



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 31st, 2018

Freetown, March 31st, 2018: Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, this is the second press statement from the WANEP Election Situation Room (ESR).

As indicated earlier, 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).

In that first statement, we briefed you on some of the issues observed at the opening of polls. These include: late opening of some polling stations, reported cases of unstamped ballot papers in some polling stations and instances of security personnel removing National Electoral Commission (NEC) officials allegedly involved in electoral malpractices, to name a few.

Although the general atmosphere still remains calm, other incidents reported from the various polling stations observed are as follows:

1. Allegations of interference with the voting process by government functionaries at some polling stations in Bonthe and Western Urban;
2. Heavy military presence in areas such as Bonthe, Western Urban, Kambia and Kenema allegedly created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation;
3. Instance of accredited local National Election Watch (NEW) observers denied access to some polling stations in Tonkolili;

4. Reports coming in after the close of polls suggest that there are incidents of violence and standoffs between party supporters in some areas in the Western Urban and Kono;
5. In Moyamba, there was an allegation of pre-marked ballot papers in one candidate's favour; and
6. Vehicles with concealed registration plates with or without accreditation were seen plying the roads.

Interventions

The eminent persons of the WANEP Situation Room made several calls to relevant stakeholders, including NEC, SLP, ONS and some government officials. In addition, on-site visits were made to some of the polling stations during and after voting.

Although voting has ended in polling stations observed by WANEP, coordination continues between WANEP ESR and the relevant stakeholders to ensure all unresolved issues are addressed.

Once again, we commend Sierra Leoneans for exercising their franchise in a relatively peaceful manner. We urge all to continue to remain patient and law-abiding even after the results are announced by NEC.

We call on the political parties to continue the dialogue with NEC and security forces, and to ensure their supporters remain peaceful and law-abiding.

We implore all Sierra Leoneans to refrain from any act that is likely to threaten the peace and security of the state.

God/Allah Bless us all!

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