

**ANFREL OBSERVATION OF THE 2007  
PHILIPPINE NATIONAL ELECTION  
IN THE AUTONOMOUS REGION OF MUSLIM  
MINDANAO (ARMM)**

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5<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2007  
(Election was on 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2007)



▄ Tribal leader Bong Cawed casts his vote on Monday's midterm elections in the hope that winning candidates will also give priority to the plight of the indigenous people nationwide.  
(The Philippine Star News-Saturday, April 21, 2007) PHOTO BY HARLEY PALANGCHAO

*Tribal leader Bong Cawed casted his vote on midterm elections in the hope that winning candidates will also give priority to the plight of the indigenous people nationwide*

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## **ABBRIVATION**

<b>AFP</b>	<b>Armed Forces of the Philippines</b>
<b>ANFREL</b>	<b>Asian Network for Free Elections</b>
<b>ARMM</b>	<b>Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao</b>
<b>BEI</b>	<b>Board of Election Inspectors</b>
<b>CAPP</b>	<b>Coalition of Administrative Political Party</b>
<b>C-Care</b>	<b>Citizen Care</b>
<b>CIDA</b>	<b>The Canadian International Development Agency</b>
<b>COAV</b>	<b>Committee on Overseas Absentee Voting</b>
<b>COMELEC</b>	<b>The Commission on Elections</b>
<b>CSO</b>	<b>Civil Society Organization</b>
<b>GOP</b>	<b>Government of The Philippines</b>
<b>IPER</b>	<b>Institute for Political and Electoral Reform</b>
<b>KAMPI</b>	<b>Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino</b>
<b>Lakas-CMD</b>	<b>Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats</b>
<b>LDP</b>	<b>Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino</b>
<b>MILF</b>	<b>The Moro Islamic Liberation Front</b>
<b>MNLF</b>	<b>The Moro National Liberation Front or MLNF</b>
<b>NAMFREL</b>	<b>National Citizens Movement for Free Elections</b>
<b>NLRV</b>	<b>the National List of Registered Voters</b>
<b>NPC</b>	<b>Nationalist People's Coalition</b>
<b>PDSP</b>	<b>Philippine Democratic Socialist Party</b>
<b>PNP</b>	<b>Philippine National Police</b>
<b>PPCRV</b>	<b>Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting</b>
<b>TAF</b>	<b>The Asia Foundation</b>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The ARMM Philippines observation mission is another important episode for Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) but with mixed feelings of gladness and sadness. We acknowledge the positive aspect and the problems that took place on the ground. Some obstacles came from the combined problems from the area itself along with the problems caused by the national policy and the system in general.

With such an experience that renders ANFREL's observers the opportunity to learn more about the issues in Philippines, ANFREL wishes to express its heartfelt thanks to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for financial support and the Asia Foundation (TAF) for their unwavering support in realizing ANFREL's efforts to support the democratization process during the Philippines elections, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

ANFREL would also like to extend its appreciation to the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) for its accreditation to ANFREL as an Official International Observation group and its kind attention and support to allow all ANFREL observers to study and make recommendations to the electoral processes in Philippines. It is also undoubtedly a great experience for ANFREL to learn about the electoral monitoring body called Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) and National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL). ANFREL is happy with the positive working relations that it enjoys with the body especially in sharing useful information and case studies on the electoral processes. We thank the moral support given by Institute for Political and Electoral Reform (IPER) and ANFREL board member, Mr. Damaso Magbual and Mr. Ramon Casiple. The warm hospitality of Ambassador Henrietta T. de Villa is unforgettable.

In addition, we also would like to thank all ANFREL observers and ARMM's local monitoring organizations, especially Electoral Reforms Advocates (ERA), Tulung Lupah Sug. Inc., Concerned Alliance of Professionals and Students, Inc. (CAPS), Maranao People Development Center, Inc. (MARADECA), Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS), United Youth for Peace and Development, Inc. (UNYPAD) for all the efforts in helping ANFREL to prepare its field works in the provinces.

ANFREL also wishes to record its profound gratitude to Dr. Steve Rood, Mr. Tim Meisburger, Mr. Ky Johnson, Marie Grace Cristina G. Faylona, Debbie Felix, Michelle Domingo, Ashley Barr, Natalia Warat, Rommel Dela Rosa and other TAF members in Philippines for the wonderful preparation and impressive team work. Without such professional arrangement, the mission may not run smoothly.

# MINDANAO MAP



Source: Polyglott-Reiseführer, Philippinen, Albert G. Schaefer, 1996 Polyglott-Verlag München  
 Polyglott-Travelguide, Philippines, by Albert G. Schaefer, 1996 Polyglott-Publishing Munich, Germany  
 Note: With few minor changes with regards to spelling and German words



Philippines flag

## INTRODUCTION

The election in the Philippines has been generally noted with high rates of voter's turnout despite the obstacles of transportation and sometimes the threat of violence. Elections are very much enjoyed and expected by the Philippines people who strongly exercise their right to vote.

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is currently the 14<sup>th</sup> President of Philippines and has been in succession to the presidency since January 2001.<sup>1</sup> Since the beginning of her Presidency she had outlined her vision of building Philippines as a strong republic which consisted of a strong bureaucracy, improving the economic growth and intensifying the counter-terrorism efforts among other things. In 2004 she decided to contest the Presidential elections for a new six-year term. Her return to power gave her a chance to solidify her administration and strengthened her legitimacy which was questioned since 2001 of her rise in power.



*President Arroyo voted in her hometown of Lubao in Pampanga*

In 2005 President Arroyo was accused of having rigged the 2004 election results and attempts to impeach her failed. In order to curtail any opposition to her rule, the President in September 2005 issues an executive order making it illegal to hold any demonstrations without permits, additionally Executive Order No. 464 was issued which forbade government officials from appearing in congressional inquiries without the President's prior consent. These measures were challenged in the Supreme Court, which did declare some of the sections as unconstitutional.

In February 2006 an attempt to coup d'état was uncovered and a declaration of Proclamation No 1017 gave the President the power to issue warrantless arrests and to take over private institutions that ran public utilities.<sup>2</sup> A State of Emergency was declared across the country, demonstrators were dispersed and some leading public figures were also reported to have been arrested. Crackdowns were done on leftist political leaders and on media outfits, Journalism Guidelines was also issued to deal with any dissenting opinion, this was later lifted in March 2006.

The Gloria administration has been accused of widespread human rights violations, there have been also reportedly surge in the political killings and additionally there have been a crude campaign by the government which has branded all leftist party and other social-civic organizations as underground fronts of CPP or its armed wing New Peoples Army (NPA).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloria\\_Macapagal\\_Arroyo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloria_Macapagal_Arroyo)

<sup>2</sup> Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloria\\_Macapagal\\_Arroyo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloria_Macapagal_Arroyo)

<sup>3</sup> World Prout Assembly, Escalating political murders in the Philippines, Source: [http://www.worldproutassembly.org/archives/2006/10/escalating\\_poli.html](http://www.worldproutassembly.org/archives/2006/10/escalating_poli.html)

It has been reported that some regional and international human rights organizations have also expressed their concerns over the attacks and killings of militant activist and community workers.

The rise of human rights violations has been steadily going up and one of the Arroyo governments' attempt in undermining the human rights situation has been the passing thru the parliament of the Human Security Act which is actually a disguised Anti-terror Act, thus leading to a call for the midterm elections.

For the year 2007 before the election, the situation of human rights violation was more complicated when many cases need to be identified whether the violence and killings related to the election, candidates and political parties. Or it is just ordinary crimes which link to the existing conflicts. Many people and organizations had paid attention to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) where all kind of problems could be found during electoral season; vote-buying, killing, irregularities, cheatings etc.

Like some Asian countries, vote-buying, cheating becomes a widespread practice in elections, especially in the provinces. Foreign observers were often told by those they interviewed that money distribution is common in Philippines. It became political trading and rule. Candidates who refrained from vote-buying will risk with lost. Thus, even candidates who appeared to be well-meaning and public service-oriented, succumbed to the practice, accepting it as a fact of Philippine politics that one just had to learn to live with.

The COMELEC and the BEIs, who supervise the elections and the administration of the polling stations, have not been taking steps to effectively curb vote-buying, cheating neither have the likes of the PPCRV and the NAMFREL. Perhaps, like many other countries where commissioners do not exercise their power fully or they do not see it is worth to take a risk to be a so called "enemy of politicians". This report should be able to reflect some picture of politic during the election in Philippine.

## **LIPINOS WAY OF VOTING**

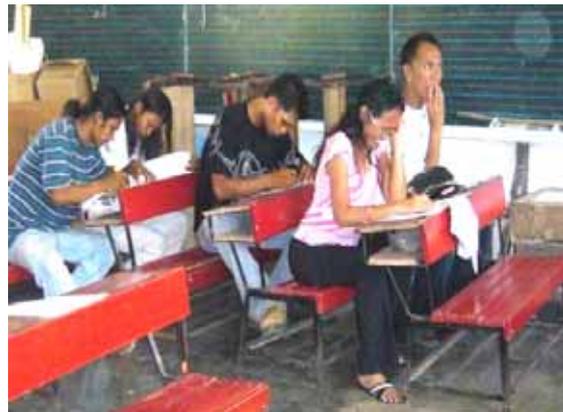
On Monday, May 14th, Filipinos voted for 17,889 different government positions at different levels, none of which included the office of President. Voting in Philippines is different from other countries in Asia. Voters will write the names of candidates for 9 types of election which are Senators, Party List, Congressman/ Representative, Governor, Vice-Governor, Provincial Board Members, Mayor, Vice-Mayor, Councilors. One voter will write for nearly 35 names (or more) on one piece of paper. For the Senate election, only half of the seats were selected (12 seats).

They do not have polling booth setting to protect voter secrecy but they used a small folder to put on the desk where voters suppose to sit and vote there. There are only 3 persons to do the work inside polling stations. The three are called Board of Election Inspectors (BEIs) to work inside precinct from 7:00 AM until 3:00 PM. BEI members, watchers and observers qualified to vote at the precinct may vote first. Voters should then be allowed into the polling place one by one, and should inform

the Chairman of their name and address, who will then look up their name in the Election Day Computerized Voter List.

If a voter accidentally spoils or defaces a ballot in such a way that it can no longer be lawfully used, he can return it folded to the chairman who will write the word "spoiled" in the corresponding space above the ballot serial number in the EDCVL. The voter will then be given another ballot authenticated by the chairman after announcing the serial number of the second ballot and recording the serial number above the word "spoiled". If the second ballot is again spoiled or defaced in such a way that it can no longer be lawfully used, the voter may not have another ballot.

An illiterate or physically disabled voter is entitled to assistance with marking their ballot if their disability or illiteracy is recorded in the PCVL; or the disability is apparent from physical condition. Such a person may be assisted in marking the ballot by relative who is a first cousin or closer. If no close relative is available, the ballot can be marked by any person who has the voter's confidence and belongs to the same household, or by any member of the BEI. No person may assist an illiterate or disabled voter more than three (3) times, except the members of the BEI. In all cases where assistance is provided, the poll clerk shall first verify from the illiterate or disabled voter whether the voter has authorized the assistor to prepare the ballot for him.



*Voters sat inside the precinct and wrote the names of candidates on the ballot paper (there was no polling booth) and were also talking to each other, this raised much doubt on voter secrecy.*

In principle, before marking the ballot the assistor shall bind himself in writing and under oath to fill the ballot strictly in accordance with the instructions of the voter and not to reveal the contents of the ballot by affixing his signature in the appropriate space in Part G of the Minutes of Voting and Counting of Votes. The assistor shall then prepare the ballot for the illiterate or disabled voter using the ballot secrecy folder in the presence of the voter, and together they will return the ballot to the Chairman. Following normal procedure, the thumbprint of the voter (not the assistor) will be affixed on the stub of the ballot and on the EDCVL, and then ink applied on the fingernail of the voter.

For the counting, it must be done at the polling place except if there is imminent danger of violence, terrorism, disorder or similar causes. The BEI may by unanimous vote, and with the concurrence of the majority of the watchers present, transfer counting to a public building within the city/municipality. All the members of the BEI, and those watchers who agree with the move, will record their agreement in the minutes by signing the minutes. Any watchers who disagree will be asked to record their objection. However, the counting at ARMM provinces were conducted at the counting centers where there was no facility support.

## **ELECTIONS IN MINDANAO<sup>4</sup>**

For more than 50 years, Mindanao has had a reputation within the Philippines as having the worst electoral processes in the country. The unresolved issues about the 2004 election revolve mostly around alleged cheating that took place in various places in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The regional Governor in the ARMM was quoted on Election Day 2007 as saying that “what is important is we can rectify the negative impression that here in the ARMM, there is cheating.” And the ulama (religious leaders) have said that people must “rise against the sarcastic perception that the ARMM is the ‘cheating capital for elections.’”

Muslim citizen response this time around was quite vigorous. In early April, twelve Muslim organizations (ranging from region-wide coalitions like Citizens Coalition for ARMM Electoral Reforms and the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, to province-based organizations like MARADECA in Lanao del Sur and Electoral Reform Advocates in Tawi-Tawi) met with the Catholic-based Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV). The agreement to work for “Clean, Honest, Accurate, Meaningful, Peaceful Elections” helped fill a gap in PPCRV’s coverage of all precincts throughout the country.

### **ANFREL/TAF MISSION IN ARMM, 6 PROVINCES**

(Basilan, Sulu, Tawi Tawi, Maguindanao, Shariff Kabunsuan and Lanao del Sur)

ANFREL has joined TAF in Philippines for the 2007 election observation under the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to observe and witness the national and local political exercise in ARMM areas. With a very good cooperation of local organizations, observers were able to learn the system and observe the process and so on. They had seen how the COMELEC administering its work in the provincial level down to precincts and counting centers. It could be true from reading the analysis and articles that mentioned a few years ago that the electoral situation in Muslim 6 provinces was never been conducted in effective manner since the political conflict in general were not able to settle for decades. Many people lost trust to central administration and authorities that put the control the areas. Foreign observers have realized once they worked on the ground that civil society in ARMM also lost their faith on elections and local independent institutions. The elections have always been organized in the midst of violence and the control of clan system. The MILF leaders and many members do not see the consequence of the poll will be able to help them improve their autonomous status or solve the so called “problem between Philippine people and Bangsamoros”.

