

**NGO: EC must unshackle election observers**  
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NGO Pusat Komunikasi Masyarakat or Community Communications Centre (Komas) has urged the lifting of restrictions imposed on the five accredited election observers by the Election Commission (EC).

In a press statement released today, Komas coordinator Arul Prakkash said the NGOs should be given full access and freedom to fulfill their election observation duties.

"NONE They must be able to communicate with the public and mass media without any censorship from any government body or agency," said Prakkash (right), the coordinator for Komas's citizenship and voter education programme.

Komas launched a civil society movement on November 2011 known as Jom Pantau to monitor the 13th general election, based on the rights demanded by electoral reform coalition Bersih 2.0.

The human rights organization has been involved in election monitoring, documentation and voter education work since the 1990s.

He also called for clarification of the criteria for the selection of polls observers and for the organizations to be briefed and equipped with all the necessary resources to carry out their duties.

"International observers should be invited to observe the elections without restrictions," he added.

The EC has named five NGOs to be accredited as official election observers for the next general election - think-tanks Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (Ideas) and Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli); graft watchdog Transparency International-Malaysia, human rights body Association for Promotion of Human Rights (Proham) and independent pollster Merdeka Centre.

According to Arul, Jom Pantau has written to the EC requesting official accreditation more than a month ago, but has yet to receive a reply.

mafrel sarawak elections workshop 0700806 presentation Other groups experienced in polls observation have also been overlooked, including veteran election monitors Malaysians for Free and Fair Elections (Mafrel) and Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Abim).

This has prompted Mafrel to accuse the EC of deliberately selecting groups with no expertise in observing elections in order to maintain the illusion of transparency.

Arul added that Jom Pantau has gathered over two hundred voluntary monitoring agents across

the country, receiving more than a thousand reports on electoral irregularities.

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