

Burmese rights group's election report made available online

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A Burma-based rights group has released a report with its findings on research of the 2010 parliamentary elections, describing most people in the country as disinterested or disbelieving in the electoral process, and the process itself as fraudulent.

According to Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP) in the 51-page English version of the report, translated from the Burmese, it conducted 30,000 interviews in 42 townships across six states and divisions in the lead up to the polls. On November 7, the day of the elections, it observed 400 polling stations.

The report contains both general findings and a variety of specific allegations concerning vote rigging, fraud, and threats to voters and persons refusing to vote. It also describes local council officials, police, party members and election commission personnel as complicit in vote rigging.

"Persuading voters with incentives, vote buying, threatening, unlawful campaigning, transferring votes, and campaigning in restricted areas are all violations found to have occurred during the election period," the report says.

Ballot stuffing with so-called advance votes, counting of ballots behind closed doors, and the staffing of polling stations with people connected to the army-established Union Solidarity and Development Party also were prevalent in the areas monitored, according to the HRDP.

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) posted both versions of the report to one of its websites on Monday, to coincide with the first sitting of the new parliament in Burma.

"As it is not possible for groups inside Burma to promote and distribute widely reports of this sort, it is beholden on outside groups to take responsibility," Wong Kai Shing, executive director of the Hong Kong-based regional rights group said, explaining why the AHRC was posting the report online.

"Now that the new parliament is sitting, it is timely to recall how it, or some of it, got there," Wong said, alluding to the fact that 25 percent of parliamentarians did not go through the elections but have been appointed from the army.

Wong noted that the report's findings were consistent with those of other groups and individuals who had monitored the elections, which were won by the army-established Union Solidarity and Development Party, but that the insider viewpoint gave them additional value.

"Given that the military government in Burma prohibited any international observers from attending the elections, the research and attention to detail in this document is especially insightful," he added.

The HRDP was founded in 2006, and the report states that some 40 of the group's members, including founder U Myint Aye, are currently in prison. The AHRC has issued urgent appeals and made other interventions on their behalf, which can be accessed by searching for "HRDP" on its website.

The English version of the report is available here: <http://burma.ahrchk.net/pdf/HRDPPReport-ebook-en.pdf>

For Burmese: <http://burma.ahrchk.net/pdf/HRDPPReport-ebook-my.pdf>