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<sup>4</sup> Article written by Dr. Steven Rood is The Asia Foundation’s Country Representative in the Philippines. He joined ANFREL observation team in Shariff Kabunshuan province, ARMM.

The **Moro Islamic Liberation Front** is a Muslim separatist rebel group located in Southern Philippines. The area where the group is active is called *Bangsamoro* by the MILF and it covers the southern portion of Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago, Palawan, Basilan and the neighboring islands. There are approximately 4.5 million Muslims in the Philippines and the majority live within this area.

The MILF was founded by Salamat Hashim, who advocated a conservative, Wahhabist-influenced brand of Islam developed during his time as a student in Saudi Arabia and Cairo. Salamat, like many in the MILF, adapted the words of Qutb to call for "jihad in the Moroland" against "the colonial Philippine occupation armies" who he accused of crimes against Muslims in the region.<sup>[4]</sup> Salamat died in July 2003, and was replaced as Chairman of the MILF by Al Haj Murad Ebrahim.

The exact size of the MILF is unclear, though its military wing, the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces, is known to consist of a guerilla army of 12,500 people. The group claimed a peak strength of almost 90,000 "well-armed" men in 1998.

ANFREL/TAF's local partners took the initiative to organize this mission in ARMM in order to support free and fair election and its reformation. Six partner organizations<sup>5</sup> are collaborating with the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV). The 21 observers who were invited came from 6 countries were from Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. They took nearly two weeks from 5<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2007 to understand what had happened in the Muslim areas and issued a report and statement to the public.

The mission started after the conference on "Islam and Democracy" on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2007 at Zamboanga, Mindanao was organized. The study and discussion had helped international observers and local partners from 6 ARMM provinces to understand how important it was for the Muslim community in each country to promote democracy, free and fair election as well as peaceful conflict resolution.

The observers had evaluated the pre-election environment in the region, Election Day in the areas and the counting process. The observers liaised with other international and local observer based in the region to share information and coordinate deployment. Besides that, they met with COMELEG, police, military, candidates, political parties, voters and all the stakeholders in the provinces where they were deployed. On Election Day, they visited more than 500 precincts. One of the most valuable aspects of such a mission was the reactions of the observers to many things that Filipinos normally take them for granted.

However, it was a short-term mission which did not cover the observation of voter registration and voter education processes. They did not observe the entire campaign

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<sup>5</sup> Electoral Reforms Advocates (ERA), Tulung Lupah Sug. Inc., (TLS), Concerned Alliance of Professionals and Students, Inc. (CAPS), Maranao People Development Center, Inc. (MARADECA), Consortium of Bangsa-moro Civil Society (CBCS), United Youth for Peace and Development, Inc. (UNYPAD).

period but observers were able to see the last week of candidates and parties campaigns.<sup>6</sup>

Objectives of International observers:

- To observe, study and report on electoral process and system in Philippines
- To support free/fair and transparency election in ARMM.
- Strengthen the democratization process in ARMM Provinces, Mindanao.
- Sharing the Asian experiences for possibly electoral reform.

After the election, the observers return to Manila for the debriefing. Based on the results and weekly reports from observers, ANFREL/TAF prepared a press statement that were released at a press conference in Manila, one day before leaving the country. ANFREL/TAF also prepared a comprehensive report here on the election that included recommendations.

## SECURITY

Security was one of the most priorities for observers for this mission. As usual, ANFREL/TAF had adhere to “safety first” concept, the coordinating team and local partners had informed the police and military for the deployment of foreign observers. According to assessment briefing from the General of Military of ARMM and the Chief Police of ARMM, Basilan, Sulu and Lanao Sur were the most dangerous area. In Basilan and Lanao Sur, the situation was quite tense because of the tough competition among the local clans.

Sulu is the base of Abu Sayaf (the split group of MILF, which is a network of Jemaah Islamiyah). During the assessment mission, 8 persons had been killed and beheaded in Sulu and one bomb blasted 300 meter from the conference room and two people were killed in Cotabato.



What is unique to ARMM and ought not be glossed over, is the fact that conflict among clans for political power regularly overwhelms the electoral system. The overwhelming majority of voters in areas with “failed elections” are in the ARMM. In

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<sup>6</sup> The 10 teams of the observers were unable to make a comprehensive evaluation of the pre-election environment for the whole country. Observations and findings in this report were based solely on observations and interviews conducted in the areas of Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao only.

one well-televised incident, the COMELEC and security forces were not able to overcome objections by an incumbent mayor to the distribution of election paraphernalia in his municipality – the protesters were led by his mother who sat on the pile of ballot boxes in the COMELEC office and so the people in that community did not get to cast their vote.

In fact, The Asia Foundation research has shown that the main source of violent conflict in Muslim Mindanao is not separatism but clan feuds. This problem is worse in ARMM than anywhere else in the country and political disputes are the main factors initiating conflict among clans. While elections throw this dynamic into sharp relief, such feuding is a constant reality and no amount of change in election procedures (no matter how much such reform might benefit Philippine democracy) will change that. It is only when followers are able to exact accountability from their leaders for peace and development that this will change. How residents of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao might accomplish this is a difficult, though not impossible, question.

## 1. PRE-ELECTION REPORTS

May 7 – 12, 2007

### 1.1 Security

Basilan – the Deputy-Chief of Police, Mr. Salisa, reported the security situation was normal, and said that no election violations occurred during the campaign period and that there had not been any complaints received from political parties. He said the police in Basilan would deploy around 800 officers to guard the election. The commander of the First Marine Battalion, Colonel Ramiro Alivio noted that while the military had been involved in elections in the past, even transferring and protecting the ballot boxes, in this election they had no official role. He welcomed ANFREL observers very warmly.



*Observers were talking with polices in Basilan about security situation*

The Mayor of Lamitan, Mr. Oric H. Fugay, said there have been no violent incidents so far, but admitted that he was being threatened by certain group, and consequently moved out of his office and into a guarded building of his own. He also said that the campaign process had been relatively peaceful, but as D-day approaches, the situation became more tensed. The Congressional representative for Basilan, Mr. Gerry A. Salapuddin, thought the situation similar to other parts of the country, a mixture of "challenges and opportunities", and "fun and dangerous". He accused the current governor of links to the Abu Sayyaf group, saying he had been "trained" in Middle-East, and that's why one of his wives is a Syrian.

Ms. Nida Patino Dans, a Councilor in Isabela City said that in general the situation in Basilan is peaceful, and the perception of violence was caused by media exaggerating the situation by taking sensational angles. Ms. Joy Zabala, a local NGO leader,

worried that if the incumbent governor lost, something will happen after election. "They are already threatening the public", she said.

Sulu – The KAMPKI Party Leader Haji Sakur Tan, who was an ex-Governor of Sulu, and a candidate for Governor, said that there was peace across the Sulu at that time, but he worried that Abu Sayyaf and MNLF might interfere on election day, and recommended that the Government deploy army on a large scale in Sulu to avoid any big conflict.

The director of the police in Sulu said there was no issue of peace and security in Jolo at that moment, but two weeks ago seven Christian Zamboangans were beheaded by Abu Sayyaf group in Paranga. There have been no reports of any conflict between the opposite parties candidates or workers/supporters. He said there were only 1400 police personnel in Jolo, so the priority would be to deploy them in the sensitive areas like Indianan, Patikul and Parnga etc. He also thought the police would require backstopping by the Armed Forces of Philippines (AFP).

The AFP Commander of the 104th Armored Brigade was also concerned about the Abu Sayyaf group and the MLNF, but noted the biggest problem was the ongoing political rivalries that never end after the election, but continue generation after generation, and contribute to destabilizing the peace efforts and the process of democracy in the Jolo. Cocoy, a candidate for Congress from Mashwara (a religious party), confirmed no campaign violence has been reported, but when replying to a question about the connection of nexus of Abu Sayyaf with religious parties noted that there is no proof of any link between them, and that the Abu Sayyaf group is not interested in politics.



The bodies of men beheaded by the Abu Sayyaf lie on the back of a truck in Parang, Jolo yesterday.

*The bodies of men beheaded by the Abu Sayyaf*

Shariff Kabunsuan – ANFREL's observers visited an MILF camp and met with Ghazali Djafar (Vice-Chairman for Political Affairs). While they were in the camp, Assib Dats Ibrahim, who is running for board member of Shariff Kabunsuan, was also visiting the MILF. Mr. Gazali said he does not believe that the election can solve the Bangsa Moro problem, and that the only one way to solve it was through independence. Consequently, he didn't register to vote in the election, but said the MILF is not barring its members from participating in the coming election as candidates and voters (however, committee members and military commanders of MILF are not allowed to participate). He said that many candidates have visited MILF political officers asking for advice and seeking blessing or endorsement, because MILF has a lot of influence in ARMM, but the MILF doesn't support any candidate officially. In this election, MILF guarantees that their areas will be safe from violence. In their areas of influence, the MILF has its own government (shadow government) and select leaders through a consensus method.

Maguindanao – Mr. Gazali Djafar also met with the Maguindanao observers, and said that the assassination of candidates and political activists with the intention of disrupting the elections was a common tactic of Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) or Abu Sayaf (who killed six people with a bomb at Sultan Kudarat on 8 May). In contrast, in MILF controlled areas people had the right to vote. He noted that denying pluralism and creating an atmosphere of intimidation and fear is also disenfranchising, and hoped that there would be no more killing.

## 1.2 Vote-buying in cash and in kind

In Basilan, the Governor, a Congressman, a Councilor of Isabela City, and the Mayor of Lamitan, all agreed that vote-buying was engaged in by virtually all candidates. As Congressman Salapuddin noted, "it is everywhere". According to the Councilor, the incumbent governor distributed P500 per family in many places. She said that local government employees had their salary cut to fund his campaign, "but no one dared to file a complaint". An NGO leader said that vote-buying had been massively implemented starting 6 years ago, and that money politics was the biggest problem in the ARMM. In a discussion with first time voters in Basilan, one said "if candidates offer money, I will take it, but won't vote for them". The voter, a Catholic, was then asked "Do you think it is in accordance with Christian teachings to accept such money?" to which he replied "Hmmm.... (Silent)", suggesting he was uncertain<sup>7</sup>.

In Shariff Kabunsuan, at the fishing village of Linek Barangay voters reported candidates distributing rice to villagers (villagers do not consider it a vote buying, as no cash is provided). Candidates promised the villagers that they will build road, provide electric, peace and order. In Lanao del Sur a group of NGO workers felt that money would play a



*Voters tried to sell the votes to ANFREL Observers*



*Potential voters showed their money received from the candidate agents as soon as they saw ANFREL observers arrived in Tawi Tawi*

<sup>7</sup> In general, international best practice suggests that voters should usually accept the money (as to reject it can be seen as a rejection of the candidate and can endanger the voter), then vote their conscience. When this issue has been addressed by religious leaders in other countries, they have generally seen the offering of the money as the sin or wrong action, and that taking the money to protect oneself or one's family and then voting one's is morally acceptable.

vital role in the election, and that thought that 70 to 90 percent of the votes would be bought by the candidates. In Shariff Kabunsuan a candidate for Governor worried that votes would be bought during the canvassing process, and an internationally funded local NGO shared that expectation, stating frankly that the local COMELEC was an actor in all cheating during the canvassing process.



*Potential voters received free gasoline in Tawi-tawi from candidate Dick Sahali before the Election Day.*

In Sulu a sitting Mayor said that some parties (he didn't name) are buying the vote of voters by renting their ID cards for 500 Pesos. The cards will be returned after the election. In contrast, a female candidate for councilor from a well-connected political family said reports of vote buying are just rumors spread by the media or outsiders, and that no proof of such activities had been presented to COMELEC or any party. The Provincial Election Supervisor said vote-buying was an issue that everyone talked about, but that to date no one had filed a single

complaint to the COMELEC office. A 32 year old tricycle driver said nobody had yet asked to buy his vote, but he was waiting; "I will take money from them, but no vote will be given to them" he said.

In Tawi-Tawi vote buying is common and almost all the candidates and civil society organizations complained about it. Most of the candidates admit that the power of money is very important to get the votes. One of the candidates for Mayor told our observers that he gives money to people, but claims it is financial support for needy people, not vote buying. A voter (a fish vendor) the team interviewed said he will take money if the candidates give it, but will vote for the candidates that he favors.

### 1.3 Election Observers

Comments on election observers were mixed. In Lanao del Sur a candidate for Congress said he thought that both PPCRV and NAMFREL will play positive role in the forthcoming election, but a candidate for Marawi City Mayor – positive about COMELEC and PPCRV – seemed to have some reservations regarding NAMFREL. In Sulu, another congressional candidate condemned the actions of NAMFREL in the previous election, saying they didn't report to COMELEC or a lower body about their findings, that they had written a very false report vilifying the peoples of the area and made baseless allegations damaging the image of Jolo. He said we don't want a network like that here.

Observer team in Shariff Kabunsuan reported that many people know NAMFREL and PPCRV, and



*People came to take money openly (vote buying) in the city of Tawi-tawi*

that some volunteers do work for both (this is apparently a reference to the PPCRV's agreement to pick up the sixth copy of the election return for NAMFREL in polling centers where they do not have a volunteer). The observers interviewed NAMFREL and reported NAMFREL volunteers, unlike PPCRV volunteers, will only be engaged in quick count, so do not need to be in the precincts the whole day. NAMFREL noted that they will only file a report by internet for the senate election, and that the result should be out by 10:00 PM on the Election Day. Regarding neutrality of observers the NAMFREL said that cheating, conflict, culture of impunity and fear is common in Mindanao and ARMM, and the system is so feudal that it is difficult to get neutral people to do the volunteer work. The local official said they rely on their own staff, who have been with them for at least a year, and on staff from organizations with a grassroots presence (like PPCRV). The official noted that it is more difficult working in Moro areas than in Christian areas, where the church helps them.

