

PRESS RELEASE

As a part of the national electoral observation conducted by the University Institute of Public Opinion (*Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública*, IUDOP) of the Central American University (*Universidad Centroamericana*, UCA), we present here a summary of the qualitative evaluation of the process of setup and opening of the local election boards (*Juntas Receptoras de Votos*, JRVs), based on information received through the observer network by 12:00 noon.

- a) We would first like to congratulate all Salvadoran citizens for their enthusiasm on election day, and recognize the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (*Tribunal Supremo Electoral*, TSE) for its role, as well as the various international observer missions and the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (*Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos*, PDDH), who have been involved in the process and promoted greater transparency.
- b) As a part of this election observation process, with the principal goal of conducting an independent election monitoring effort to promote a more transparent process and allow for greater confidence in the results of the municipal and legislative elections, 2,000 observers were deployed throughout the country's 14 departments. Through their direct observation on election day, they recorded information regarding the setup of the election boards and the beginning of the voting process. The statistically random nature of the sample permits the acquisition of results that can be generalized to the national level.
- c) As a product of the observation, we can make the following estimates:
 - ✓ 99.82 percent of election boards were set up between 7:00 and 9:00 a.m., and 0.02 percent were not set up for various reasons. According to our estimates, of the 9,534 election boards in the country, only 20 did not open before 9:00 a.m. (see graph 1).
 - ✓ There were delays in beginning setup; however, 70 percent of the voting tables (*mesas de votación*) opened before 8:00 a.m. (see graph 2).
 - ✓ All election boards opened with the minimum number of required members. Two-thirds of the election boards set up with five members and one-third with four members (see graph 3A).
 - ✓ At more than 97 percent of election tables, the election board set up with the necessary materials to begin voting, including the ballot boxes, the voting shield, the required papers, the bottle of indelible ink, and the electoral registry (see graph 3B).
 - ✓ Some problems were detected during setup. In 30 percent of election boards, there were members who did not smoothly implement the setup process; in one-fifth of the election boards, the placement of the voting shield allowed others to observe the vote, and at four percent of election boards, we identified people campaigning.

- ✓ In all locations observed, we identified the presence of monitors from various political parties (see graph 4a), and in 98 percent of cases, ARENA and FMLN monitors were present (see graph 4b).
- d) Although the setup and opening process generally took place in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Code, the General Regulations on Election Observation and the TSE's opening instruction booklet, the observer network experienced difficulties in conducting its work, detailed in table 1.

Our observers will remain in place at their respective election boards for the remainder of election day, and we will continue to provide reports on their observations.

San Salvador, January 18, 2008.

TABLE 1.

DEPARTMENT	MUNICIPALITY	PARTIES INVOLVED	DETAILS
La Paz	San Antonio Masahuat	Members of the Municipal election Board	Did not permit observers to enter voting center As of noon, observers had not been able to enter
San Miguel	Nuevo Edén de San Juan	FMLN and PDC	Voting center CLOSED, even at noon. Impossible for voters to enter Appear to be foreign citizens wanting to vote Disturbances and intervention of the Maintenance and Order Unit (<i>Unidad de Mantenimiento y Orden, UMO</i>) Prosecutor's office proposes that voting take place in the park
Sonsonate	Armenia	Members of the local election board	Threatened not to permit observation of the counting process
		Municipal election board	Stated that the legal provisions for observation have been repealed.
Cabañas	San Isidro	Members of the local election board and political parties	Suspended voting due to rumors that foreign citizens were voting
Santa Ana	El Porvenir	Members of the local election board	Did not permit entry to the voting center
Cuscatlán	Cojutepeque	Members of the local election board	Did not permit an observer to vote, stating that he was required to vote at the same time as members of the JRV
	San Cristóbal	Municipal election board	Moved local election boards to other municipalities. Local election board 9474, assigned to San Cristóbal, was moved to Santa Cruz Michapa
La Unión	La Unión	Members of the local election board	Threatened not to permit observation of the counting process (JRV 6697)