

**STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE/
CARTER CENTER ON NOT SENDING OBSERVERS TO PERU'S
MAY 28 PRESIDENTIAL RUN-OFF**

May 25, 2000

Since last December, four successive observer missions, sponsored jointly by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Carter Center, have pointed to fundamental flaws in Peru's electoral process. These included: unequal access to the media, media bias favoring the incumbent, smear campaigns against Peruvian election monitors and opposition candidates, the misuse of state resources for electoral advantage, and a climate of impunity. These serious problems were compounded by an opaque vote tabulation process that, following the April 9 polls, was plagued by irregularities and inexplicable delays. All of these factors led a large segment of the Peruvian electorate to question the credibility of the polls and those administering them.

While certain conditions, such as access to the media, improved somewhat in recent weeks, steps taken fell well short of the comprehensive measures needed to change the political environment and build public confidence in the process. Moreover, the difficulty in verifying ONPE's tabulation system raised serious doubts about an accurate and timely vote count for the run-off election. Serious deficiencies also reportedly existed concerning the training of election officials and administering the logistical aspects of the election process.

NDI and the Carter Center support the recommendations of the OAS mission in Peru, the Defensoria del Pueblo, Transparencia and others concerning required reforms in the election process. Today, the Jurado Nacional de Elecciones (JNE) decided to maintain the May 28 election date, thereby rejecting the OAS observer mission finding that 10 additional days were needed for the mission to test the vote tabulation system, and also rejecting several other petitions from Peruvian organizations asking for a postponement of the elections.

NDI and the Carter Center had hoped that Peruvian authorities would agree to an election date that permitted sufficient time for technical and political improvements to be accomplished. Meaningful improvements would have required political will, as well as decisive action and concerted efforts by the government and electoral authorities, mass media, security forces, courts and others. Regretfully, this political will was not demonstrated.

Therefore, an election on May 28 will not meet minimum international standards for a credible, democratic election. Under current circumstances, NDI and the Carter Center will not send its fifth electoral observation mission to observe the May 28 exercise.

Contacts:

In Washington: Patrick Merloe / Matt Dippell (202) 328-3136

In Atlanta: Jennifer McCoy (404) 420-5175

In Lima: Luis Nunes / Barry Levitt (511) 442-2224

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