



NATIONAL CITIZENS' MOVEMENT FOR FREE ELECTIONS (NAMFREL)

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MEDIA RELEASE

NAMFREL Bantay ng Bayan UPDATE #2

October 30, 2023, 7pm

NAMFREL releases update on its observations on the conduct of the 2023 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections (BSKE)

The National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) released a second update on its observations on the conduct of the October 30, 2023 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections (BSKE). NAMFREL has been accredited by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) as citizens' arm for the 2023 BSKE, and for these electoral exercises, NAMFREL chapters have deployed teams of volunteers to observe the election day procedures in the voting centers.

The second update covers the last few hours of voting as well as the closing and counting processes observed in the polling places. Observations are sent by observers through NAMFREL observation forms, as well as through phone calls.

In a voting center in Datu Abdullah Sangki, Maguindanao del Sur, a NAMFREL observer reported that one camp together with members of the police and CAFGU controlled the voting there by preventing entry to voters supporting the opposing camp. The observer was also not allowed to enter the voting center. He was able to interview some voters, and one voter admitted to having voted eight times using other voters' names. Another voter interviewed said that she was able to enter and vote, but when watchers from the controlling camp saw that she voted for the opposing camp, they tore her ballot. The observer also reported that some bystanders outside the voting center were armed with metal pipes.

In Barangay Sangkahan in Al-Barka, Basilan, the wife of the incumbent barangay chair came to the municipal police station at around 4:30pm with about 50 followers in tow, demanding that the COMELEC municipal election officer declare a failure of election and to set a date for a special election. The COMELEC EO said he will not grant the request because there are no grounds to declare a failure of election.

In Macabalan Elementary School in Macabalan, Misamis Oriental, a NAMFREL observer was prevented from observing a polling place due to the EB's requirement for a notarized appointment letter.

In Zamboanga City, observers reported that in some voting centers, the ones assisting voters were mostly candidate watchers, while in others, majority of the voters were watchers or supporters of a certain camp. In another voting center, there were EBs that were not validating the identity of voters entering the polling places.

With regard the counting process, NAMFREL observers reported that in general, counting in the polling places observed have been orderly and without incident, with the

EBs knowledgeable of the process. The observers also reported that watchers and the public had an unimpeded view of the votes while they were being read and tallied.

In Graciano Lopez Jaena Elementary School in Bacolod City, the counting process was interrupted when the EB encountered a ballot where the voter wrote their choice for barangay captain in the section for barangay councilors. The matter was resolved when the COMELEC decided to count the vote as valid since there are no similar names from among the candidates for councilor.

In a voting center in Zamboanga City, some voters (presumably SK voters) wrote the names of their chosen candidates on the wrong ballot, which led to some votes being voided. Some voters also wrote the same names on their ballots multiple times as if they were separate candidates.

With regard voter turnout, NAMFREL observers reported that there were more voters who voted in the morning compared to the ones who turned out in the last few hours of voting.

As of 7pm, some NAMFREL volunteers have reported the completion of the counting process and proclamation of candidates, such as in Dasmariñas, Cavite and Bontoc, Mountain Province.

The canvassing of votes will be held after the counting process. NAMFREL will follow the canvassing process, and will be submitting a final report to the COMELEC on the findings of the observation, identifying areas that could be further strengthened, and recommending measures to help ensure the conduct of safer and more efficient electoral exercises. ###