



# 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)

## Press Statement for Immediate Release

*Freetown, 12th December 2020: 1:00pm Statement on the Re-run and Bye-elections*

On Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2020, the National Election Watch (NEW) deployed 235 stationed observers in all 5 election locations (Constituency 110, 078, Ward 226, 287 and 348, in Western Rural, Bo, Moyamba and Karene Districts respectively). In addition, NEW deployed supervisors and roving observers who served as incident reporters and support the problem-solving mechanism in our observation strategy. Reporting instruments were developed – Checklists and incidents reporting forms, and observers trained and accredited to report accurately their observation. NEW commends all voters who had turned out so far to exercise their civic right.

This statement is offered by NEW on the Re-run and Bye-elections conducted on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2020. The purpose is to support the country's efforts to conduct peaceful polls that are participatory, credible, transparent, and impartial to inform the public about events on the field so far.

### Critical Incidents

- In Centre 15089, Polling Station 3 Community Center Hamilton, there was chaos at the station between the NEC official and a voter. The voter was caught taking a snapshot of his marked ballot. He was intercepted and asked to delete the photo by the NEC official. After heated argument, he was handed over to the police who checked the phone and the photo deleted.
- In Centre 15093, Polling Station 6, Lady Patricia Kabba Secondary School, Goderich, a voter also took a snapshot of the vote. He was intercepted and warned by the NEC official that if such action is repeated, he will be handed over to the police.
- In Centre 15087, Polling Station 14, R.E.C. Primary School, Ogoo Farm, a voter came to the Polling Station with a fake ID card and the NEC official asked her to go out. The party agents however protested that she should be arrested, and she was handed over to the police.
- In Kent Village, the Minister of Lands and Country Planning Dr. Dennis Sandi went into polling centre 15084 with 2 vehicles (Toyota Land Cruiser registered No. AEE 403 and a blue Jeep with registration No. AMK 884) and men dressed in black suits and an armed Military personnel even before polls opened and was obstructing the work of NEC. He defied the assigned security personnel deployed at the polling station and insisted on staying at the polling centre, though he was not accredited. The roving police patrol headed by AIG Brima Jah also approached him, but he still resisted to leave the polling centre. The men in black suits that were with the Minister threatened the ONS Regional Coordinator of Western Rural District who was also roving that she would lose her job for asking the Minister to leave the centre.

- Vehicle with registration DPT. LEADER HOP was spotted at a polling precinct in Tokeh Village.
- A polling centre 15079 at John Obey, polling started at 8:30am because voters refused to vote as the centre was not located at its designated location. The centre was eventually relocated at the community centre as designated.
- NEW observed a number of vehicles without number plates plying across the polling centre in Constituency 110.

## Key Observations

### NEW observed that:

#### **Polling Stations Set-Up and Opening:**

- 86% of polling stations opened on time (7:00-7:15am) in Constituency 110, and 77% in Constituency 078, 87.5% in Ward 348, 75% in Ward 226, also opened on time. All stations observed in Ward 287 opened on time.
- **NEC officials present:** Observers noted that NEC officials who were easily identifiable were present in all polling stations observed.
- **Availability of equipment.** Observers noted that equipment's and election materials were available in all polling stations observed.
- **Party agents present at opening of Polling Stations:** At most of the polling stations observed, there were two political party agents in the polling station, except in some stations where up to four political party agents were present in the polling station.
- **Suitability of polling stations:** In Constituency 110, 85% of observers reported that polling stations were suitably located. However, some polling stations were not disable friendly, whilst others were located in the open with no canopy and exposed to excessive sun light.

#### **COVID-19 Compliance**

- Hand washing materials were available in 62.3% of the polling stations in constituency 110, but hand washing was mostly not enforced.
- Hand sanitizers were in most polling stations and its used was enforced.
- Wearing of face masks by NEC officials, security and voters within the precincts of polling stations was observed.
- Social Distancing was not satisfactorily enforced.
- Thermometers to check temperatures of voters were available in 16.4% of polling stations observed in Constituency 110, In Constituency 078 Bo district only 22.2% of polling stations had thermometers. In Ward 287 also in Bo District, there were thermometers in only 16.7% of polling stations observed. In Moyamba District, there was no thermometer in 80% of the polling stations observed. In Ward 226 Karene District, there was no thermometer in all the polling station observed.

NEW will continue to observe the remaining activities of the electoral process in all locations where elections are taking place and will report accordingly.

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.

Disclaimer: Views expressed in this statement do not reflect the opinion of our donors.

*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 related activities and will report its findings accordingly.*

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of National Election Watch – Sierra Leone and do not necessary reflect the views of the European Union.

**XXX End XXX**

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

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