

NEWSLETTER
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Newsletter

GENERAL ELECTION SPECIAL II

Not-so-sealed - or outright blank - original vote tallies, the CPP and CNRP firmly standing their ground, and threats of upcoming mass protests: one month after the general election, the Cambodian political situation seems nothing short of a deadlock.

Both the CPP, now in its thirtieth year in power, and the CNRP, the main opposition party, claim to have won the general election held on 28th July. Hope for the creation of a joint committee to look into election irregularities fizzled earlier this month, after the ruling party refused to agree to the involvement of the United Nations in the discussions - a *sine qua non* condition to negotiations for the CNRP.

The National Election Committee (NEC), which is close to the government's interests, published the official preliminary results of the polls on 12th August. The NEC's published results confirmed previously announced trends in which the CPP won the majority, albeit fixing the latter's advance to only 289,789 votes. According to CPP calculations, the CPP won 68 of the National Assembly's 123 seats, versus 55 for the CNRP.

What's more, the NEC announced a week later that it rejected all of the opposition's complaints regarding election irregularities, citing a lack of evidence to prove their legitimacy. It also declared that it would no longer be involved in the mediation process between the CPP and the CNRP. The opposition party subsequently took its complaints to the Constitutional Council, the final arbiter in terms of electoral issues. The Council's investigations have so far led to the opening of several "Security Packages A" in two provinces. These packages contain the original documents from election day, including records of the number of voided ballots and original counts. Ten of the 13 packages in Kratie Province were found unsealed or improperly sealed, while two of the eight vote tallies from Battambang City booths simply were blank, leading to serious concerns of vote tampering and to the CNRP threatening the NEC of a lawsuit.

While the Constitutional Council's investigation is still ongoing and the parties await the NEC's publication of the final results on 8th September, the opposition leaders are flexing their muscles. They held a 10,000 strong rally in Phnom Penh earlier this week, and have already announced a mass demonstration to be held on 7th September - unless the CPP accepts the creation of a joint committee that would include the United Nations.

All this occurs amid ostensible military dispatchment in the capital and increased tensions in the Kingdom. On 22nd August, local police blocked the access to a private residence in Battambang City, where the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights organised a meeting organised to discuss the election results. Clashes followed between the armed forces and the crowd (which included prominent opposition MP Mu Sochua). Officials also have been reported pressuring citizens into "voluntarily" signing declarations in support of the results announced by the NEC and forbidding them to take part in CNRP rallies. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sar Kheng issued a letter last week ordering provincial and

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municipal governors to put an end to these support petitions, in order to "(strengthen) the neutrality of public authorities at all levels."

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Further reading:

Cambodia: Anatomy of a Fraud

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B9F8IykFLUT9X0czaUJmY1E4MUE/edit?pli=1>

Cambodian Opposition Holds Protest Rally Amid Vote-Tampering Suspicions

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/elections-08262013195332.html>

Initial Results of Cambodia's Election Committee Confirm Ruling Party Win

<http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/7648-election-results-stun-cambodians.html>

Cambodia's Top Court Says Key Election Records Open for Review

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/elections-08222013182016.html>

NEC Checks Continue

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/nec-checks-continue>

As Cambodia Election Impasse Continues, Opposition Plans Rally

<http://www.voanews.com/content/as-cambodia-election-impasse-continues-opposition-plans-rally/1734644.html>

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