#### **1.4 Environment for Voters**

In Shariff Kabunsuan the team interviewed a female street restaurateur. She had registered to vote and had a voter ID (she had learned about the registration through an announcement from a car that passed her house). She has already decided who she will vote for, and based her decisions on credibility and past track records. She had learned about the voting process from a guidance paper she got. A waitress in the restaurant had also registered to vote, but a customer said he didn't care about the election, and thought it better to have a drink every night.

Matthew and Renato, two villagers in Baranggae Nange (also in Shariff Kabunsuan) hoped the election would bring development, but feared that – based on their previous experience – candidates might not keep their promises. They said that a candidate's religion didn't influence their choice, and that they expected the COMELEC would be able to run a good election. The owner of internet-café, who left a position in government because of frustration at rampant corruption, felt the election would solve nothing. He felt solutions to economic problems had to come from the people themselves, not the government.

In Sulu vehicles, tri-cycles walls, and houses are decorated with the banners and posters of candidates. People are interested to take part in the elections, and are not concerned about the security situation. Muqtadir Mahajir, a 32 year old tricycle driver, said that he will vote, and that his candidate for governor is Main Massuri. He liked him more because during his period there was complete peace, tolerance and harmony in Sulu. He knew the election date and how to vote. He learned about the candidates from friends, radio broadcasts, and shops decorated with candidate posters.

Saeeda Munapi, a 100 year old shopkeeper, said she would vote if a relative helped her. She voted regularly when she was in good health, and thought that voting was very important because it was the only way to put the country on the democracy track.

Hussein, a 42 year fisherman, did not know about the date of election. He said he would close his business and not go to sea on Election Day so he could vote. Binadyt Nasir, a 24 year old fisherman, did know the date of the election. He had not yet decided who he would vote for, but said a single vote can change our poverty, so he would vote.

In Basilan ANFREL's observers discussed the election environment with Bishop Martin Jumoad, Father Arnel Lagman & Sister Virginia Roy. They said that violence or killings would likely happen after the election. Many people have already been threatened with the well-known phrase "Isang Bala Kalang (you are one bullet away)". The killing of Mayor Biel last year in Isabela City had a major impact on Christian's attitude to the election; "If the mayor, who did a lot of good in Isabela City, could be killed, what chance have ordinary people?" The military cannot do much to improve the situation, because people are losing trust to them. "They play a 'game' with Abu Sayyaf group." Although there are so many problems in Basilan, however the dialogue between Christians and Muslims will be continued: "We will not stop", promised the priests. Election problems in Basilan come both from candidates and electorates. "Voters also allow them to happen. It is a disorderly and chaotic election."



*Observers interviewed all important stakeholders  
In Basilan.*

In Tawi-Tawi people are enthusiastic about the elections, but at the same time nervous. In previous elections, threats and violence to influence the voters were common, with warlords preventing voters from going to the polls so they could manipulate the balloting in favor of their candidates. When the observers asked COMELEC about this issue, they said that there were no such practices in Tawi-Tawi, but local election monitoring groups confirmed it does happen in some municipalities. Most of the people (including candidates) interviewed by the team don't believe the upcoming election will be free and fair.

In Maguindanao many voters will have to travel long distances to vote because the local COMELEC has clustered precincts to cut down on expenses. Opposition candidates note that those people who have to travel come from the only area with a contested election. They said that in this area several candidates for the forthcoming election were subjected to threats by various groups and even physically attacked when they tried to put up their posters in public places, creating minor clashes between party supporters of Lakas and Congress. Members of Lakas Party found it difficult to conduct their election campaigns. In other parts of the province there is no violence and little reported vote-buying because the local elections are uncontested.

### **1.5 Women and Elections**

In Sulu, a young candidate from an Islamic party said there was no resistance to women voting or standing as candidates, and that he had tried to encourage some women to stand as candidates for his party, but to no effect. The Sulu team met a female candidate for councilor from KAMPI party in Indinan named Dadang Basaluddin. Although she is first time candidate, she comes from a political family (her husband is captain (chief) of the town and brother former vice mayor). She

thought it easier for women to campaign as the women are always open-hearted and outspoken and not applying a double standard like most men politicians.

In Basilan a female Councilor from Isabela City who is running for the Provincial Board said there is no discrimination against women, noting that on the 10 member City Council 3 are women. There are chances provided by the political system for women, however culturally she thought that Muslims prefer men to become leaders. "I'm the only woman in my party (Lakas) running for provincial candidate, and other party also has only one candidate". She did not agree that the campaigns conducted by Governor Wahab Akbar's three wives (running as mayors and governor) could be considered as women's participation. "People are already aware about the motive behind these campaigns"; she said.



FEELING THE PULSE: Pakistani political scientist Mossarat Qadeem, a member of the 21-strong foreign observer team deployed in Mindanao, listens to feedback from a voter in Marawi City. (RAN D. ROSARIO/INQUIRER-PH/INAG)

*ANFREL's observer (Mossarat Qadeem) listened to feedback from a voter in Marawi City.*

In Shariff Kabunsuan ordinary voters said that illiterate women would ask their husbands to write the names of candidates for them on the polling day, and that some will be guided by their husbands. Voters reported that Muslim female candidates do not face black campaigns as much as before, and that their families understand and support them.

## 2 POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES

There are two types of parties in the Philippines: major parties, who correspond typically to traditional political parties, and minor parties or party-list organizations, who rely on the party-list system to win Congressional Seats...

Senator <b>12</b>	Member , House of Representatives <b>212*</b> District	<b>53*</b> Party – list
Governor <b>79</b>	Vice Governor <b>79</b>	Member <b>758*</b> Sangguniang Panlalawigan
City Mayor <b>117**</b>	City Vice Mayor <b>117</b>	Member <b>1,276*</b> Sangguniang Panlungsod
Town Mayor <b>1,506**</b>	Town Vice Mayor <b>1,506</b>	Member <b>12,016*</b> Sangguniang Bayan

\* 2004 figures \*\*Based on NSCB figures as of September 2006

From Philippine Daily Inquirer, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007

## **2.1 Party Agents (Poll Watchers)**

In Sulu the head of KAMPI said his party had not trained any poll watchers, but a candidate for an Islamic party (Mashwara) said that he had trained most of the poll watchers for his party (1031 precincts and 7000 poll watchers), that all the poll watchers were Madrassa students (studying in religious schools), and that they were all volunteers. The acting Mayor of Jolo said the LAKAS party would train 3342 poll watchers on May 11, 2007.

In Tawi-Tawi observers reported that because of the bad experiences of cheating in previous elections, most of the political parties had recruited and trained party agents. Each party has guidelines for their poll watchers.

In Lanao del Sur Dr Mahid Miraato Mutilan (Aleem); from the UMPIA PARTY, and previously Governor for nine years, said the party has its own system of recruitment and educating poll observers/party agents for the polling stations. For the forthcoming election (14 May election) relevant recruitment and training has already been completed, with the Party's lawyer actively involved in the training program. The guidelines and other materials have already been distributed to the poll watchers.

## **2.2 Campaign Issues and Methods**

In Basilan candidates ran on a variety of platforms. The Mayor of Lamitan, Mr. Oric H. Fugay, said his approach was very simple; "We want a place for all of us to live happily, a nice place for every ethnicity and tribe". In contrast, the Governor of Basilan, Mr. Wahab Akbar, said there was "no hope for our people to get better future. Poverty is deep rooted and Mindanao will continue suffering." He thought the best way to foster development would be to get rid of local elections and have the regional government appoint provincial governors and mayors -- only regional government to be elected. "It's the high cost of campaigning for elections that creates corruption." The Mayor of Malusu, running for re-election and a former member of the MNLF said he has just two planks in his platform, Peace and Development. He promised to maintain the peace, and develop agriculture, fisheries and infrastructure in his area.

An NGO leader in Basilan observed that very few candidates offer platforms that address substantial issues. She thought that most of the candidates run only for power -- that later would be abused. Typically, all people know about the candidates is their face on a poster or leaflet, their name in big letters below. It's rare to see even an outline of a platform on the posters.

In Lanao del Sur Hamid A. Barra, a candidate for Congress and a Professor and Doctor of Philosophy in Islamic Law and Jurisprudence, said he is fully ready for the election. His major developmental policies involve health, human rights, halal food registration, education, environment, employment placement, livelihood, lifestyle modernization, power, water and energy, peace, poverty alleviation, political transformation. The above, according to him are the exceptional issues that make him different from other candidates. The candidate's campaign strategy consists primarily of direct interactions with the people, as he does not have the money needed to campaign in other ways.

Yusop YK. Salic, a candidate for Marawi City Mayor in Lanao del Sur also has an extensive list of issues, but primarily generalities rather than specific proposals, and also includes an explicit Islamic appeal: youth development agenda, adherence to gender sensitivity and human rights issues, infrastructure development, promotion of knowledge based society by supporting quality education and development of skills and innate talents, development of program oriented politics, principled leadership, promotion of good governance, establishment of social order and security, promotion of economy by promoting business and trade, addressing major environmental issues, promotion of cultural heritage, and promotion of Islamic values. Mr. Salic's campaign strategy involves door to door visits, interactions through mass rallies, distribution of leaflets, display of posters, etc.

In Lanao del Sur, Dr. Mutilan of the UMPIA PARTY said the party uses religion in their campaigns. The party strategy includes 3 major issues: i) Economic Development; ii) Infrastructure development; and iii) Social Development. Major components of the economic development strategy involve: development of agriculture based on local resources, mechanization of agriculture, development of irrigation facilities, introduction of multiple cropping system, etc. Infrastructure development has as major component building and maintaining the road network.

In Shariff Kabunsuan Candidate for Governor Datu Tucao Mastura said he was the only candidate using door to door campaigning. As one of his campaign tactics, he created his own style with a cowboy hat so he could be recognized easily. His platform is to use IT to improve administration, support agriculture development, and encourage economic development by enticing investors to come to Shariff Kabunsuan. Observers also asked the local COMELEC about the limitation of campaign finance. They found that there was no such implementation on this law.

#### **Spending limits**

THE GOVERNMENT has imposed certain limitations on candidates to ensure equal campaign opportunities. The spending limit for someone running in the 2007 elections is P3 for each voter registered in the constituency where he or she filed a certificate of candidacy. Political parties and independent candidates can spend P5 for every such voter. In the case of presidential elections, those running for president or vice president can spend P10 per voter.

As of April 2006, there were 43,522,634 registered voters in the country. This means that someone running for senator (who is affiliated with a political party) can spend as much as P130,567,902 for his or her campaign. An independent senatorial candidate can shell out at most P217,613,170

( *Philippine Daily Inquirer...January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007*)

In Sulu, the Acting Mayor of Jolo had an interesting approach to development. In response to a question about party strategy to solve local problems he said that 2100 people had already been sent abroad, and that fifteen recruitment agencies had been established to help the hundreds of new university graduates every year find employment abroad.

In Tawi-Tawi political parties are seen as not very important. What matters most is family connections and economic status. Most candidates campaign on a general platform focused on employment creation and economic development. For example, Mr. Abdulnaser H. Hadjiula, candidate for Mayor in Bongao municipality, will assist unemployed youth by creating a Municipal Employment Board. In general the

electoral environment in Tawi Tawi has been peaceful, barring a few small incidents of posters a candidate being torn down by other candidates' supporters.

In Shariff Kabunsuan people were fascinated by the campaign, and on the last day came out in droves to rallies. In Datuk Odin Sinsuat municipality thousands gathered to hear a candidate for governor speak. Some people came by jeep from outside the town using their own money. On the road outside the town our observers saw people who could not attend the rally listening to the speeches on the radio.

### 2.3 Political Dynasties

The Mayor of Lamitan, Mr. Oric H. Fugay, who is running for re-election said the "political situation in Lamitan is unique", referring to the competition for mayor between him and one of the Governor of Basilan's wives. He noted that all of the governor's family is involved in Basilan politics. The governor himself, Mr. Wahab Akbar, is running for Congress in this election after finishing his 3 terms as Governor of Basilan. The governor has four wives. Of the four, one is a candidate for mayor in Lamitan, one is running for mayor of Isabela City, and one is running for governor of the province. One may wonder why the fourth wife in this political family is not running for an office, but according to a local congressman, one of Akbar's wives is a Syrian, so perhaps she is ineligible to stand as a candidate. When the team interviewed the governor, he noted that one problem in Basilan was fragmentation of politic leaders. "There should be unity among the people", he said, "and no better unity compare to those of husband and wife or brother and sister."



*Datu Tucao ran for governor while daughter, Bai Idang, ran for mayor in Shariff Kabunsuan .*

In Tawi-Tawi, dynastic politics is common. For example, when we interviewed a candidate for Vice Governor, who is the daughter of the incumbent governor, she told us that many people from her family are involved in politics. Her husband is a mayor in another province; her younger sister is a former mayor, and her in-laws are also in the politics<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Based on the interview with Ruby Suhali the candidate for Vice Governor.

In Maguindanao observers spoke to the mother of a political dynasty. She said her husband had been a political leader in the province, three of her sons were city mayors, and her daughter was running for Vice Mayor of Buluan Municipality. She was shocked when asked if her family ever intimidated other candidates, saying they had never blocked anyone from competing.

