



राष्ट्रिय निर्वाचन पर्यवेक्षण समिति (नियोक)

National Election Observation Committee (NEOC)

National Secretariat

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Constituent Assembly Election-2008

NEOC OBSERVATION TODAY

14 March 2008

NEOC and Human Rights Home jointly organized a meeting on 14 March 2008 on **Human Rights Defenders Safety and Security during the Monitoring of Constituency Assembly Election.**

Dr. Gopal Krishna Siwakoti, Secretary General of NEOC introduced National Election Observation Committee (NEOC) and explained its history in Nepal's elections. He stated, NEOC, NEMA, GEOC and DEAN have a close coordination for successful monitoring of the CA election. There is a need for a common ground, develop common code of conduct to illustrate that every observer has the common mission. He added that each observer would be trained and they would perform the best while they are in the field. He further linked that safety and security is a major challenge ahead. Therefore, there is a need for developing strategies for minimizing the risk that the observers face.

Mr. Hemanta Raj Dahal, Executive Director, HR Home stated that HRDs are the observers of the election and we should be very careful in their safety and security. He added there is a need of collaboration among Protection Desk Nepal, Peace Brigade International, Protection International, OHCHR, NHRC and HR Home and other human rights organizations for minimizing the risk of observers. He proposed to develop a mechanism for coordination among the key stakeholders in central as well as in local level.

Mr Pradeep Ghimire, Coordinator NEMA introduced NEMA and explained the activities NEMA has been doing. He stated that NEMA and NEOC have been working in close coordination. He informed the participants that a team has been deployed in six regions to assess possible threats and the report will be prepared and circulated in a week's time. He further proposed to create a common platform for rescue and respond so that we can be more effective. Similarly, Dr. Netra Timsina- Co Chair of NEOC and Vice President of NGO Federation of Nepal advised to explore possibilities to create a common platform for proper coordination among the observation organizations which needs further discussions.

Ms Ranjana Thapa from OHCHR clarified on the task of OHCHR and its mandate that it would monitor the human rights violations like intimidation, physical attack etc. Mr Arjun Bhattarai-board member of NGO Federation of Nepal suggested to form a high-level committee for safety and security of the HRDs. He also added the need of training and orientation, common policy guidelines and coordination with media.

Shaun Kirven, representative from Protection International stated on the need a committee at central level but emphasised on more effective mechanisms in the local level. He reminded the risk of observers not only during the election but also after the election. There should be coordination between district committees as well, he added. He suggested developing strategies to be able to cope even with the worst possible scenario.

Mr Shobhakar Budhathoki, Executive member of NEOC questioned on the mechanism if the observers would be entrapped and emphasized on assurance of authentic information, which could be possible through district as well as regional committees.

Professor Kapil Shrestha, Co-Chairperson of NEOC emphasised on proper coordination among the key stakeholders. He suggested for ensuring competence of the election observers and their credible performance. The security agencies, political parties, civil society and the international communities have confidence on the election observers who could boost the morale of the security personnel and the officials involved in the process of polling.

Some of the incidents that are in non-compliance with the code of conduct are as follows:

March 13, 2008

Thursday

- An armed robbers group looted Rs. 3, 22,000 from Agricultural Development Bank's Gaur branch in Rautahat by taking control over the bank manager and the employees.
- The owner of Bardibas based Tulsi Hotel of Mahottari VDC-1, Tirtha Raj Ojha, 55, was found dead on March 13, 2008 after abduction by an unidentified gang on February 26, 2008.
- 6 people were injured in a clash between Nepali Congress cadres and activists of the pro-NC Tarun Dal at Ramnagar Bhutaha Constituency number-5, in Sunsari. The clash occurred after a dispute between minister without portfolio Sujata Koirala and regional chairperson of Tarun Dal, Tabil Ansari who had reached the venue for the election campaigning.
- Gunarawar Basyal, candidate from Parvat constituency-2 and Toyanath Bhusal, chairperson of the same constituency have started to receive threat of physical attack from the Maoists. Moreover, the Maoists have pressurized the locals to prepare meals for those cadres that come for election campaigning.
- In the process of election campaigning in various regions of Palpa, CPN- UML, Maoists and Rastriya Jana Morcha party workers have not stopped the activity of poll graffiti on the walls. They are busy with the poll graffiti activity though this is the violation of election code of conduct.
- Lok Bahadur Lama, 63 of Bara, Ratanpur along with 8 of his family members were displaced after they were charged of witchcraft and were forced to eat inedible items by Lama's own nephew Babu Thing and the nearby neighbors.

The end.