

# Press Release



## **GECOM did NOT Disenfranchise any Member of the Disciplined Forces**

**6th June 2023, GEORGETOWN** – The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) has noted the contents of an article published in the Monday, 5th June 2023 edition of the Stabroek News with the headline, **“Alexander accuses GECOM of disenfranchising 10% of joint services voters.”** In this regard, it is the responsibility of this election body not to dismiss such a level of disinformation and confounded allegations; especially since the sentiments in the article are attributed to a GECOM Commissioner.

Consequently, it must therefore be emphasized that **GECOM did NOT Disenfranchise any Member of the Disciplined Forces** i.e., the Guyana Police Force, the Guyana Defence Force, and the Guyana Prison Service. In fact, all the Ranks from the respective Forces were given an equal opportunity to cast their ballots in the Local Government Elections on Friday, 2nd June 2023, as provided for in the Local Authorities (Elections) Act, Cap 28:03, and which is also the usual practice in an effort to ensure adequate national security at all times, especially on Elections Day.

In view of the foregoing, it is of crucial importance to outline the methodology used by GECOM to prepare the ‘Register of Ranks’ who are eligible to vote in the elections. In keeping with the usual practice, the preparation for the conduct of Disciplined Forces Balloting commenced months in advance and involved constant communication between senior officials of the respective Forces and the Ballot Officers, Mr. Nardeo Persaud, for the Guyana Police Force, Ms. Areana Britton, for the Guyana Defence Force, and Ms. Sharon Jethu, for the Guyana Prison Service, the Chief Election Officer, Mr. Vishnu Persaud and the Deputy Chief Election Officer, Mr. Aneal Giddings to ensure that in the first instance GECOM receive lists of all the officers employed by the Guyana Police Force, the Guyana Defence Force, and the Guyana Prison Service respectively.

When those lists were received, they were verified against the National Register of Registrants Database (NRRDB) to determine the eligibility of each officer to vote in the LGE due to the fact that only persons who were registered in a Local Authority Area (LAA) were required to vote in these elections. Hence, it must be

highlighted for emphasis, that the 'Register of Ranks' to vote on Disciplined Services Balloting Day is prepared based on the list submitted to GECOM by the respective Forces.

Further, once it was determined who were the officers eligible to vote at LGE, the location where the officers are stationed was requested by GECOM. This information then allowed for GECOM in consultation with the respective Disciplined Force to establish Balloting Stations across the country and for GECOM to logistically prepare to ensure that the officers vote where they are stationed, using a ballot that is applicable to the LAA where they are registered.

Moreover, it must be clarified that GECOM ensured that names of the ranks were placed on a list where they were stationed and it was displayed at all the Balloting Stations countrywide prior to Disciplined Forces Balloting Day. Additionally, the Ballot Officers visited all districts and conducted civic and voter education sessions with the officers of the **respective Forces** to ensure that they were well informed about checking the lists and the voting process. These mechanisms were further supplemented with the presence of GECOM Information Clerks at all the Balloting Stations to provide guidance to the officers.

It must also be noted that officers who did not vote on Disciplined Forces Balloting Day still have an opportunity to do so on Local Government Elections Day, Monday, 12th June, 2023 when the rest of the country will vote. However, they will have to vote in the Local Authority Area / Constituency where they are registered.

Against this backdrop, for anyone to accuse GECOM of willfully disenfranchising members of the Disciplined Forces is malicious and intended to discredit a transparent and efficient process that was evidently successful. The Guyana Elections Commission takes this opportunity to remind all stakeholders, especially voters that its procedures are guided by the legal provisions and reassures them that they can expect an election that is free, fair, transparent, and credible.

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