#### **2.4 Misuse of Government Resources**

In Tawi-Tawi opposition candidates complained that private armies run by warlords had been telling the common people to vote for government-backed candidates. The team noticed that the posters of candidates and political parties are often posted on government resources such as schools, mosques and public places. During a visit to the Governor's office, the observer team was surprised to see that the Governor and his campaign team, and the Mayor of Bongao municipality, were using government offices and vehicles for their campaigns. It did not seem wrong to them (in fact they seemed proud). This issue has been reported by opposition candidates and local election monitoring groups such as PPCRV and ERA to the COMELEC, but till now there is no action<sup>9</sup>.

#### **2.5 Religion in Politics**

Most parties in all provinces appeal to religious sentiments for votes. In Isabela City, an ANFREL observer and journalist from Indonesia interviewed the Chair of Basilan Ulama Supreme Council about the role of Islam in the election. His report follows.

"We are Neutral in this Election"

Unlike the Ulama Council in Indonesia, the Basilan Ulama Supreme Council (BUSC) chooses to stay away from local politics. This conclusion is based on a conversation the ANFREL observer team had with Dr. Aboulkhair S. Tarason, Chair of BUSC at his house in Isabela City, the province of Basilan, Mindanao.

The Ulama Council in Indonesia, known as MUI, has been known largely for its active political support to implement Syariah Law in some provinces and districts in Indonesia -- although it is against the Indonesian Constitution.

Ustadz Aboulkhair, who was spent 20 years in Mecca to study Islamic Theology in Ummul Qura University of Mecca, said that his position is different compared to the previous chair of the organization who supported certain candidates for the election. His approach is more cultural than political. This can be seen from the committees inside the organization: which are on education, mosques, preaching, women, and peace & order. "There is no committee on politics or election," said the former member of MNLF.

However, it doesn't mean that Council does not care about elections. By their own effort, independently, they are doing voter education through Islamic schools to promote a peaceful election. When asking about what kind of political system he thinks the best for Islamic community in Basilan, he diplomatically answered, "any good system that could give autonomy and benefits to the people in Mindanao."

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<sup>9</sup> Based on the interview with ERA and PPCRV.

Approaching to the May 14 election, Ustadz Aboulkhair expects the election would give freedom for people to choose. Candidates should also offered freedom. "People are still not free now", he said. Regarding women candidates, he said it is not suggested by Islamic teachings, but, in reality, the Philippines Constitution allows women to be political leaders.

In Sulu the KAMPKI Party Leader Haji Sakur Tan (ex-Governor of Sulu and currently a candidate for Governor) said that religion is mostly used by politicians as just another tool to achieve power. He also noted that there are some Ulama (religious leaders), well versed in politics, who use religion to divide the people.

Our observers in Tawi-Tawi report that religion has always been used by the candidates because of the strong religious convictions of the Muslims in ARMM provinces. For example, one candidate who will oppose the incumbent governor, promised to fund Madrasahs or religious schools if he is elected, and because of the promise he got endorsements from religious leaders<sup>10</sup>. In Shariff Kabunsuan it is reported that several candidates have approached religious leaders to help them gain their votes.

### **3 ELECTION ADMINISTRATION**

In Basilan, the Mayors of Lamitan and Malusu thought that COMELEC was well prepared for the election, but the Governor of Basilan was not as confident, stating "being 70 percent ready is already the best we can hope for". He thought there would be problems in transportation.

In Lanao del Sur, according to the Provincial Election Supervisor, all election materials had arrived and been handed over to the Municipal Treasurers, and all the BEIs for 1994 precincts had been trained. It is assumed by the Provincial Election Supervisor that the training was better this time, and all BEI members had been provided with guidelines. COMELEC had not met recently with political parties and the security forces, but had a number of meetings during September-December 2006. The Provincial Election Supervisor believes that, the common people had confidence in the COMELEC, however, the team could not confirm this in their meetings with voters and CSOs. At the moment, COMELEC in Lanao del Sur had received 16 complaints, none of which had been resolved yet. The exact timeline for resolving the complaints could not be provided by the Provincial Election Supervisor. The Provincial COMELEC did not conduct any voter or civic education programs.

In Sulu a party leader said that the BEI members, mostly teachers, were not properly trained. They focused too much on minor procedural things and ignored or had no knowledge about the overall conduct of the elections. He also said the COMELEC was not a neutral body; "I have no trust on COMELEC because they were involved in gerrymandering (illegal clustering of barangays) at the will and wish of strong and powerful candidates". Distrust of COMELEC was also voiced by a mayor, who said "COMELEC is a biased body and I have no trust on them". "They are unable to stop fake registration, gerrymandering, changing the results in favor of big goons, or the corruption of the people by vote buying".

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<sup>10</sup> Based on interview with the Mufti, Imam and Ustaz.

The Provincial Election Supervisor of Sulu said all essential materials had been received and delivered, and that all staff and BEIs had been trained. Responding to opposition party claims that COMELEC was clustering barangay (village) at the will of influential politicians, she said the allegations are totally false. Clustering of some sensitive barangay was done for security reasons and was a joint decision of the Philippine National police (PNP), Armed Forces of Philippine (AFP) and COMELEC. She said the same type of clustering had been done 2004-05, so people already know where to vote.

Observer team in Basilan heard in a meeting with senior church leaders that the COMELEC had no will-power to act against corruptors because the problem lied in the COMELEC also. "I pray every week in front of the mass, that the COMELEC will not 'change' the result of the counting. They also said that the election problems are widely known by the public in Basilan; "we have seen massive vote-buying and other problems, and strangely, it is only the COMELEC doesn't know about them." They also revealed that people in ARMM said the election is over long before the voting begins. The rumor was that in order to win the election, candidates should pay P5 million to COMELEC; "the highest bidder is the winner."

In Tawi-Tawi our observers interviewed COMELEC officials who said that not all the materials had arrived when our observers filed their report, but the provincial COMELEC was getting a big boat to send it. All election officials and BEIs had been trained, and the Election Officer thought the trainings were much better compared to previous elections<sup>11</sup>. All the BEI members received the COMELEC/DepEd handbook on the election process<sup>12</sup>. The COMELEC has not received any complaints so that they don't do any investigation. In later discussions with candidates and voters our observers learned that some don't believe that the COMELEC is totally neutral. They said that the COMELEC officers seem willing to establish underground contacts with candidates, and also said that COMELEC officials are human, and can be manipulated, as they experienced in past elections<sup>13</sup>.



POLL workers load ballot boxes for distribution to other municipalities in Jolo where the military is hunting terror groups with links to Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah.

*Poll workers loaded ballot boxes for distribution to other Municipalities in Jolo where the military was hunting Terror groups with link to Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah.*

In Shariff Kabunsuan most ordinary voters interviewed questioned the effectiveness and transparency of the COMELEC. One fisherman said that in the last election voters could clean the ink off their finger easily with water. A teacher working for the first time in a BEI said she has got BEI training for a day but it was not enough to

<sup>11</sup> According to Abu Talipan, Provincial COMELEC Supervisor.

<sup>12</sup> According to Abu Talipan, Provincial COMELEC Supervisor.

<sup>13</sup> Based on interview with the people at the market and Sulay Halipah the former Mayor of Bongao.

understand deeply about the election process. Her husband was also on a BEI, but in a different barangay. She was really worried for her responsibilities and could not sleep properly at night.

In Maguindanao COMELEC's job is easy. Both of the COMELEC officers in one municipality are women, and told ANFREL's observers that essentially their duty is already finished because all elections were uncontested in the municipality. When the observers asked a local NGO leader about clean elections, she said that COMELEC was the biggest problem in Philippine elections; "if you want to win, prepare your money".

#### **4 VOTER EDUCATION AND CIVIC EDUCATION**

In Lanao del Sur MARADECA in collaboration with C-Care has been conducting voter education. The local election officials were found not proactive in providing voter education. The idea was that the COMELEC did not have mandate for that. The NGOs basically are the major catalysts for voter education in Lanao del Sur. People learn about the elections generally through meetings, rallies and special community voter education programs organized by the NGOs. The NGOs involve volunteers at the grassroots levels (Barangays) to conduct voter education program. Most of the coordinators involved in voter education that observer team interviewed felt that the election would not be free and fair. They thought that money was going to play a vital role in the election, and guessed that 70 to 90 percent of the votes will be bought by the candidates.

In Sulu a candidate said that no voter education was given to anyone, and made a plea for a Civil Society Organization (CSO) to support his party in large scale mass awareness about election and political rights. He thought that the people of Sulu were not aware of the importance of elections and governance.

Observer team interviewed a broadcaster at radio DXMM (Catholic Ministry Sulo), and asked a number of questions about the preparation and conduct of the election. The broadcaster said they were giving coverage to all parties for the sake of creating a positive dialogue and developing a culture of listening tolerance and democratic value among the people. They were also broadcasting an awareness raising program for the masses not to buy or sell the vote, and plans to broadcast live on Election Day to keep the people informed.

In Shariff Kabunsuan voter education has been conducted by the Local Government Support Program (LGSP), a partner of PPCRV. LGSP has supported campaigns for clean election through Muftis and Ulama in ARMM. They did a leaflet called "peaceful processes of reforms constitute a jihad" that was signed by four muftis and distributed across ARMM. A Catholic priest in Upi municipality was also conducting voter education, distributing a leaflet that listed 10 characteristics of good leader according to the Bible. He also recorded 23 songs on the theme of clean elections that would be played in an evening performance on May 9<sup>th</sup>. Ordinary voters said they got most of their information from TV and radio, not newspaper, and that the only voter education they got came from NGOs and civil society, saying COMELEC had not done much for this election.

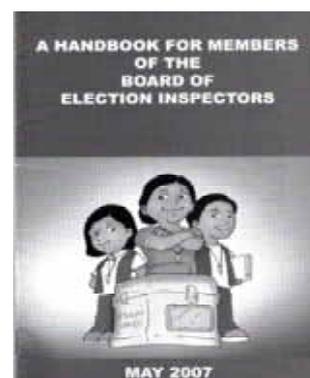
In Tawi-Tawi the provincial COMELEC said they provided voter education to the people through seminars, and through posters on how and when to vote<sup>14</sup>. Electoral Reform Advocates (ERA), the local partner of PPCRV, organized a candidate forum for all the political parties. This forum allowed the candidates for the upcoming election to explain their manifesto and programs to the people. ERA-PPCRV also organized a candle light vigil at Bongao municipality for the Free and Fair and Peaceful elections. More than 200 people came to this event. During this event, the organizers explained to the people about the importance of peaceful, free and fair elections<sup>15</sup>.

Muslim religious leaders played their role to educate the people about the criteria of the good candidate according to Islam. They did voters education during the Friday prayer, through radio talk shows, and some seminars that they organized<sup>16</sup>. They also educated people regarding money politics, stating that money politics is “haram” according to Islam. In the future election period they will issue the “fatwa” that money politics is bad according to Islam<sup>17</sup>.

Most of the voters that observers met in Tawi-Tawi felt that they had enough information about the candidates for this upcoming election and they already had in mind about who to vote for<sup>18</sup>. They also said that the candidates addressed well both local issues, and issues about Mindanao and the ARMM<sup>19</sup>.

In Maguindanao voters complained that campaigning through the broadcast media was even more irritating than the parties campaigning through posters. A local NGO leader said some candidates had come to her community giving promises but she did not believe it at all. She said that it would be difficult for her community to vote because they did not know how to vote properly, and never got training or any information linked to the voting process.

## CIVIC EDUCATION



*Handbooks for members of the board of election inspectors were published with support from TAF through a grant provided by AusAID. Many young volunteers came to help to distribute them.*

<sup>14</sup> Based on interview with Abu Talipan and observation in Tawi-Tawi.

<sup>15</sup> Based on observation at the event on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Based on interview with Mufti Abdul Ghani.

<sup>17</sup> According to interview with Mufti Abdul Ghani.

<sup>18</sup> Based on interview with the potential voters in market and villages.

<sup>19</sup> Based on the interview with the potential voters.

## 6. UNCONTESTED ELECTIONS

There are no uncontested elections in Sulu. In Tawi-Tawi the seat for Mayor and Vice Mayor of Panglima Sugala were not contested. In Maguindanao all was peaceful: there were no clashes between party supporters because there were no contested elections. Given the situation that no other party but the present ruling party has been able to campaign in these areas, our observers wondered whether an election held under such circumstances could be considered free and fair.

## 7. ABSENTEE VOTERS

Republic Act 9189, "The Overseas Absentee Voting Act of 2003" established the system that allows Filipinos to cast their votes in Philippine elections, even while abroad. The system was successfully implemented for the first time last year, when more than 230,000 Filipinos in over 70 countries all over the world participated in the 2004 National and Local Elections. Less overseas Filipinos came to vote in the 2007 elections.

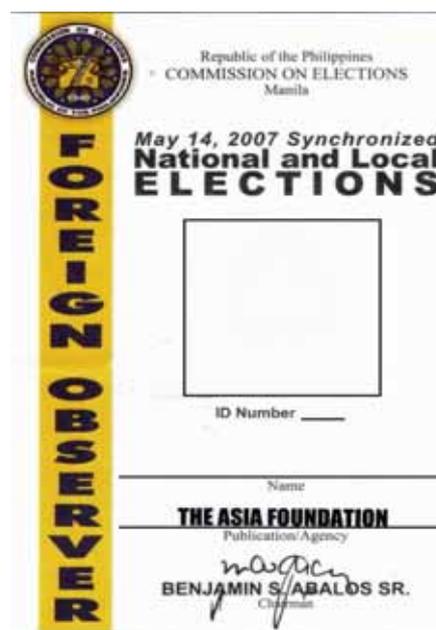
Meanwhile, under the local absentee voting system, government officials and employees, including members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police, can vote for senators and party-list candidates in advance if they will be assigned to perform election-related duties in places outside their place of registration during the May 14 polls.

### COMELEC<sup>20</sup>

The Commission exercises not only administrative and quasi-judicial powers, but judicial power as well.

