



NATIONAL CITIZENS' MOVEMENT FOR FREE ELECTIONS (NAMFREL)

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STATEMENT

With the transmission of Election Returns (ERs) at COMELEC's Transparency Server being stalled at 76.3273% as of 5:41 PM on May 17, Friday or five days after the May 13 voting, a lot of apprehension is going around over COMELEC's plan on how it will account for the remaining 23.6727% missing ERs. This has not been made easier by the proclamation of the 9 leading senatorial candidates based on "untenable figures" - the proclamation was made on the basis of 117 out of 304 expected Certificates of Canvass (COCs).

The COCs are the summary of the total Election Returns of a province or of a chartered city, which form the official and legal basis for the proclamation of winning candidates. Right now, the low turnout of the COCs being served to the National Board of Canvassers is due to the incomplete or unaccounted ERs. NAMFREL explained in an earlier press release that the probable causes of unavailable ERs are PCOS malfunction, corrupted CF cards, transmission failure due to defective or absence of modem, and weak or absent signal, among other causes.

The question begging to be answered is, what is the plan of the COMELEC to account to the public the remaining 18,504 ERs, estimated to contain at least 8.5 Million votes?

COMELEC is enjoined to share with the public the status of these ERs: Were the CF cards brought to the Municipal Board of Canvassers? Were the ballots counted manually at the precinct and an ER prepared? Were the ballots counted manually at the Municipal Board of Canvassers and an ER prepared? Were there manual counts at the Municipal Canvassing or Provincial Canvassing sites?

In another light, NAMFREL's Systems Group is wondering how come there were still transmission of ERs coming in 4 days after the close of polls? From where are these ER figures being sent, when PCOS machines are supposed to have been sealed by this time? The problem of low signals may be discounted since the telecom companies have stated that signals were available in all the sites. If and when the transmission to the transparency server resumes, from where are these ERs being sent? Are the contingency plans for this event (if any) being followed?

The lowest percentage of ERs transmitted to the COMELEC by regions is ARMM at 34.9% of 3,124 ERs; next is Region IX transmitting 62.2% of 2,968 ERs; following closely is the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) which transmitted 62.31% of 1,828 ERs.

The issue appears to be the call for transparency in explaining where the votes of the 8.5 million voters are, if they will find their way to the National Board of Canvassers. Call to mind that the Philippines has always adhered to the principles of free and fair elections.

All things remaining unexplained, there are still two remaining safeguards at the backend of the automated election system that will not only crosscheck the numbers yielded by the PCOS machines but will also, if done right, fill the gap left by the 23.67% unaccounted Election Returns: firstly the result of the parallel manual count (assuming this has clear methodology, that the unit of the count are the precinct ERs, and the figures can be disaggregated by region, by province, by municipality and by precinct), and secondly the results of the post - count Random Manual Audit in 234 randomly selected precincts in as many congressional districts. The **Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV)** is authorized to conduct the parallel manual count from the 3rd copy of the ER (and cascading other copies of other documents) as one of the four COMELEC's citizens' arm. The Random Manual Audit Committee chaired by the PPCRV Chairperson is responsible for summarizing and analyzing the results of the Random Manual Audit. The public waits.