

## **International mission to observe RP elections**

Wednesday 20 June 2007, by [ABS-CBN](#) (Date first published: 4 April 2007).

Representatives of political parties in nine countries are set to arrive in the country to observe elections especially in provinces included by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) and the Philippine National Police on the list of "areas of immediate concern," DZMM reported Tuesday.

Jennifer Albano, Institute of Politics and Governance executive director, said members of parliament and political party representatives from Australia, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Indonesia, India, United States, Norway and The Netherlands are set to arrive May 4 to observe the mid-term polls.

Albano said among the "election hotspots" to be monitored by the group are Nueva Ecija, Quezon, Bacolod, Negros Occidental, Bicol region and some areas in Mindanao.

She said the group of foreign watchdogs will be assisted by the COMPACT for Peaceful Elections, an umbrella organization of civil society groups in the country that was formed during the May 2004 national elections.

She said the international group's observations will be presented before the diplomatic community.

In a statement, COMPACT said that from Nov. 11, 2006 up to April 17 this year, it has recorded 21 incidents of election-related violence, which killed 38 people and injured 16.

"Violence threatens the sovereignty of the people. It prevents the free exercise of the constitutional right to suffrage, which puts into question the integrity of democratic processes like voting," said Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales, member of COMPACT's advisory council.

The group added that election harassment from the military and the New People's Army (NPA) remain unabated.

It said the military is using its anti-insurgency campaign "to harass and intimidate" groups perceived as anti-Arroyo. The group also mentioned the deployment of military troops in depressed areas in Metro Manila.

COMPACT said it also monitored NPA's extortion activities in Quezon, Negros Occidental and Iloilo provinces.

"The running price is P100,000 for the entire slate, while individual local candidates are asked to pay P50,000," it said in its statement.

COMPACT said COMELEC and the police should be able to ensure peace and order during the election period because violence is a precedent to massive fraud.

"If the COMELEC or law enforcement agencies fail to protect the integrity and credibility of elections, or worse, if they connive with warlords or other fraudulent elements, a culture of cheating is embedded in the electoral process," the group said.

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