The Commission is under the over-all control of the Chairman and the Commissioners, who constitute the policymaking body that lays down the guidelines and regulations for elections, referenda, plebiscites, initiatives and recalls. The Commission sits either en banc or in two divisions in order to expedite disposition of election cases including pre-proclamation

The Chairman is the Chief Executive of the Commission. Under him is the Executive Director (ED) whose duty is to implement policies and decisions and to take charge of the administrative affairs of the Commission. Assisting the Executive Director are two deputies: a Deputy Executive Director for Administration (DEDA) and a Deputy Executive Director for Operations (DEDO).



*Accreditation card for International Observer*

<sup>20</sup> [www.comelec.gov.ph](http://www.comelec.gov.ph)

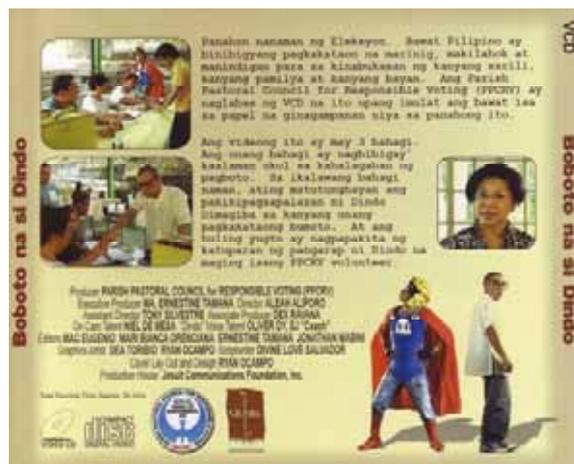
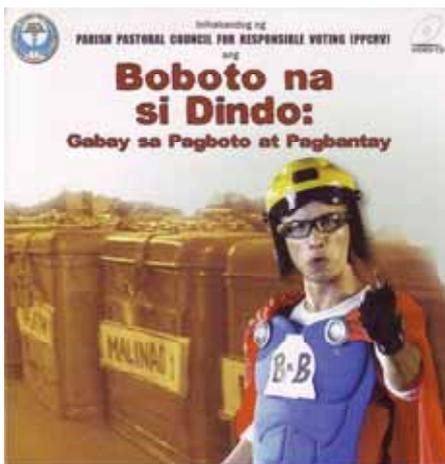
In the field, there are 16 regional election directors (RED), 79 provincial election supervisors (PES), 1,609 election officers (EO) and their staffs. The election officers are based in every city and municipality. Their main function is to supervise the conduct of electoral activities within their areas of responsibility as field representatives of the Commission.

The body also created an intensified voters' education by means of school tours to give young voters an idea of what to expect during the election and to educate them on the whole electoral process. In order to further bring election information close to new voters. COMELEC also launched the website [www.bagongbotante.com](http://www.bagongbotante.com) where in first time voters could obtain ready information by accessing the website.<sup>21</sup>

## PPCRV

Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) is one of the strong Election Monitoring group besides NAMFREL in Philippines. PPCRV was formed in 1991 by the group of Christians. The reasons of the formation of PPCRV are because of the Church is an independent and credible organizations in Philippines. Because of the trust of the people and concern regarding the election monitoring and voter's education, PPCRV was formed.

Later on after a few years of good work and credible election monitoring, PPCRV was invited to be a citizen arms of COMELEG and involved with the counting process. The infrastructure of the Church help the recruitment of the volunteers for PPCRV became easier. In 1993, PPCRV was able to recruit 365 000 volunteers and for this upcoming elections, PPCRV have 400 000 volunteers for 2007. The findings of PPCRV in ARMM can be found at appendix III.



*PPCRV produced CD for voter education which features a famous comedian of Philippines*

<sup>21</sup> Election 2007, Intersect, January – March 2007.

## NAMFREL

**The National Citizen's Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL)**<sup>22</sup> have more than 250,000 individual members and over 1,500 volunteer regional, provincial, city, municipal, and district chairpersons and coordinators nationwide. Likewise, NAMFREL is supported by 125 organizations, 145 donors and benefactors. It is governed by the National Council, consisting of heads of major national organizations participating in NAMFREL. The National Secretariat is composed of a number of staff headed by the Executive Director. At the local level, NAMFREL is organized into 87 provincial chapters and 17 city and municipal chapters in the National Capital Region.

Since the Batasang Pambansa Elections in 1984, NAMFREL has participated in 20 national and local elections. In all electoral exercises, NAMFREL has been accredited by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) as its citizens' arm to undertake voter education and poll watching functions and the conduct of an unofficial parallel count. NAMFREL volunteers have also worked as trainers, election observers, election administrators and resource persons in 27 countries since 1986. For 2007 election, NAMFREL has done quick count for its main activity.



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<sup>22</sup> Namfrel is a non-partisan, nationwide organization of individuals and civic, religious, professional, business, labor, educational, youth and non-government groups voluntarily working for the cause of free, orderly and honest elections. It was organized in October 1983 but its roots can be traced to as far back as the 1960's with the formation of the New Voters Registration Committee, the Citizens National Electoral Assembly (CNEA), the National Citizens Constitutional Convention Movement (NCCM), and the Citizens National Committee for Referenda, Plebiscites and Elections (CINACORPE). Today, NAMFREL continues its tradition of harnessing citizen's and organizations' collective strength in working for electoral and political reforms. For further details, visit: [www.namfrel.or.ph](http://www.namfrel.or.ph)

## 8. SITUATION ON POLLING DAY AND COUNTING PROCESS

All precincts were suppose to open at 7.00 am and close at 3.00 pm. Observers, interpreters and drivers went to observe the ballot boxes transportation and opening process since before 7.00 am.

### 8.1. Tawi-Tawi

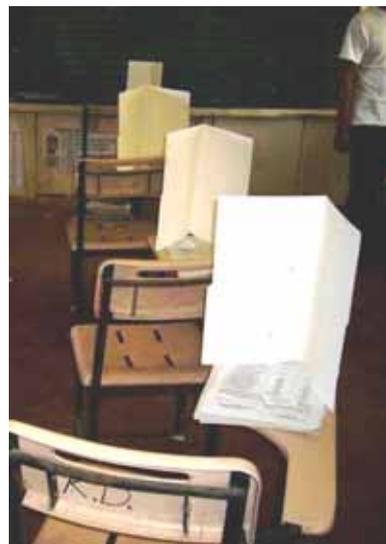
Most polling centers opened late, primarily because the COMELEC did not distribute materials until the morning of Election Day, and many centers were observed still having candidate campaign materials inside. In some precincts the set up of the room compromised the secrecy of the vote, and in Barangay Tong Sina at the Tong Sina Elementary School, poll watchers from LAKAS were attempting to influence voters' candidate choice. The BEI's are not well trained in most of the polling precincts visited: in some the BEI didn't check the finger of the voters before giving the ballot, and some didn't mark fingers with indelible ink after voting.

In the municipality of South Ubian in Barangay Naugan, according to local observers from ERA-PPCRV, armed men tried to confiscate a ballot box. The chairman of BEI refused to give it up, and sent the ballot box and election materials to the Municipal Treasurers Office. Consequently, the COMELEC declared the failure of the election, and it is assumed that it will be re-run at a later date. In Bongao Municipality at 11.30 am observers noted open vote buying activity.

### 8.2 Basilan Election Day

In Lamitan, Maluso and Isabela voting was reported as calm and peaceful. In Lamitan all precincts opened by 7.30 am with all materials in place. Although the voting was calm, ANFREL observers noted that voters could not really cast their votes in secret. The "Ballot Secrecy Folder" was just too small, and the distance between one voter and another was too short. Voters who sat in the back could easily see what was being written by the voter in front.

At 3 pm, all precincts in the Isabela East Center began to count the votes, and the counting in the precinct observed was transparent, with ballots shown to all attendees, including poll watchers and observers. It took around a minute for each ballot to be counted.



*Small ballot secrecy folders inside some precincts.*

### 8.3 Shariff Kabunsuan

An ANFREL observer team visited the polling center at Pilot Elementary School, in Dato Odin Sinsuat municipality. At about 7:30 a bomb went off in a precinct located near the rear of the school. One person was injured in the blast, and voters quickly evacuated the area. As the team was leaving the center, another bomb exploded, prompting one observer to later comment in the press that elections in the ARMM are more dangerous than those she had observed in Afghanistan.



*BEIs allowed Mayor's poll watchers to carry ballot boxes to the vehicle and allow them to sit inside the vehicle with the box.*

Because of threats in Berira municipality COMELEC was unable to distribute boxes and materials, and the election was postponed.

Polling was chaotic. Nowhere were voters required to queue: instead they simply formed a disorderly mob around the entrances to precincts. Precincts were not set up to ensure the secrecy of the vote. BEI staff collected marked ballots from voters to insert in the box. Poll watchers acted like BEIs, helping voters directly, and helping the BEIs to do their work. Some poll watchers were allowed to “help” voters fill in their ballots. There were more KAMPI poll watchers than other parties, with some precincts having 4 or 5 poll watchers from this party, and the KAMPI poll watchers were most involved in trying to influence voters. Soldiers were everywhere; some of them were inside the precincts with guns.

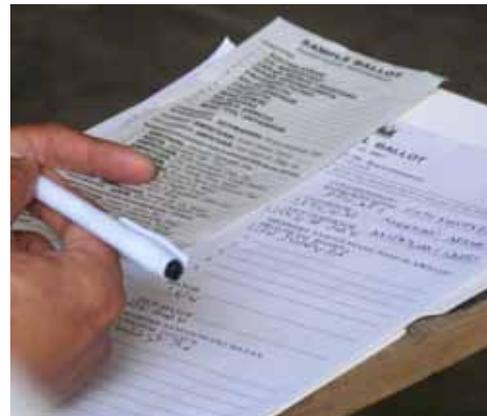
ANFREL observer and interpreter watched the closing process at Matanog National High School, where more than 10 voters arrived after 3 pm, but were allowed to vote. One poll watcher help them, then took the ballot papers and used his thumb print to mark the voter roll. The BEI assisted in this process. When the observer pointed out the cheating to her interpreter, two people noticed and tried to distract the observer by asking her name, telephone number and offering her fruit. While this occurred, the manipulator turned to the wall; finished putting the ballots in the box, then closed the box for transport. The observer accepted the fruit and took to show at the press conference at the hotel of Cotabato. The closed ballot box was carried from the precinct by a poll watcher, not a member of the BEI. The same thing was practiced at the counting centre where one mayor's poll watcher carried another box to the counting place.

Observers followed the ballot boxes from Matanog National High School to the counting center at Palang Central Elementary school, which had a tank parked outside, and many soldiers both inside and outside. When the incumbent Mayor showed up at the center one of the observers took his photo, and the Mayor asked “who is she?” The observer introduced herself as an international observer from Thailand. He asked observer to not to take photos of the tank or of him. People seemed afraid of him. The local observer present did not want to answer questions about him, and a BEI member explained that this is the political culture here; that everyone knows what will happen inside the counting center. Tension was rising and the observer team decided to pull out.

Meanwhile, another team noted the process began more or less on time in Sultan Kudarat, Sultan Mastura, Parang municipalities, while it started late in Barera and Buldon because essential materials had not arrived. In the precincts people were freely moving around, talking to each other as they voted, while outside they crowded round the entrance in no discernable queue. In Namukan Barangay, an observer saw a mayoral candidate, Jak Gimba, giving money to the voters behind the polling center building. One party representative told the observers that the money was just support for relatives and families because “we are one family in this Barangay”. In the same location some voters had to vote outside, under banana trees guarded by soldiers.

#### **8.4 Maguindanao**

Polling did not start on time in some precincts. Although the local elections were uncontested, many party leaders were at polling centers, supporting the candidates they liked on the party lists. In general, the polling process was orderly.



*Voting by writing the names*

At one precinct at Sapakan Central School, there were no chairs and tables for voters to sit at, and so they sat on the floor, or squeezed in next to the polling staff to mark their ballot papers. In several place voters were seen as filling in the ballot papers in the presence of other persons, who were perhaps watching over for whatever reasons. Our observers were sure these ‘other persons’ were not there to assist in view of any disability or illiteracy. In general, there was no secrecy of ballot, as voters could be easily watched over by the staff as well as other voters coming, going out, or waiting in the same room for the issuance of ballot.

In a few polling stations visited before noon, observers were told that over 70% or 80% of registered voters had already voted, but the number seemed suspiciously high. At one polling station, a person was observed sitting and writing in one corner of the room with a bundle of ballot papers in her hand, but when she noticed the observers, she stopped what she was doing and put the papers aside. At this place it was also claimed that a very high percentage of people had already voted, and our observer suspected that votes were being stuffed, signatures and thumb prints forged.

The election at Pagulungan Municipality was fraught with violence and flagrant disregard for the rights of the citizens of the area. Since the police and political parties were unable to maintain peace and order, the COMELEC officer Mrs. E. Jasmin reported that the area was not safe for counting, and requested to higher authority that the counting be moved to the provincial capital of Magindanao, Sharrif Aguak (this was the only municipality with a contested mayoral race).

### 8.5 Lanao Del Sur

Polling did not start until 9:00 or 10:00 AM in most places. But by 7:00 hours the polling stations were crowded with voters, in some more than 500 persons waited. Because of the delay in opening, many voters were seen leaving the centers. In some places the observers found open vote buying; and in one place an observer (who looks like a Filipina) was offered money by the “operator” of a candidate.



