

GHANA CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT (CDD-GHANA)

MONITORING THE ODODODIODIO BYE-ELECTION

PRESS STATEMENT ON THE PRE-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT

PERIOD: AUGUST 22ND– 27TH 2005

Introduction

The Ghana Center for Democratic Development is pleased to present its second report on the general political environment in the Odododiodio Constituency ahead of the Tuesday August, 30, 2005 bye-election. The report covers the general political atmosphere and election-related developments in the constituency from August 22 to 27, 2005.

General Observation

Campaigning by the contesting parties and their candidates in the Odododiodio constituency reached its peak during the week under review. There was heightened tension in the constituency with most election related activities characterized by verbal and physical attacks. Examples include the disruption of the town hall meeting organized by the Institute of Economic Affairs and the violent clashes that occurred between NPP and NDC supporters within the week.

Utterances made by key political figures at some campaign rallies appear to have contributed significantly to the mounting tension in the constituency at this time. Leading members of both the NPP and NDC parties exhorted their supporters to match their opponents *boot-for-boot*.

Voter and Civic Education

The Electoral Commission's posters, indicating the up-coming bye-election as well as posters showing the placement of the candidates on the ballot were visible around the constituency. However, much of the voter and civic education on the bye-election appears to have been undertaken by the political parties at their respective campaign rallies. Leading members of the contesting political parties took it upon themselves to explain to the electorate the essence of the bye-election and the need for them to locate their voter identification cards ahead of the voting day.

Incidence of Abuse of Incumbency

The week under review saw the initiation of a number of development projects in the constituency. CDD monitors observed streetlights being mounted, roads being tarred and medical screening being undertaken in parts of the constituency. However, they could not determine whether the initiation of the projects was deliberately timed to coincide with the elections and to garner votes for the ruling party. Indeed, some residents of the affected areas insisted that the projects commenced only when campaigns began in the area..

Recommendations/Appeal

- The atmosphere in the Odododiodio constituency is highly tense and volatile. The Center appeals to all political parties, their leadership and supporters to exercise circumspection in their utterances and civility in their conduct ahead of and during the polls.
- The Center is encouraged by the assurances of the Police Command regarding the measures it has put in place to prevent violence and ensure security. We trust that the Police would carry out its duties with utmost professionalism in order not to intimidate voters in the process.
- Finally, the Center would like to call on political parties, their supporters, and indeed all people in the Odododiodio constituency to do their best to ensure that peace prevails during and after the polls. It is our fervent wish that this bye-election passes without further violence.

Signed by

Peter Owusu-Donkor
Head of Programs (CDD-Ghana)
29th August 2005