



National Electoral Commission (NEC)
OAU Drive, Tower Hill
Freetown
Sierra Leone

MEDIA GUIDELINES AT POLLING CENTRES

Media are free to visit any of the polling centres throughout Sierra Leone, but need to strictly follow the NEC rules. These rules try to meet both the needs of journalists, and the right of the Sierra Leonean people to vote in secret, without any pressure or interference.

Journalists may film or photograph the overall situation in a polling station, but they **must not, under any circumstances, film or photograph a person marking her/his ballot.** **Only journalists with valid press cards will be allowed inside voting centres.** They must wear their badges and carry with them one additional identity document with photo.

The Polling Centre Manager (PCM) is the point of contact at the polling centre, and media are asked to direct questions only to them and to Presiding Officers (PO). **Inside the polling centre, voters, observers, or agents cannot be interviewed at any time.** Only the PCMs and POs can be interviewed inside the polling centre. Journalists are asked to be as brief and unobtrusive as possible in their visits to the polling centres.

When interviewed, a PO will not comment on the overall conduct of the election, other than to state the broad nature of his/her role at the polling station, and the number of voters up to that point.

Inside the **polling stations**, there can be only one photographer or one camera person at a time (unless decided otherwise by the PO, such as in the case of covering VIPs). Shots of individuals (such as of a voter placing her/his ballot in the ballot box) must be cleared with the PO and with the individual being photographed.

Decisions of the PCM or the POs are final and binding. Attempts to influence or intimidate voters, and failure to obey orders of PCMs or POs are considered election offences. The media is welcome to observe the vote counting process in polling stations and centres. For more information please see the separate fact sheet on *Media Guidelines for Counting*.