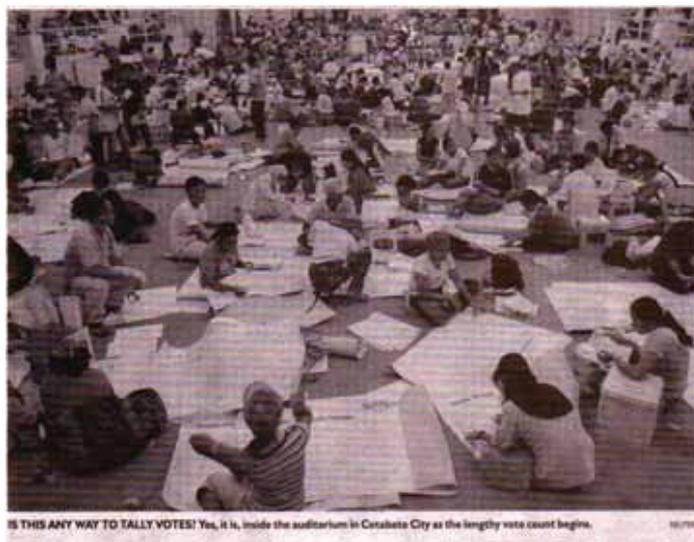
*This person took several ballot papers to cast the votes*

In eight municipalities the voting was stopped due to clashes, killings, intimidations or other types of violence and electoral irregularities: Masiu, Lumbabayalao, Butig, Lumbanyue, Madalwm, Pulas, Sultan-du-Malondong; and Biailayan.

The voting at the polling centers continued until 3:00, and by 4:00 ballot boxes and other relevant documents started arriving at the central counting center, however the counting did not start until 20:00 because of the continuous inflow of the ballot boxes, and complex and time-consuming paperwork requirements. Some of the ballot boxes arrived at the counting center open. When power went out late in the night, counting continued by candlelight.

### 8.6 Sulu

In general, polling commenced on time, but there were still many posters of candidates in prohibited areas inside the school. There was not secrecy of voting, with many voters having two or three companions inside the precinct, and in a number of cases outsiders sat with voters dictating the candidate names they should write. No locks were used on the ballot boxes, and in many cases there were no poll watchers inside the



*Poll workers tally votes (on the floor) inside the auditorium in Cotabato City as the lengthy vote count begins.*

precinct, and voters fingers were not marked with ink.

Observers went to Manimung to observe closing, but by the time they arrived at 2:30, the center was closed and ballot boxes sealed. Many of the precinct chairmen seemed a little bit nervous to see international observers. A local observer said that since almost all voters had cast their vote, it was the custom to close polling and seal the boxes.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Statements and recommendations from ARMM observation, presented in Appendix II

## APPENDIX I



### Asian Network for Free Elections

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### Statement

May 9th, 2007

### **Asian Observers Deployed in 6 ARMM Provinces put High Expectation for the Philippines's May 14<sup>th</sup> Elections**

The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), in collaboration with the local monitoring organization: the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) and its partner Muslim civil society organizations throughout the ARMM (CBCS, TLS, CAPSI, UNYPAD, MARADECA, ERA), has deployed 21 international observers from 6 Asian countries; Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Thailand to observe the May 14th General Election in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) from 5th to the 15th May 2007. All observers wish the people of the Philippines will experience positive political development through the peaceful elections.

ANFREL, Asia's only regional observation body (with CIDA and TAF support) would like to see all political parties and candidates as well as stakeholders run a credible election in a smooth and efficient manner. Drawing from ANFREL's experiences from many countries in Asia, ANFREL would like to express their appreciation to COMELEC for its efforts in preparing the crucial election, administering the process, and accrediting international observers to observe in the country. ANFREL supports and encourages civil society groups like PPCRV, NAMFREL and IPER, and local organizations throughout the country to exercise their rights and play their role through monitoring the election in order to lead the country and champion democracy.

For the pre-election observation, we would like to see the following:

1. Since electoral system and its process are different from other countries, observers would like to see how effective it is to have synchronized elections in one day. How do the COMELEC in all levels facilitate the voters and implement the electoral laws and regulations? Are there any improvement from the previous elections regarding the

prevention of electoral violation, technical problems, voter education and civic education etc.?

2. All measures should be taken to prevent electoral violence before, during and after the polling day. We hope all candidates, party leaders, party agents and supporters cooperate with each other and COMELEC to ensure peaceful and smooth running election processes.

3. ANFREL observers will watch in the ARMM provinces to see if government officials, police and military as well as community leaders and religious leaders are able to be neutral. Candidates must not be allowed to utilize state facilities and human resources. COMELEC should enforce the laws to punish those who violate election rule and law.

4. To eliminate the culture of corruption from the grass roots level, candidate must have a sense of self esteem by not giving money to voters for vote buying. Candidates should gain their popularity by their legitimate activities and long-term work for people.

5. Illiterate voters and new voters should be informed about the process of election and the candidates in their constituencies as well as be encouraged to go out to vote.

6. ANFREL hope to see the clean outcome and no manipulation of the electoral result for this election. It calls on all stakeholders to adhere to the principle of genuine democracy and the reputation of the country.

*On May 15, ANFREL will hold a post election press conference in Cotabato City at Estosan hotel and its final statement would also be issued from Cotabato City and Manila.*

*For further information, please contact: Ms. Somsri Hananuntasuk, ANFREL Director, at 0921 6018091 or Ms. Natalia +628158900740*

*For other information on ANFREL, please visit [www.anfrel.org](http://www.anfrel.org) which also contains reports on various other ANFREL works in Asian countries.*

## APPENDIX II



### Asian Network for Free Elections

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## **Preliminary Statement of Asian Foreign Election Observers on the Mission in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao 15th May, 2007 Estosan Garden Hotel, Cotabato City**

### *For Immediate Release*

The twenty one observers from the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) have completed their election observation mission and study of the Philippines' electoral system and process. Observers from Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Thailand spent eight days observing the pre-election situation and Election Day throughout the six provinces of the ARMM, visiting more than 500 precincts. We observed the preparations for the elections at the local level, and the situation before Election Day by interviewing candidates, election and other government officials, non-government organizations, and citizens. We then observed Election Day, up to the counting of ballots.

The observers would like to thank the COMELEC for accreditation and the Filipino people for their warm hospitality from both ordinary citizens and civil society organizations. We very much admire the hard work of the poll officers at all polling stations, who worked from the evening before the polling day, until late on the night of the Elections Day. Filipinos were seen as very devoted to the process of election, and in particular we were happy to see women participating in all aspects of the electoral process, including as voters, poll workers and candidates. We, along with the Filipino people, hope to see peaceful outcome for the post election period.

Observations included some localities where Election Day was properly conducted by all stakeholders, upholding law and order, freedom of expression, and freedom of choice. Observers appreciated the good media cooperation and coverage about electoral information. Unfortunately, Election Day in other localities in the ARMM was not peaceful and orderly.

Despite the enthusiasm and determination of voters to choose their government, the active support of Muslim and Christian leaders, and the best efforts of most COMELEC officials and teacher/poll workers, ANFREL observed an election day process plagued with problems, and an environment marred by intimidation, threats and violence. The low quality of elections in the ARMM, the general impression that

the process is manipulated by outsiders, and the culture of impunity for election and political crime, can fuel calls for alternative government that can provide justice for the people.

ANFREL still would like to see significant reform in the election process and the legal and political environment to ensure the establishment of free and fair elections in the future. ANFREL takes the opportunity to point out some aspects for further consideration and discussion in the Philippines and among the other Asian democratic countries.

### **Voter Registration**

It is encouraging that lists of registered voters are now electronically available. But, to ensure that voters know where their precinct is, and so that cross-checking is possible (particularly with the lists posted in precincts), they need to be made available earlier.

### **Voter Education**

Compared to other Asian countries, there was very little voter education in the ARMM. In the future, COMELEC should develop a comprehensive program to inform the people of the election process, and their rights and duties in a democracy. Given the significant influence of clan politics and violence in the election process, ANFREL suggests that civil society organizations should also be deeply involved in long-term and intensive civic education campaigns.

### **Campaign Process**

To create a fair competitive environment for all candidates, it is important to enforce the law and to punish those government officials who use government facilities, vehicles and staff to support the campaigns of incumbent candidates or parties. Ending impunity for election offenses would yield the single biggest improvement in democracy and the election process.

Since in political campaigns there is always risk of conflict and violence, candidates and parties should not involve children for political activities, even though they may like to voluntarily join the campaigns or they were hired. The Philippines has acceded (in 1990) to the Child Rights Convention and thus all political parties have obligations to protect the rights of the child.

All candidates should respect the election law by not campaigning on the day before and polling day. The COMELEC should not allow poll watchers, voters and members of the parties to distribute campaign fliers for specific candidates inside or outside the precincts on Election Day.

### **Violence and Intimidation**

ANFREL calls on all stakeholders in the ARMM and all over the country to stop using violence to undermine the democratic process or gain their votes. For the sake

of peace and genuine democracy, those who utilize all kind of weapons in the ARMM must be ended.

The supporters, poll watchers, members and party agents should not assist the candidates with unethical means, i.e., intimidation, harassment, discrimination, revenge etc.

All candidates should perform their potential leadership with passion and ability to unite the country; they should not win the election by creating more conflict and hate.

### **COMELEC, BEIs and the Polling Problems**

There should not be any exception in COMELEC's exercising their power on election administration and implementation of the electoral law. COMELEC in all levels must perform their work effectively and transparently so that no candidate or party will be able to influence the Commission and its officers.

Board of Election Inspectors (BEI) should implement their role and authority to fulfill the work during election process and canvassing. Both COMELEC and BEIs who cooperate with the candidates and poll watchers to manipulate the voting and results must be punished and dismissed from their work. All BEIs must follow the law and electoral process seriously.

There should be a consistent policy for the poll setting, polling and canvassing. The COMELEC must give the same instructions to electoral officers and BEIs.

Poll watchers should not be allowed to assist or intervene in the activities of voters during the election time. The number of members on a BEI could be increased to more than three persons if it is not compatible to the amount of work on the Election Day, so they will not ask for assistance from the poll watchers.

To make the voting process run in an orderly way, all voters should form a queue, and voters should not be assisted to vote except for illiterate and disabled voters.

In urban areas, polling centers can be very crowded and chaotic, and the grouping of many precincts in a single location means voters must walk long distances to vote, and often have difficulty finding their precinct within the polling enter. Confusion and chaos make the polling and counting processes less transparent, potentially facilitating malpractice, and certainly diminishing credibility. The COMELEC should consider establishing no more than two or three precincts in any one location. For the convenience of the voters and more order, there could be more places set up as precincts or using tents for poll setting for the remote areas. In this manner voters can find their precinct easily, will not travel long distances, and can find their names on voters list without difficulty.

The ballot secrecy folders and the layout of the precincts were ineffective in ensuring the secrecy of the vote. In many precincts poll-watchers sat within a meter of voters, and could easily observe their selections. In several instances we saw voters curling their ballots in an attempt to prevent poll-watchers seeing their choices. This lack of secrecy can be very intimidating, and can facilitate vote-buying, by allowing voters to demonstrate their adherence to a previously struck bargain. The COMELEC should

replace the ballot secrecy folders with actual voting screens, as are used in other countries, and ensure that desks are far enough apart to prevent violation of the secrecy of the vote.

Voters who had completed their ballots sometimes handed them over to the chair of the precinct, who would keep them in a stack next to unmarked but folded ballots until he had time to register the voter and put the ballots in the box. It is international best practice that after a voter has marked a ballot, he or she should retain that ballot in their possession until they deposit it in the ballot box.

Too many precincts observed had candidate materials and candidates themselves hanging around polling centers. It should be made clear in law and regulation that this is unacceptable.

Voters' index fingers need to be examined to deter any person from trying to vote more than once. It was noted that most polling stations did not check the voter's index finger, whether it was already inked. And sometimes voters did not have their fingers inked after casting their vote – this procedure should be rigorously followed.

### **Counting Process**

It is important to provide enough facilities for the counting at the precincts and at the counting centres. In some areas counting happened exactly as outlined in the “Handbook for Members of the Board of Election Inspectors.” However, these were the minority. They should provide enough light for the counting.

### **Proposals for Electoral reform**

- The problem is mostly about the implementation and law enforcement. Impunity for election offences must be addressed.
- The law on campaign finance should be enforced. Overspending must be discouraged, and the source of funding should be clear.
- In order to cut down the cost of campaigning, and enhance accountability and representation, Senators could be elected by region rather than nationwide.
- The provision of the 1987 Constitution against political dynasties should be implemented by law to limit the number of politicians from same family or political clan.
- COMELEC must be more professional and need to disqualify those who misuse their power.
- The local election should be separated from the national one, to make the process more simple and transparent.
- The law on electoral modernization should be implemented for counting to prepare for coming elections.

*For further information, please contact Ms. Somsri Hananuntasuk, Director, Asian Network for Free Elections at +63 921 6018091 and [anfrel@anfrel.org](mailto:anfrel@anfrel.org)*

## **APPENDIX III**

### **Philippine Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV)**

Archdiocese of Cotabato

*Contact Person : Fr. David Procalla, OMI, Executive Director, PPCRV-Cotabato*

Two bombs exploded in Brgy. Dalican, Datu Odin Sinsuat at about 7:10 a.m. outside a residential house and outside the premises of the Dalican Pilot Elementary School. No one was reported injured. PNP-ARMM Chief Superintendent Gen. Joel Goltiao, in an interview over DXMS, said the bombs were intended to harass, “nanaanakot lang”. The bomb explosions however did not affect the conduct of elections.

In Barira, Shariff Kabunsuan, members of the Board of Election Inspectors are yet to be deployed. A group is opposing the composition of the BEI in Barira.

Unconfirmed reports say that at about 6:30 a.m., an electoral candidate for councilor confiscated the ballot boxes of the following barangays: Bagoenged, Dalgan, Boliok and Kalobogan all of Pagalungan, Maguindanao.

Goltiao also said that elections in the Basulta area are generally peaceful except for a reported gunfire in a Lanao town. Also as of 8:38 a.m., ballot boxes are still being distributed in some municipalities in Lanao.

PPCRV Chair Fr. David Procalla observed that in one elementary school many voters complained that their names can not be found in the voters list. PPCRV is also calling for the BEI to honor PPCRV poll watchers with IDs in accordance with a memorandum issued by COMELEC Chair Abalos.

