



JUDICIAL SYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAMME
PROGRAMA MONITORIZASAUN BA SISTEMA JUDISIÁRIU

Press Release
Dili, 28 May 2018

JSMP congratulates the Alliance of Change for Progress (AMP) coalition for its victory in the 2018 Early Elections and JSMP's observations of the electoral process

JSMP congratulates the Alliance of Change for Progress (AMP) multi-party coalition for winning the 2018 early parliamentary elections with an absolute majority, namely 34 seats (49.6%) from a total of 65 seats in parliament. This decision was formally announced today, 28 May 2018, by the Court of Appeal (Supreme Court of Justice).

JSMP also congratulates the people of Timor-Leste and especially all of the political parties that competed in the election for their ongoing contribution towards maintaining peace and stability. The election and the results of this election provided a unique and fair solution for ending the protracted political impasse that occurred after the parliamentary elections in 2017.

“The victory of AMP is a victory for the people of Timor-Leste, because the people of Timor-Leste have democratically and freely made a political decision that is fair and in accordance with rules and norms of democracy to ensure the regular functioning of State institutions for a period of five years”, said Luis de Oliveira Sampaio, Executive Director of JSMP.

“JSMP requests for all parties to accept these results with open arms and to come together and move forward to develop the nation and liberate our people from poverty and hardship. When irregularities occur they need to be resolved in accordance with the constitutional and legal mechanisms provided by the law”, he added.

JSMP also requests for the AMP coalition to comply with their electoral promises made during their political and electoral campaign, in particular to resolve problems relating to clean water, basic infrastructure, health and education, the strengthening of justice institutions, good governance, administrative decentralization and approval of the Draft Law Against Corruption and other long term electoral promises.

To ensure that the electoral process was conducted in a transparent, impartial, credible, fair and accountable manner, and in accordance with constitutional and legal requirements, on 9 May 2018 JSMP sent its observers to several municipalities to observe this election process. JSMP conducted monitoring in the municipalities of Aileu, Dili, Ermera, Liquica and Covalima.

JSMP observed 16 Voting Centres and 21 Voting Stations in these five municipalities. Results showed that the general election was carried out in a smooth, transparent, independent and accountable manner, although there were some technical issues relating to voting preparations and some small irregularities that occurred in some of the voting centres and stations.

JSMP discovered the following technical issues and irregularities:

- 1) The Becora Prison voting station, in Cristo Rei Administrative Post, Dili Municipality, only opened at 8am and voting started at 09:30 am. According to the rules, voting centres and stations open at 06:00am and voting starts at 07:00am. In addition, the voting booths were too close to each other and some voters could see each other and spoke to each other and the officials did not pay attention to this.

JSMP recommends that in the future STAE staff should prepare the voting centres in advance so that voting centres, voting stations and the voting process adhere to the existing regulations. In addition, appropriate voting locations need to be selected to accommodate the voting booths and prevent voters from communicating with each other when voting and should ensure that voters can't take anything into the voting booths. This will prevent voters from taking things like oil or glue or other things that can be used to manipulate the voting process.

- 2) The Guido Valadares National Hospital (HNGV) voting station opened at 07:30am and voting started immediately. The ballot boxes were opened at the voting centre and then they were taken to the Guido Valadares National Hospital voting station which meant there was a major risk of manipulation occurring on the way.

JSMP recommends that in the future STAE staff should be prepared and waiting at each voting station so that the stations and voting can be opened on time and the ballot boxes should be opened at each station to avoid any manipulation occurring on the way when the ballot boxes are opened at the voting centre.

- 3) At the I E.S. voting centre No. 1 in Liquica, Liquica Administrative Post, Liquica Municipality, a voter put pipe glue on his index finger that is dipped in ink after voting. The STAE official caught him and handed the voter over to PNTL for investigation. At the Maumeta Village Voting Centre, Bazartete Administrative Post, Liquica Municipality a voter put oil on his index finger when he went to vote. The purpose of the oil was to stop the ink from staining his finger so it would be easy to wash off and then he could vote again.

Rua setubal, Colmera, Dili Timor Leste

PoBox: 275

Telephone: 3323883 |77295795

www.jsmp.tl

Facebook: www.facebook.com/timorleste.jsmp

Twitter: @JSMPtl

JSMP recommends that when voters are ready to vote and ink is placed on their finger the STAE official who is supervising the ink should hold the voters finger and place it in the ink or conduct a check before placing the finger in the ink, so that any manipulation can be immediately detected.

In addition to technical issues and irregularities, JSMP also observed that:

- a) At the Guido Valadares National Hospital voting centre the number of patients who didn't vote was very high in comparison with those who actually voted. 239 voted and 559 did not vote and there were 145 family members who did not vote. Therefore 704 voters did not vote at the Guido Valadares National Hospital voting centre simply because their names were not on the list.

To ensure every person can exercise their right to vote and their political rights by participating in elections, in particular patients and their family members who are in hospitals, JSMP recommends that an exception be made regarding the requirement for prior registration. This is because some patients and family members arrived after the registration period had finished and therefore their name was not on the voters list, and therefore they lost their right to vote. In order to vote, patients and their family members only need to show their electoral card or other personal identifying document in accordance with the law.

- b) Some political party delegates were illiterate and gave inaccurate information which created confusion during municipal tabulation. This occurred during the tabulation in Ermera Municipality.

JSMP recommends for political parties to appoint delegates who are literate to avoid creating confusion which could have a serious impact on the electoral process.

At the E.P. voting centre No. 5 Comoro, Dom Aleixo Administrative Post, STAE officials replaced a ballot box without making an announcement or did not inform delegates or observers. JSMP recommends for the Government, especially those institutions responsible for elections, namely STAE and CNE, to provide proper and appropriate training to staff from STAE, CNE and political party delegates, including national observers, to ensure that the electoral process runs smoothly and to prevent any manipulation or irregularities.

- c) There were a high number of null and blank votes, particularly in Ermera Municipality.

JSMP recommends for STAE to establish a good method for raising awareness on how to vote or puncture the voter paper, to avoid large numbers of null and blank votes.

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JSMP appreciates the work of the Government in organising this election properly and successfully, especially the work of STAE and CNE. JSMP also really appreciates the maturity of the people of Timor-Leste in exercising their political rights and deciding to end the protracted political impasse in a stable and peaceful manner. All Timorese should be very proud. Our success and ability to overcome political situations peacefully and calmly sets a good example for other countries around the world.

Observers included JSMP staff and volunteers. There were 23 observers comprising 8 JSMP staff members and 15 university students.

This activity was made possible due to the support of the Australian Government through the Australian Embassy in Timor-Leste

For more information, please contact:

Luis de Oliveira Sampaio
Executive Director of JSMP
Email: luis@jsmp.tl
Phone: 3323883 | 77295795

Rua setubal, Colmera, Dili Timor Leste

PoBox: 275

Telefone: 3323883 | 77295795

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