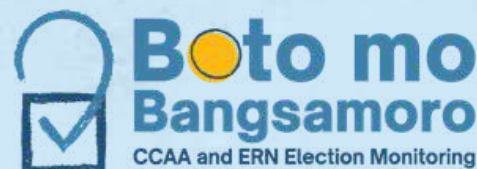


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Areas covered: Bangsamoro Region

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SUMMARY

The morning of election day was welcomed by a gunfire inside the Central Pilot Elementary School in Cotabato City which left four people injured, including a police officer. The shooting incident caused fear and panic among voters, prompting them to flee the precinct. Some voters reportedly climbed onto a roof of a nearby store, which eventually collapsed. Voting only commenced in the precinct at 11AM.

Other incidents were also recorded across the BARMM such as in Lamitan City, where an improvised explosive device (IED) was discovered on the early hours of election day. In South Upi, gunshots were heard in Rifao Elementary School which caused fear among residents. Some voters decided to return home and were not able to vote.

These incidents raise serious preliminary concerns about the effectiveness of security forces and COMELEC, particularly in identifying and securing election hotspots. Most military deployments are concentrated in Lanao del Sur, which has left Cotabato City with inadequate security coverage. Furthermore, Cotabato City was only placed as COMELEC control on the eve of election day.

It is concerning that such an incident occurred despite the unprecedented military deployment to secure the election, especially in Cotabato City where the Bangsamoro government sits and where international observers were deployed. Voters queued early in the morning to cast their votes. Some reported arriving in their polling precincts with already pre-shaded ballots, such as in Maluso, Basilan. In Datu Anggal Midtimbang, some voters were reportedly blocked from entering the polling precinct.

Despite the testing of Automated Counting Machines (ACMs) over the weekend, some units malfunctioned, which caused delays in the opening of the polling precincts such as in Tugunan, SGA; Marogong, Lanao del Sur; South Upi, Maguindanao del Sur; and in Basilan.

Meanwhile, some areas have been generally peaceful, with reports indicating a smooth and orderly process such as in the SPMS Box, Ampatuan, Sultan sa Barongis, Datu Hoffer, Datu Piang, Mamasapano, Rajah Buayan, South Upi, Pandag, Shariff Aguak, Datu Odin Sinsuat in the Maguindanao provinces; Nabalawag, SGA; and in Marawi City. In some barangays in Rajah Buayan and Butig, voting is almost finished as of 10AM. ●