In Parang Elementary School which has 18 precincts and about 200,000 registered voters, names of almost 20-30 percent of voters are not found in the voters list. One voter complained that at the time of registration, his name was not found in the list but the name of his father who died 15 years ago is still on the list. COMELEC advised voters to look for their names in other polling precincts in other schools.

In Making elementary school which has 22 precincts, an estimated 30% of voters were not able to vote due to the absence of their names in the certified voters list.

Voters in one barangay were prevented to cast their votes in Alamada, Cotabato. PPCRV urges voters to report all incidents to them. Many voters also complained names of candidates were not made available in the polling precincts.

DXMS observes many cases of disenfranchised voters because their names are not found in the list of voters as well as incidents of harassments, voters being prevented from casting their votes, and distribution of campaign leaflets outside the polling precincts.

In Tenorio Elementary School, Datu Odin Sinsuat, a voter who refused to be identified called up DXMS that there were armed men poking guns (“nananutok ng baril”) on voters.

According to the DXMS Monitoring Center, as of 8:45 a.m. in Marawi City, election paraphernalia were still not distributed because of the refusal of some candidates.

PPCRV Chair Fr. David Procalla also dispatched a team to the COMELEC office in Shariff Kabunsuan but could not enter the area. Fr. Procalla brought the matter to the COMELEC Commissioner who assured him that they have given instructions to the COMELEC regional supervisor and that they are taking charge of the matter.

Ballot boxes containing election paraphernalia intended for Barira town were still not transported due to supporters of one candidate cordoning the COMELEC-Shariff Kabunsuan office in Cotabato City to block the release of the boxes.

COMELEC-ARMM Regional Director Atty. Rey Sumalipao said that they are tapping the assistance of the PNP and AFP to facilitate the immediate release of the paraphernalia.

Atty. Sumalipao also announced that the acting election officer in Barira town is Flor Munoz as ordered by COMELEC Commissioner Rene Sarmiento. The Shariff Kabunsuan election supervisor is Atty. Lintang Bidol who is also the Maguindanao election supervisor sitting in concurrent capacity.

He also assured PPCRV Chair Fr. Procalla that he will call up the Provincial Election Supervisor to allow the PPCRV team to enter the COMELEC office.

PPCRV also brought to Atty. Sumalipao's attention the matter of teachers being appointed as BEI members in Barira being opposed by one camp demanding their replacement by teachers who are not from Barira town.

Goltiao said that the "situation in ARMM is very volatile ." In Kapatagan, Lanao del Sur, similar to Barira, sympathizers of one candidate blocked transport of ballot boxes. There are also no BEI members.

In Pagalungan, Maguindanao, one person was wounded when two grenades were thrown in front of Brgy. Galakit Elementary School by an unidentified man on board a motorcycle.

Fr. Procalla is reminding all PPCRV volunteers to be vigilant in looking into irregularities inside polling precincts. In the event of irregularities, they should report and bring these to the attention of the BEI. He also reminded volunteers that complaints should be acted by the BEI and not by them.

In Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat, sketchy reports say thousands of voters failed to see their names in the Certified List of Voters.

PPCRV reports that the conduct of election in Barangay Sarmiento, Parang, Shariff Kabunsuan is relatively peaceful but many voters were not able to vote because their names are not on the voters list. Also only about 122 precincts compared to 129 precincts during the previous elections.

Many voters came to the PPCRV Voting Assistance Center for help whose names are on the master list of voters but not on the list in the polling precincts. "Marami pumupunta dito relating to problems in technicalities. . .di nila alam saan ang mga COMELEC officials." (Many come to us for help. . . and where do not know where the COMELEC officials are.)

COMELEC-ARMM Regional Director Rey Sumalipao reported that the situation in Barira, Shariff Kabunsuan as to the transport of election paraphernalia has not yet been resolved. "There were many people, mostly women, who had sat on the ballot boxes preventing its distribution," he said. "It is likely that there will be failure of election."

Sumalipao also said that in Lanao del Sur, seven municipalities failed to function because of disturbances.

This was confirmed by PNP-ARMM Chief Superintendent Gen. Joel Goltiao over DXMS that there are in fact nine towns in Lanao del Sur which failed to conduct elections, namely: Masiu, Lumba Bayabao, Bayang, Bilidayan; Kapatagan; Capay; Butig, Tubaran, Lumbatan, and Sultan Dumalandong.

Goltiao also said that failure of elections are also due to the failure of many BEI members to report; candidates could not agree the composition of the BEIs; and clustering of voting centers, among others.

Field reports also indicate that in Kapatagan, Lanao del Sur, there was no election because there were many people who showed up hurling stones wrapped in plastic as ballot boxes were being brought out from the COMELEC office.

PPCRV Chair in Shariff Kabunsuan, Fr. Loreto Saloy, reported that in Matanaog, Shariff Kabunsuan, election turnout is relatively good. Sketchy reports indicate a shooting incident in Barangay Bugasan Sur, Matanog where one person was wounded.

PNP-ARMM Chief Superintendent Gen. Joel Goltiao reported that there is a ballot snatching that occurred in Barangay Gambar, So. Kabuntalan town, at about 11 a.m. A group of armed group led by a certain Teng Ormena and five others forcibly took two ballot boxes and threw them into a river. The ballot boxes are believed to contain votes casted. Goltia said that ballot snatching is usually resorted by candidates who feel that they are losing, so the votes cast inside the ballot will not be included in the counting.

In Buliok, Parang, Shariff Kabunsuan, a bomb contained inside a can exploded, hitting a bystander identified as Odin Abdun who was hit by a stray stone due to the explosion.

In Brgys. Imam and Macapegas also in Matanog, supporters of rival mayoralty candidates fired shots but no one was hit, more like an "acoustic shooting", according to Goltiao.

## APPENDIX IV

### LIST OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND SOME DETAILS

COMELEC website [www.COMELEC.gov.ph](http://www.COMELEC.gov.ph)

#### Major political parties

Party name	Acronym	Founding year	Chairperson
<b>Together Everyone Achieves More Unity (TEAM Unity)</b>			
Coalition of Administrative Political Party	CAPP	2007	Federico Sandoval III {presending officer}
Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino	KAMPI	1996	Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (Chairman)
Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino	LDP	1985	Edgardo Angara (President)
Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats	Lakas-CMD	1991	Jose De Venecia (President)
Nationalist People's Coalition	NPC	1991	Eduardo Cojuangco, Jr. (Chairman)
Philippine Democratic Socialist Party	PDSP	1973	Norberto Gonzalez (Chairman)
<b>Genuine Opposition (GO)</b>			
Aksyon Demokratiko	AD	1997	Sonia Roco (Chairperson)
Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (Marcos Wing)	KBL	1978/2007	Ferdinand Marcos Jr (President)
Liberal Party	LP	1946	Franklin Drilon (President)
Nacionalista Party	NP	1907/2004	Manuel Villar (President)
Nationalist People's Coalition	NPC	1991	Eduardo Cojuangco, Jr. (Chairman)
Partido ng Demokratikong Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan	PDP-LABAN	1984	Aquilino Pimentel, Jr. (Chairman)
Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino	PMP	1987	Joseph Estrada (Chairman)
United Opposition	UNO	2005	Jejomar Binay {President}
<b>Unaffiliated parties</b>			
Ang Kapatiran	AKP	2004	Nandy Pacheco (Chairman)
Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (Lozano Wing)	KBL	1978/2007	Oliver Lozano
People's Reform Party	PRP	1991	Miriam Defensor-Santiago (Head)

## Minor political parties and party-list groups

Next to the main **political parties in the Philippines** there are other parties represented in the House of Representatives of the Philippines. Most of these parties are elected through the party list system.

Party name	Acronym	Founding year	Chairperson
<b>Parties elected through the constituency system</b>			
Akbayan Citizens' Action Party	Akbayan	1998	Ronaldo Llamas
Buhay Hayaan Yumabong	Buhay	N/A	Mike Velarde (founder)
Partido Magdalo	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sarangani Reconciliation and Reformation Organization	SARRO	N/A	Priscilla Chiongbian
<b>Party-list organizations</b>			
Alagad	N/A	N/A	N/A
Alang sa Kalambu-an ug Kalinaw	Alayon	N/A	John Henry Osmeña
Alliance of Volunteer Educators	AVE	N/A	N/A
Anak Mindanao	AMIN	N/A	N/A
Anakpawis	AP	N/A	Crispin Beltran
Ang Laban ng Indiginong Filipino	ALIF	N/A	Acmad Tomawis
An Waray	N/A	2001	Florencio "Bem" Noel
Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives	APEC	N/A	N/A
Bayan Muna	N/A	1999	Satur Ocampo
Citizen's Battle Against Corruption	Cibac	2001	Emmanuel Joel Villanueva
Cooperative NATCCO Network Party	Coop NATCCO	1998	Cresente Paez
Gabriela Women's Party	GABRIELA	N/A	Liza Maza
Luzon Farmers Party	Butil	N/A	N/A
Partido ng Manggagawa	PM	N/A	Renato Magtubo
Sandigan ng Lakas at Demokrasya ng Sambayanan <sup>[1]</sup>	SANLAKAS	N/A	N/A
Veterans Freedom Party	VFP	N/A	N/A

## Other parties

Party name	Acronym	Founding year	Chairperson
Ang Ladlad	N/A	2003	Danton Remoto
Bangon Pilipinas Movement	BPM	2004	Eddie Villanueva
Green Party of the Philippines	GP	1990s	Felizardo Colambo
Partido Isang Bansa Isang Diwa	PIBID	2004	Eddie Gil
Philippine Green Republic Party	PGRP	N/A	Felix Cantal
Progressive Party (Defunct)	PP	1957	Raul Manglapus

## Former major coalitions

- Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan (K-4, Coalition of Truth and Experience for Tomorrow), the main administration coalition in the 2004 national elections
- Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (Coalition of United Filipinos), the opposition coalition in the 2004 national elections
- Laban ng Makabayang Masang Pilipino (LAMMP, Struggle of Patriotic Filipino Masses), the opposition coalition for the 1998 national elections
- People Power Coalition (PPC), the administration coalition for the 2001 midterm legislative elections
- Puwersa ng Masa (PnM, Force of the Masses), the opposition coalition for the 2001 midterm legislative elections
- Lakas-Laban Coalition, the administration coalition for the 1995 midterm legislative elections
- Grand Alliance for Democracy {GAD}, the opposition coalition for the 1987 midterm legislative elections
- Lakas ng Bayan (LABAN), the opposition coalition for the 1986 snap presidential election

## APPENDIX V

<b>Election calendar</b>	
<b>DATE / PERIOD</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>
Jan. 14 to June 13	● Election period.
Jan. 15 to Feb 12	● Filing of certificates of candidacy for senator filling of manifestations of intent to participate in the party-list election.
Jan. 15 to March 29	● Filing of candidacies for local positions, including seats in the House of Representatives.
Feb.13	● Posting of the certified list of voters.
Feb.13 to May 12	● Campaign period for aspiring senators and party - list groups.
March 30	● Deadline for submission of names of party-list nominees.
March 30 to April 14	● Inspection, verification and sealing of precinct book of voters.
March 30 to May 12	● Campaign period for aspiring members of the House of Representatives and for those seeking provincial, city and municipal posts.
April 14 (host country time to May 14 (Philippine time)	● Casting of votes for local absentee voters.
April 28 to April 30	● Casting of votes for local absentee voters.
May 14 ( 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. )	● Casting of voters.
May 15 to June 13	● Filing of sworn statements of election contributions and expenditures.

*From Philippine Daily Inquirer..January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007*

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## APPENDIX VI

### Schedule for Seminar and Observation Mission

Time/Date	Activities	Person in charge
5 May	All observers arrive Southern Philippines Register	TAF-Manila all STOs must send their accreditation form/photos to COMELEC within 1st April 2007
6 May	Seminar on Muslim and Democracy in Asia	TAF-Mindanao
7-8	Briefing and receiving Accreditation Cards	Mindanao Local Partners ANFREL
9	Deployment	Local Partner
10-13	Observe party campaign and interviews local stakeholders	Local coordinators, interpreters and drivers
14 May	Election Day	Local coordinators, interpreters and drivers
15 May	Counting STOs return from districts	Local, ANFREL, TAF
16 May	De-Briefing and Issue statement	All STOs/ANFREL
17 May	Departure to Manila and STO countries	TAF –PH

### Briefing Schedule for ANFREL OBSERVERS 5th and 7th May 2007 Garden Orchid Hotel, Zamboanga City

Time	Topics	Speakers ( <i>Status</i> )
	<b>FIRST DAY (May 5, 2007 Saturday)</b>	
08.30	General Overview - Introduction	TAF – Steven Rood
8:40	Structure of Government	
8:50	Levels of Elections – including 2004 elections	
9:00	Political background: candidates and parties competing, major political players and alliances, influence of family in politics	
9:45	Coffee Break	
10:00	Continue political background and persistence of traditional feudal governance, role of religion in ARMM, experience of previous elections	Edward Lim
10:45	Questions and discussion	
11:00	Security and conflicts, political/clan violence vs. secessionist movements	Prof. Alber Hussin
11:45	The situation of women in Mindanao	Atty. Laisa Alamia (Bangsamoro Lawyers Network)
12:15	Lunch	
1:45	Legal Framework for elections (Constitution, relevant election laws and regulations)	Election lawyer (Atty. Rogelio Benjamin)

2:30	Structure and Role of COMELEC/DepEd in election administration	Atty. Rogelio Benjamin
2:50	Background on local partners, including PPCRV	PPCRV and partners
3:50	Coffee break	
4:10	Deployment Process and Financial Clarification	ANFREL and Natalia Warat
4:55	Wrap up and closing	
5:30	End of the Day	

	<b>SECOND DAY (May 7 Monday morning)</b>	
8:30	Pre-Election Observation and reporting	Tim Meisburger on International Observation Manual
9:20	Polling and counting process & Check list	
10:10	Reporting on election day	PPCRV, Tim, ANFREL
10:25	Coffee Break	
10:45	Security Protocols	Plenary
11:15	Code of Conduct	Tim/ ANFREL
11:45	Wrap up and close	

