



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 31st, 2018

Freetown, March 31st, 2018: Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and partners reopened its Election Situation Room (ESR) on Friday, March 30th and will run until April 1st, 2018 at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Freetown.

The ESR's focus is to observe threats to the peaceful conduct of the electioneering process and provide strategic responses to prevent and mitigate election related incidents that have the potential to erupt into violence and public disorder. The Situation Room, supported by the United States Agency for International Development in West Africa (USAID/WA), is part of a broader programme designed to mitigate election violence in West Africa through National Early Warning Systems (NEWS).

Having reviewed and analysed reports submitted into the Situation Room by our 500 local observers assigned to prioritized districts across the country, the general mood thus far is peaceful as Sierra Leoneans exercise their constitutional rights.

However, some incidents arising from various polling stations are as follows:

- Some polling stations opened later than the stipulated time of 7am;
- An initial low turnout of voters at some polling stations, but that is gradually improving;
- Reported cases of unstamped ballot papers in some polling stations;

- Instance of security personnel removing NEC officials (2) allegedly involved in electoral malpractices.

In view of the concerns raised, the relevant stakeholders including NEC, SLP and political parties should take necessary steps to address the issues swiftly.

The stability of Sierra Leone rests on the credibility of the run-off election. This will help towards ensuring a peaceful political transition.

Therefore, we call on the political parties and citizens of Sierra Leone to continue to exercise patience during and after the exercise of their civic rights and responsibilities.

Furthermore, we call on all to resist the attempt to disseminate unverified and/or potentially inflammatory information on social media. Finally, we continue to call on all Sierra Leoneans to be peaceful and law-abiding until the electioneering process is concluded.

God/Allah Bless us all!

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