



## **NATIONAL CITIZENS' MOVEMENT FOR FREE ELECTIONS (NAMFREL)**

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Press Release

### **NAMFREL lays out activities in connection with the 2022 National and Local Elections**

MANDALUYONG CITY (Sept. 28, 2021) — The National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) today, in a press briefing, laid out their planned activities for the 2022 National and Local Elections. NAMFREL said it aims to file this week with the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) its Petition for Accreditation as COMELEC Citizens' Arm for the coming polls.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, NAMFREL said that it will be very challenging for the COMELEC to conduct the coming elections, and for NAMFREL to monitor the different activities, as they would need to ensure that the processes would not only be accurate and transparent, but also safe for all concerned.

NAMFREL's activities for the 2022 elections are as follows:

#### **1. Automated Elections System (AES) Monitoring**

NAMFREL will monitor the conduct of different activities of the 2022 elections, with focus on the automated elections system. According to NAMFREL, whose members include IT experts and observers trained specifically to monitor the automated elections, the AES requires different and highly specialized methods of observation, but the goal remains to help ensure that the count is accurate and that no fraud is involved.

The group said that at present, it is already involved in third party oversight of the AES by observing the COMELEC's procurement of AES goods and services, by participating as member of the COMELEC Advisory Council (CAC), and attending meetings of the COMELEC AES Steering Committee. In the coming months, NAMFREL aims to observe the local source code review, ballot printing, mock elections, delivery of election materials, and other processes related to AES.

On election day, NAMFREL Bantay ng Bayan observers will monitor the conduct of the elections in different voting centers around the country, focusing on the performance of the vote counting machines, transmission of election results, and other election day activities inside and around the voting centers, among others.

#### **2. Open Election Data (OED)**

NAMFREL said it will make available to the public an Open Election Data website that will contain election-related information, many of which will be AES-related. NAMFREL said it will seek a partnership from the COMELEC, offering to the COMELEC a secure, publicly accessible website -- an additional platform -- for election-related data.

Through the information coming from the COMELEC and other government institutions contained in said website, NAMFREL sees the following as benefits of this OED platform:

1. General information for voters and other election stakeholders;
2. Voter assistance;
3. Precinct-level results validation;
4. AES performance analysis;
5. Data research;
6. Coordination between the public and other election stakeholders;

## 7. Others

NAMFREL said that for the public --and not just NAMFREL observers -- to be able to follow and monitor the elections, they need to have enough and correct information about the automated election process. The OED platform is in line with NAMFREL's belief that "each voter is a potential observer," and the platform will provide not only a way to gain information, but also to follow the process.

### 3. Random Manual Audit (RMA)

NAMFREL will again monitor the Random Manual Audit, or the manual comparison of votes from the machines and those manually counted inside the polling places included in the audit. At present, NAMFREL said it already participates in the regular meetings of the COMELEC Random Manual Audit Committee (RMAC). According to NAMFREL, current discussions revolve around ensuring that the process will be safe without sacrificing accuracy and transparency.

NAMFREL said that the RMAC is also discussing some possible improvements to the audit process. In August this year, NAMFREL said that it has proposed to the COMELEC putting QR codes not only on the machine-generated elections returns (ER) but also on the voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT), or the paper receipt that comes out of the vote counting machine when voters cast their votes. NAMFREL said having QR codes on the VVPAT could make the RMA more efficient.

### 4. Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT)

NAMFREL said it will conduct a parallel vote tabulation (PVT) for the coming elections, but this will depend on whether the COMELEC adopts its proposal to put QR codes on election returns.

NAMFREL used to be synonymous with its Operation Quick Count or OQC, a process it pioneered, and conducted from 1984 until 2007. The PVT, as it is now known, has been adopted by election monitoring organizations in many countries around the world as a way to help ensure transparency in the count and detect possible fraud in the consolidation of results.

According to NAMFREL, the PVT not only adds another layer of security to elections, but also provides an opportunity for the public to participate in safeguarding the process.

NAMFREL said that for 2022, it envisions a parallel vote count in which other election stakeholders and the general public -- and not just NAMFREL observers -- can participate in the count by allowing them to use a smartphone app to be created by NAMFREL to scan the QR codes on the ERs, which will then go to NAMFREL servers for consolidation. NAMFREL assures that it will have a system in place to ensure that crowdsourced information are verified before they are included in the partial unofficial count. NAMFREL also said that it is willing to assist any other organization who would like to conduct their own count using NAMFREL's app.

NAMFREL said it will start accepting volunteers soon, as it aims to deploy observers throughout the country to monitor the conduct of the 2022 polls. It recently launched a website, Vote For Us ([www.VoteForUs.org.ph](http://www.VoteForUs.org.ph)), to encourage and assist Filipinos to register for the elections and to participate in the entire electoral process.

With the start of the filing of certificates of candidacy happening on October 1, NAMFREL also said it would like to encourage people who have good knowledge of the responsibilities of the position, the ability to lead, genuine love for country, and other qualities specified in the Philippine Constitution, to consider participating in the elections by running as candidates. ###