



## NATIONAL ELECTION WATCH (NEW)

A Coalition of Civic and Non-Governmental Organizations  
8 Sawi Drive, Off King Harman Road, Freetown.  
+232-76-737-231

[nationalelectionwatchsl@gmail.com](mailto:nationalelectionwatchsl@gmail.com)  
[www.nationalelectionwatchsl.org](http://www.nationalelectionwatchsl.org)

### ***Freetown, 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2019: Constituency 040 Parliamentary Bye-Election Ends Peacefully, But NEW Calls for More Strict Enforcement of Security Regulations***

National Election Watch (NEW) applauds the peaceful conduct of the parliamentary Bye-Election in Constituency 040 in Falaba District held on Saturday 14 September 2019 by the National Electoral Commission (NEC). Though the election ended peacefully, NEW observed a few challenges in the enforcement of order and compliance with vehicle movement and crowd control by security personnel assigned to polling centres. The vacancy in Constituency 040 occurred following the judgement of the High Court of Sierra Leone delivered on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019, on the petition filed against the substantive winner of the 2018 parliamentary election, which was declared null and void.

NEW deployed stationed observers in all the 27 Polling Centres in Constituency 040, 3 roving supervisors to support the stationed observers and to respond promptly to incidences. Additionally, NEW deployed an oversight support team comprising members of the Strategic Management Committee (SMC) and secretariat staff. NEW observed the entire process, including opening, polling, closing and counting, tallying, and the announcement of results, which was done in Kabala Community Centre on Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

#### **Observations**

##### **NEW observed that;**

- Polling stations were opened on time across the Constituency.
- NEC polling staff was mainly youths with gender considerations.
- NEC provided Tactile ballots for blind voters.
- Political Party agents were present in all the polling stations.
- Security personnel were deployed and visible in all the Polling Centres.
- Other observers were the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), Office of National Security, United States Embassy, European Union, DFID and the media.
- Voter turn-out was satisfactory (55.9%) with high turnout of women voters.
- A man was caught in possession of pepper spray/liquid and a dagger very close to Polling Centre No. 05032 in Ganya. He was arrested by the police and taken to Falaba for further investigations.
- The security personnel assigned to Polling Centre No. 05032 in Ganya Court Barray, failed to disperse the crowds within the polling precinct during counting.
- A Toyota FJ Cruiser vehicle whose number plates were completely covered and carrying a group of young people was plying Constituency 040 throughout polling day. The vehicle had Sierra Leone People's Party cap on its dashboard with the letters "SLPP" clearly written on it.

#### **Concerns**

NEW is concerned that despite the heavy presence of security personnel and several security checkpoints a vehicle with covered number plates was seen plying within the Constituency with young people onboard.

#### **Recommendations**

NEW Recommends that;

***Banker: Sierra Leone Commercial Bank (SLBC)***

- The Sierra Leone Police and other security agencies to be resolute in enforcing elections laws, policies and regulations without fear or favor within the ambit of the law.
- Elections related offences should be speedily investigated and charged to court.
- The man that was apprehended with alleged offensive weapons in his possession be speedily tried and the outcome should be published.

*National Election Watch (NEW) is a coalition of local and international organizations in Sierra Leone with a common objective of supporting free, fair and peaceful elections. NEW will continue to observe all elections and will report its findings accordingly.*

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**Contacts: Marcella Samba-Sesay +23276984590, James Lahai +23276962233, Sallieu Kamara +23276613324**