



ខុមហ្វ្រែល COMFREL

គណៈកម្មាធិការដើម្បីការបោះឆ្នោតដោយសេរី និងយុត្តិធម៌លើកម្ពុជា (គ.ប.ស.យ)

COMMITTEE FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IN CAMBODIA (COMFREL)

ទីស្នាក់ការកណ្តាល ផ្ទះលេខ ១៣៨ ផ្លូវ ១២២ សង្កាត់ទឹកល្អក់ ១ ខ័ណ្ឌទួលគោក រាជធានីភ្នំពេញ ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា

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Press Statement

On

The Atmosphere of the First Week of the Election Campaign Period

Phnom Penh, July 02, 2008

COMFREL has observed that, in general, the **security atmosphere** of the first week of the election campaign period for the 4th National Assembly elections **is better than that of the 2003 elections**. Nevertheless, cases of disturbance, intimidation and threats against political parties continue to take place, and comprise at least **16** cases. COMFREL condemns the violent reaction of a military official and the attempted violence of a member of the local authorities against female candidate Mu Sochua. COMFREL appeals to the supporters of each political party and the authorities (including armed forces) not to use violence to solve problems but to strive for mutual understanding, as people have to live in the same community even if they have different opinions and political affiliations.

“During this election campaign period, civil servants, authorities and armed forces have not only taken part in supporting the ruling party but have also conducted activities against other political parties. These cases have increased compared with the previous elections” said Mr. THUN Saray, President of COMFREL’s Board of Directors.

Broadcast media that are affiliated with the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP), which includes at least 30 TV and radio stations, continue to violate the principle of equality and equity as enshrined in the NEC’s Procedures, Regulations and Guidelines, when it comes to making political programs and renting airtime to other political parties.

COMFREL regrets the fact that some voters will lose their right to vote and that some other voters might believe erroneously that their right to vote has been lost. The main reasons for this are politically discriminatory actions by village and commune authorities in the cleaning up of voter lists and in the distribution of voter information notices.

COMFREL is deeply concerned about the lack of procedural transparency and legitimacy and about the report concerning the consolidation of election results. This is because the National Election Committee’s (NEC) procedure, which requires the Provincial Election Commission (PEC) to consolidate election results based on the results report of the Commune Election Commission (CEC), is contrary to the Law on the Election of Members of the National Assembly. The latter stipulates that the PEC shall consolidate election results based on the reports of polling and counting stations. Mr. KOUL Panha underlines his concerns regarding the loss of the right to vote, obstacles to voters and illegitimacy of election result consolidation, and fears that these may affect procedure and may cause election result conflicts in the constituencies.

COMFREL will train and deploy around 10,000 election observers to monitor irregularities. With one observer per polling area, more than 10,000 polling stations can be

monitored. The observers will help voters outside the polling stations until 11.00 am. After this time, they will observe the proceedings inside the polling station as well as the ballot counting. In 1,319 randomly selected polling and counting stations, some of COMFREL's observers will gather information and send reports on election results and any serious cases of irregularity to COMFREL's head office quickly after the ballot counting process. During the campaign period, COMFREL has been deploying 210 observers.

Mr. THUN Saray and Mr. SOK Sam Oeun, Vice-President of COMFREL's Board of Directors, together would like to remind election stakeholders (media, political parties, authorities, etc.) to respect and abide by the electoral law, regulations, procedures and guidelines in order to prevent conflict and to ensure that the election campaign, the voting and the ballot counting process are transparent, free and fair. Politicians should avoid using insulting words during the election campaign which may lead to result in violence among political party activists and supporters.

For more information, please contact:

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*COMFREL's mission is to help to create an informed and favorable democratic climate (1) **for free and fair elections** through lobbying and advocacy to establish a permanent and suitable legal framework; education to inform citizens of their rights; and monitoring activities that both discourage irregularities and provide comprehensive data to enable an objective, non-partisan assessment to be made of the election process, and (2) **for the general public to fully understand democratic processes not just before elections but after and between them.** It arranges, towards this end, educational sessions and public forums to encourage citizens to participate in politics and decision making. It encourages constructive advocacy and lobbying for electoral reforms that increase the accountability of elected officials. Finally, by providing comprehensive observation and monitoring it enables objective, non-partisan assessments to be made on the progress of commitment made in political platforms and on the performance of elected officials.*