



PRESS STATEMENT

Tuesday, December 3, 2024

Accra, Ghana

Observation of Monday's special voting exercise

The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) observed the Special Voting Exercise that the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana organized in 14 of the 16 regions of the country on Monday, December 2, 2024. A total of 228 CODEO observers observed the exercise in 216 constituencies throughout the country. The Electoral Commission announced on Sunday, December 1st, the postponement of early voting in Eastern and Western regions to Thursday, December 5, due to an order to recall and reprint ballot papers after a ballot paper leaked out of the printing facility. Observers reported a generally smooth voting exercise. However, worrying incidents of vote-buying by political parties and ballot photography by voters marred the exercise.

General Findings

CODEO observers reported a generally smooth voting exercise, as highlighted below:

- 81% of polling stations opened by 7:15 AM, and 19% opened between 7:16 and 8 AM.
- At nearly all polling stations observed, agents from the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the National Patriotic Party (NPP) were present.
- Observers noted that sensitive voting materials were available at all the observed polling stations except a few (4%) where there was only one Biometric Voter Verification Device (BVD) instead of two.
- Most (97%) of the observed polling stations did not face any malfunction of the BVD system throughout the day.
- Observers further reported that most (97%) polling stations were set up so voters could mark their ballot secretly.
- Most polling stations (93%) also had the requisite number of polling staff, five. However, about one-third (30%) of these polling stations had no female staff, while 43% had only one woman.

Critical Incidents

Voting process incidents

The detection of a missing serial number/ballot paper (numbered 0000046) from the ballot booklet at Sefwi Akontombra in the Western Region led to a minor misunderstanding at the polling station. This was caused by a missing serial number from the sequence of serial numbers in the ballot booklets. However, officials and party agents later resolved the issue, reporting a case of missing serial numbers.

Photographing of thumb-printed ballots

Observers from CODEO reported critical incidents that compromised the secrecy of the vote, such as voters taking a picture of their ballot after thumbprinting it.

- At the Cape Coast North constituency in the Central Region, a voter attempted to photograph their vote, but the security officials intercepted him.
- At Ablekuma South in the Greater Accra Region, a voter went into the voting booth and photographed the ballot paper showing her vote for the presidential candidate.
- At Walewale in the North East Region, a party agent and security officials intercepted a voter who photographed their vote before casting the ballot allegedly to receive money.
- In Bolgatanga Central in the Upper East Region, a police officer photographed their vote. The matter was subsequently reported to the police inspector on duty at the polling station.
- At Navrongo Central, also in the Upper East Region, an EC official and a police officer were seen taking pictures of their respective ballots; they were both taken into police custody.

Incidents of vote-buying

- Observers reported two (2) cases of alleged vote-buying.
- At Keta in the Volta Region, some party representatives at the polling station shared money to people who voted for their candidates.
- At the Weija-Gbawe constituency in the Greater Accra Region, some individuals believed to be NPP party representatives were at the polling station's gate, giving out 100 and 500 cedis to voters to cast their votes for the NPP candidates.
- In Jaman North, located in the Bono Region, a non-uniformed police officer (who doubles as a key member of the incumbent MP's security detail) attempted to prevent the NPP party chairman and several representatives from sharing money. This reportedly resulted in verbal attacks on the officer.

The incidents observed during special voting follow other similar incidents observed by CODEO in the pre-election period thus far regarding voter inducement by political parties. CODEO has also been monitoring news reports about purported instances of vote-buying by the NPP, the NDC, the New Force movement, and the Movement for Change in specific constituencies. These include Awutu Senya East in the Central Region, Ayawaso West Wuogon in the Greater Accra Region, and Tema Central in the Greater Accra Region. In some cases, such as Ayawaso West Wuogon, parliamentary candidates are seen on video circulating on social media interacting with voters in queues within the precincts of polling stations.

Conclusion and recommendations

CODEO is alarmed by the observed incidents of vote-buying and the photographing of cast ballots. It is concerning that some presiding officers and security officers did nothing to stop the violations. The Coalition is calling on the Ghana Police Service to take swift action against all such cases, including those reported in the media. As a matter of urgency, the EC and the National Election Security Task Force must issue strict directives to presiding officers and security offices on what actions to take when they witness election offences. This will help forestall similar occurrences during the December 7 polls. CODEO urges the Ghana Police Service to update the public on any such actions. CODEO acknowledges the interest taken by the Office of the Special Prosecutor in these matters. CODEO calls on all political parties to refrain from these practices, which are deeply damaging to the integrity of the electoral process, and on voters to refuse any attempts of inducement and freely express their right to vote on December 7.

CODEO commends the EC and stakeholders for a generally smooth exercise. The Coalition urges the Commission to ensure that voting on December 7 takes place smoothly, fairly, and freely.

Signed

Mr. Albert Arhin
CODEO National Coordinator

About CODEO

CODEO is an independent and non-partisan network of civil society groups, faith-based organizations and professional bodies which observe Ghanaian elections. It was established in 2000 under the auspices of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) to mobilize citizens of Ghana to participate in the electoral process actively and to complement the efforts of Ghana's Electoral Commission in ensuring transparent, free, fair and peaceful elections. The Coalition of 42-member organizations has grown to become the largest and most credible domestic election observer body in Ghana which mobilizes citizens and groups to participate in Ghana's electoral processes.