## APPENDIX VII

### List of International Observers and Deployment

No	Name	Gender	Country	Organization	Province of Deployment
1.	Mr. Lukman B. Tadjo	Male	Indonesia	People's Voter Education Network (JPPR)	Tawi Tawi
2.	Ms. Marini binti Muhammad Daud	Female	Indonesia	LKK NU/JPPR	Lanao Sur
3.	Mr. Ade Syukron Hanas	Male	Indonesia	ICCE UIN/JPPR	Basilan
4.	Mr. Muhammad Mabrur	Male	Indonesia	LAPAR/JPPR	Shariff Kabunsuan
5.	Ms. Wa Ode Asmawati	Female	Indonesia	MPM/JPPR	Maguindanao
6.	Mr. Imam Subkhan	Male	Indonesia	LABDA/JPPR	Sulu
7.	Mr. Hery Wibowo Trisaksono	Male	Indonesia	PERCIK/JPPR	Maguindanao
8.	Mr. Wandy Nicodemus Tuturoong	Male	Indonesia	Ex TAF staff and JPPR	Basilan
9.	Mrs. Maria Hana Natalia Warat	Female	Indonesia	The Asia Foundation	Shariff Kabunsuan
10.	Md. Zahurul Alam	Male	Bangladesh	Election Working Group (EWG)	Lanao Sur
11.	Mrs. Munira Khan	Female	Bangladesh	Fair Election Monitoring Alliance	Shariff Kabunsuan

				(FEMA)	
12.	Mrs. Rashida Banu Rashad	Female	Sri Lanka	People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL)	Maguindanao
13.	Mr. Mohamad Yunus bin Lebai Ali	Male	Malaysia	National Institute for Electoral Integrity (NIEI)	Shariff Kabunsuan
14.	Mr. Amin Shah Bin Iskandar	Male	Malaysia	National Institute for Electoral Integrity (NIEI)	Tawi Tawi
15.	Dr Suria Saniwa	Male	Thailand	YALA ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY	Basilan
16.	Ms. Nittaya Wangpaiboon	Female	Thailand	Working Group on Justice for Peace	Lanao Sur
17.	Ms. Somsri Hananuntasuk	Female	Thailand	Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL)	Shariff Kabunsuan
18.	Mrs. Mossarat Qadeem	Female	Pakistan	PAIMAN Alumni Trust	Lanao Sur
19.	Mr. Mukhtar Javed	Male	Pakistan	Sungi Development Foundation	Sulu
20.	Mr. Mukhtar Ahmad Ali	Male	Pakistan	Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives, Pakistan (CPDI-Pakistan)	Maguindanao
21.	Mr. Nasrullah	Male	Pakistan	Centre for Peace and Development, Balochistan	Tawi Tawi

### Provinces and Local Partners

Province	Tawi Tawi	Sulu	Basilan	Lanao Sur 2 teams	Shariff Kabunsuan 2 teams	Maguindanao 2 teams
<b>Local Partners In charge</b>	Electoral Reforms Advocates (ERA) <i>Babylyn Kano Omar</i>	Tulung Lupah Sug. Inc <i>Octavio A. Dinampo</i>	Concerned Alliance of Professionals and Students, Inc. (CAPS) <i>Harisul T. Samanul</i>	Maranao People Development Center, Inc. (MARADECA) <i>Salic Ibrahim Apipah</i>	Consortium of Bangsa-moro Civil Society (CBCS) <i>Sammy P. Maulana and Noraida</i>	United Youth for Peace and Development, Inc. (UNYPAD) <i>Samsodin C. Amella</i>

**APPENDIX VIII  
SAMPLE BALLOT**

**Prepared by:**

**Senators:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

**Party List:**

**Congressman/ Representative:**

**Governor:**

**Vice-Governor:**

**Provincial Board Members:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Mayor:**

**Vice-Mayor:**

**Councilors:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Sample Ballot by [eleksyon2007.inquirer.net](http://eleksyon2007.inquirer.net)

## NEWS

### **INSIDE PCIJBottom of Form** **Foreign observers disappointed with ARMM polls**

*Posted by: Glenys Banal on 16 May 2007 at 8:23 pm*

ASIAN foreign observers expressed deep regret over the failure of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to conduct peaceful, honest and orderly elections last May 14 in the six provinces of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Reporting its findings at a press conference today, the 21-member delegation of the international observer mission coordinated by the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) deployed in Muslim Mindanao said the ARMM polls had been marred by widespread violence, blatant vote-buying and election irregularities.

ANFREL said all the mission members from Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Thailand were witnesses to the “rampant disrespect of suffrage rights of the voters” in the region, pointing to several instances of cheating and unethical practices of candidates and election officers that, it said, were conducive environments for fraud.

The presence of the international election monitors, ANFREL noted, did not even deter vote buying, threats and intimidation of voters by the candidates’ supporters.

Amin Shah Bin Iskandar, coordinator of the National Institute for Electoral Integrity (NIEI) in Malaysia, said that some voters received P100 allegedly from Tawi-Tawi gubernatorial bet Hadji Sadikul Sahali. Aside from P100 cash, bribes, he said, came in various forms like free gasoline.

Iskandar also narrated his experience in a Tawi-Tawi precinct where he saw one poll watcher dictating the names of candidates to a voter who dutifully wrote them down on his ballot.

ANFREL delegates also observed how some members of the Board of Election Inspectors (BEI) were involved in irregularities as they did not follow the proper procedures in the distribution of ballots, and in the casting and canvassing of votes.

“During the canvassing of 195 precincts in a gymnasium, as the BEI chairman read the local candidate’s names on the ballots, the other two members were already tallying the results of the national elections (senatorial level),” narrated Steven Rood, country representative of The Asia Foundation, assigned to Sultan Kudarat.

“The tally sheets were spread on the floor and there can never be enough room to do the counting (of votes). But at least we saw three precincts doing it the right way.”

In Maguindanao, some BEI members were seen filling up the ballots for the voters and mass-thumb printing them.

Peace-keeping measures around the polling precincts in some major provinces of the ARMM proved ineffective, claimed Malaysian Mohamad Yunus Lebai Ali, NIEI director, deployed to the province of Shariff Kabungsuwan.

“(When) I was in Shariff Kabungsuwan, I encountered two armed groups in a heated situation and that made me feel physically unsafe (in the precincts). My colleague Somsri even experienced two bombings only a few meters away (from her)” said Ali, referring to

companion Somsri Hananuntasuk of Thailand, ANFREL director, who was also in Maguindanao last Monday.

Despite the low quality of elections in ARMM, ANFREL expressed hope of seeing significant reforms in the election process, and the legal and political environment to ensure free and fair elections in the future. Educating the electorate, it said, can destroy the clannish governments in ARMM and eradicate fraudulent practices.

Iskandar suggested that NGOs be involved to create programs that will inform the voting population of the basics of the electoral system. He added that if the trend of political dynasties in the Philippines is allowed to continue, “violence will reign in the region, massive fraud will remain to wallow, and politics will eventually lose its credibility.

“In the future, no one will believe the elections anymore,” the Malaysian delegate warned.

ANFREL explained that a review and a more careful study of the system can be used to magnify the ill trends of politics in Mindanao, especially those utilizing arms in order to intimidate the public. This, ANFREL said, must be stopped.

The group also said that the COMELEC must strictly enforce election laws and that it prioritize transparency to erase any influence on its operations. Secrecy must also be practiced to ensure a free and effective election, it added.

*Glenys Banal, a journalism student at the Kalayaan College, is currently doing her internship with the PCIJ.*



Title	Date	Paper	Source		
<b><i>Thais lead Philippine poll observer</i></b>	Not Specified	Bangkok Post	<a href="http://www.bangkokpost.com/breaking_news/breakingnews.php?id=118725">http://www.bangkokpost.com/breaking_news/breakingnews.php?id=118725</a>	<i>Anfrel's effort is financed by The Asia Foundation and the Canadian International Development Agency (Cida).</i>	CIDA
<b><i>Foreign observers to monitor ARMM polls</i></b>	May 3, 2007	Mindanao Times	<a href="http://www.mindanaotimes.com.ph/story.php?id=16423">http://www.mindanaotimes.com.ph/story.php?id=16423</a>	The forum, co-sponsored by the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy (PCID) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)... the press statement of The Asia Foundation said.	CIDA
<b>21 int'l election observers to monitor ARMM polls; Moro groups join PPCRV in</b>	May 3, 2007	Minda News	<a href="http://www.mindanews.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=2308&amp;Itemid=50">http://www.mindanews.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=2308&amp;Itemid=50</a>	<i>"The forum, co-sponsored by the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy, and the Canadian International Development Agency..."</i>	CIDA
<b><i>Int'l election observers, group discuss Islam, democracy in Mindanao</i></b>	May 8, 2007	Sun Star Zamboanga	<a href="http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/zam/2007/05/08/news/int.l.election.observers.groups.discuss.islam.democracy.in.mindanao.html">http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/zam/2007/05/08/news/int.l.election.observers.groups.discuss.islam.democracy.in.mindanao.html</a>	THE Asia Foundation hosted last Sunday a one-day conference... funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (Cida)...	CIDA
<b><i>Preparing for the Philippine Elections</i></b>	May 9, 2007	www.pr-inside.com	<a href="http://www.pr-inside.com/preparing-for-the-philippines-elections-r118431.htm">http://www.pr-inside.com/preparing-for-the-philippines-elections-r118431.htm</a>	<i>"The observer mission is being coordinated by ANFREL... with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency."</i>	CIDA
<b><i>Asian poll observers dispatched to ARMM</i></b>	May 14, 2007	Inside PCIJ	<a href="http://www.pcij.org/blog/?p=1679">http://www.pcij.org/blog/?p=1679</a>	Accredited by the Commission on Elections (Comelec), the team of 21 international election observers from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia is part of the election observation mission coordinated by the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL),	ANFREL

<i>Asian foreign observers to issue statement May 15</i>	May 14, 2007	Sun Star Zamboanga	<a href="http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/zam/2007/05/14/news/asian.foreign.observers.to.issue.statement.may.15.html">http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/zam/2007/05/14/news/asian.foreign.observers.to.issue.statement.may.15.html</a>	Anfrel's effort is being conducted with support from The Asia Foundation and the Canadian International Development Agency (Cida).	CIDA
<i>Foreign observers: Senate election by region, pass law on political dynasties</i>	May 15, 2007	MindaNews	<a href="http://www.mindanews.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=2413&amp;">http://www.mindanews.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=2413&amp;</a>	...the Asian Network for Free Elections (Anfrel) which deployed 21 observers from six Asian countries with significant Muslim population – Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Thailand..	ANFREL
<i>Foreign observers propose poll reforms</i>	May 16, 2007	Sun Star Network Online	<a href="http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/net/2007/05/16/foreign.observers.propose.poll.reforms.html">http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/net/2007/05/16/foreign.observers.propose.poll.reforms.html</a>	The Asia Network for Free Elections (Anfrel) that fielded observers...	ANFREL
<i>Blatant vote buying, manipulation in ARMM</i>	May 16, 2007	Newsbreak Online	<a href="http://www.pubtrust.org/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=3409&amp;Itemid=88889004">http://www.pubtrust.org/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=3409&amp;Itemid=88889004</a>	The observers were among the 21 members of Anfrel accredited... sponsored by the Asia Foundation and the Canadian International Development Agency.	CIDA
<i>Int'l observers witness vote-buying in ARMM</i>	May 16, 2007	GMA News TV	<a href="http://www.gmanews.tv/story/42732/Newsbreak-Intl-observers-witness-vote-buying-in-ARMM">http://www.gmanews.tv/story/42732/Newsbreak-Intl-observers-witness-vote-buying-in-ARMM</a>	"They were sponsored by The Asia Foundation and the Canadian International Development Agency.."	CIDA
<i>Foreign observers dissatisfied with ARMM polls</i>	May 16, 2007	Inside PCIJ	<a href="http://www.pcij.org/blog/?p=1706#more-1706">http://www.pcij.org/blog/?p=1706#more-1706</a>	The 21-member delegation of the international observer mission coordinated by the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) deployed in Muslim Mindanao said the ARMM polls had been marred by widespread violence, blatant vote-buying and election irregularities.	ANFREL
<i>(UPDATE) Foreign observers visit Namfrel</i>	May 16, 2007	Inquirer.net	<a href="http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/nation/view_article.php?article_id=66285">http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/nation/view_article.php?article_id=66285</a>	The foreign observers, from the Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand, Bangladesh, and Malaysia chapters of the Asian Network for Free Elections (Anfrel), arrived in the country May 5 and observed elections in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.	ANFREL

<i>Foreign observers in Philippines: Battle-scarred, different missions</i>	May 17, 2007	Davao Today	<a href="http://davaotoday.com/news/2007/05/17/foreign-observers-in-philippines-elections-battle-scarred-different-missions/">http://davaotoday.com/news/2007/05/17/foreign-observers-in-philippines-elections-battle-scarred-different-missions/</a>	"IFES has bilateral and multilateral funders that include...AusAID, CIDA (Canada), DFID..."	CIDA
<i>In the Philippines: Elections in Mindanao</i>	May 18, 2007	Davao Today	<a href="http://davaotoday.com/news/2007/05/18/in-the-philippines-elections-in-mindanao/">http://davaotoday.com/news/2007/05/18/in-the-philippines-elections-in-mindanao/</a>	The Asia Foundation with funding support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) partnered with the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) to bring 21 Asian election observers from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia to the ARMM.	ANFREL / CIDA



**The battle for credibility of the Philippine electoral system is not yet won, but it isn't lost. And, as long as the battle is not yet over, one should not lost hope; we should instead work towards winning the battle.**

*(Stated by Ambassador Henrietta de Villa, National Chairperson, PPCRV.)*