

A Statement from People's Network for 2023 Election Observation

Election is a political activity that belongs to all citizens. None of politicians or traditional elites shall possess or dominate the election to distort from a free and fair manner under international standards. Unfortunately, in the context of Thailand, politics was usually interfered by unelected political entities until the nation fell back from democracy even though elections were held many times. Nevertheless, it is not too late to bring back democracy if the Thai people are willing to reclaim the proper election.

The 2014 coup had taken away democracy and the right to vote of the Thai citizens for more than 5 years. The election in 2019 was held under supervision of the military regime and under the military-drafted 2017 Constitution. With the fact that the 2017 Constitution provides that the 250 senators who were handpicked by the military junta can vote for Prime Minister together with 500 members of the House of Representative, the origin of the Election Commissioners were also selected by the junta legitimacy of the 2019 election, legitimacy of the 2019 election is inevitably doubted by Thai voters whether it can reflect the will of the people.

The Election Commission was also questioned on irregularities of constituency mapping, transparency of the result reporting, the uncertainty of formula in the calculation of Party List Representatives and impartiality in the process to consider qualifications and accusations against candidates from each political party.

People's Network for the Observation of 2023 Election is aware of the problems towards fairness, independency and transparency of the upcoming election. The power of 250 senators remains an obvious inequality in the competition among political parties. Irregularities during the election process remain in question since the current Election Commissioners had served since before the 2019 Election.

It is the time that people's role to monitor the election must be widely organised across the country to ensure that the 2023 election will comply with international standards and be an independent activity for people to make decisions. The People's Network was formed as a starting point to invite everyone to join an election observation mission in the election that is expected to be held in May 2023. The network is a coalition of many groups of civil society including impartial election monitoring units and active political campaigners (listed below). The network carries 3 main missions; to prevent election fraud and to ensure that the election is conducted up to international standard, to enhance trust in an election as crucial tool

in democratic system and to refuse other political mechanisms that are not related or bare no responsibility to the people and, to strengthen legitimacy of the election to avoid political conflict and violence that may occurred from the illegitimacy of the election.

The Network would like to appeal to the Thai public and other stakeholders as follow;

1) The Election Commission must operate with impartiality and fairness and must disclose all information related to the election, especially the mapping of constituencies and opening real results of each polling station via online platform. The Election Commission must also support, prioritise and cooperate with civil society groups who are campaigning for and observing the election.

2) The government and state agencies must prepare and ensure democratic environment ahead of the election including guaranteeing freedom of expression and freedom of assembly especially in the context of election and ensure that all political parties are allowed equal access to public spaces and utilities under government's possession for the election campaign. The government is also required to guarantee that the officers of the state are free from any illegal abuse of power either to benefit or do harm against certain candidates or political parties.

3) The Network also would like to urge the Thai public to observe the upcoming election at all polling stations by registering as observers or reporting suspicious incidents before, during, and after the election to the Network via website Vote62.com

The election belongs to the People, it is not simply a meaningless political ritual!

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