

RELEASE VITAL DOCUMENTS, GROUPS ASK COMELEC

Posted by CenPEG

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A network of IT groups, election watchdogs, good governance advocates, and personalities including former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. have expressed support to CenPEG's call for the release by Comelec of all vital documents in connection with the May 10 automated polls.

The documents, they said on Oct. 5, should be the basis for an independent assessment of the automated polls which Comelec touted as "a rousing success" but which CenPEG evaluated as riddled with widespread technical inaccuracies in its study presented before a jam-packed crowd at the AES Watch post-election summit held Oct. 5 at Club Filipino, Greenhills, San Juan. They agreed with CenPEG that the unexplained refusal of Comelec to divulge the documents will only increase public suspicions that the poll body is hiding the truth. About 100 election protests – many alleging electronic fraud – have been filed with Comelec so far.

In the post-election summit organized by AES Watch yesterday at Club Filipino in Greenhills, San Juan former VP Teofisto Guingona, Jr. and Transparency International-Philippines president Judge Dolores Espanol demanded the immediate release of the documents. The release of the documents is mandated by the Constitution with respect to people's right to know and access to public information, they said.

Groups affiliated with AES Watch, including the UP Alumni Association (UPAA), Nassa, Concerned Citizens Movement, Transparency International-Philippines, DLSU caucus, PCS Foundation, AMRSP, Transparent Elections.org, Movement for Good Governance, and others also backed the CenPEG demand. NAMFREL likewise expressed its full support. CenPEG's repeated formal requests after the May 10 polls for the disclosure of the election documents were denied without any explanation by Comelec en banc last July 26. The documents included the AES source codes, Comelec-Smartmatic contract and all annexes, report of PCOS transmissions on May 10 and thereafter, and inventory of compact flash (CF) cards used for the final testing and sealing (FTS) as well as re-configured CF cards.

Similar documents had been ordered released by the Supreme Court (SC) in a ruling days before the May 10 election on an urgent petition filed by Guingona, Jr., Engr. Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada, and others. Complying with the SC ruling, Comelec released the documents but the Guingona group found the information substantially different and insignificant compared to the list of documents ordered released by the high court.

The high court also granted on Sept. 21 CenPEG's petition for mandamus for the release of the election source code for its independent review, as the law provides. However, the source code has not been made available at press time.

In its report presented during the Oct. 6 post-election summit, CenPEG revealed that Comelec's mismanagement of the automated election triggered a high incidence of technical problems, voting hitches, transmission failures, and other problems. The automated election's lack of safeguards, security and accuracy features, and verifiability tainted the credibility and reliability of the election results, the UP-based think tank added. (See www.cenpeg.org and www.eu-cenpeg.com) Doubts about the accuracy of the election results and indications of automated fraud can be fully appraised upon Comelec's disclosure of proofs and evidences related to the whole operations of the election system, CenPEG said. No less than the credibility of the electoral exercise and the true expression of the electorate's will are at stake here, it said.

CenPEG also said that contrary to Comelec claims, voting last May took longer by several hours compared to previous manual elections, with people queuing from 3 to 9 hours, thus resulting in unprecedented voter disenfranchisement. In the May 2010 elections, Benigno S. Aquino III was proclaimed president on June 9 (30 days after election) compared to Mr. Joseph Estada who was proclaimed president on May 20, 1998 (19 days after the May 11, 1998 polls.)

The official election turnout – 75% which is conservative – is the lowest in national elections since 1986, CenPEG said. ***Posted by CenPEG***