

PRESS RELEASE

The following statement is based on information provided by our network of 2,000 observers deployed throughout the country, who have observed a random national sample of local election boards (*Juntas Receptoras de Votos, JRV*) throughout the day.

Election day has been characterized by a high level of civic participation and there are no systematic irregularities that would cast doubt on the honesty of the process. However, some issues should be taken into account and corrected for the upcoming presidential election.

PROBLEMS IN THE VOTING PROCESS

- 1) An important problem, as indicated in the report of January 18, is the placement of the voting shields. At almost 45 percent of election boards, voters could be observed by third parties when casting their vote.
- 2) At 30 percent of election boards, there were people campaigning or attempting to influence voters.
- 3) At least 15 percent of election boards saw inconsistencies between the data in the electoral registry and identification documents (DUI), and cases of voters using a clearly damaged identification document.

We will continue analyzing the data provided by our observers in order to provide a detailed report to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (*Tribunal Supremo Electoral, TSE*), the political parties and the public, accompanied by our recommendations aimed at improving the quality of the presidential election process.

CLOSURE OF THE ELECTION BOARDS

Of the voting tables, 87.04 percent closed between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m.; 12.45 percent closed before 5:00 p.m.; and the remainder closed after 6:00 p.m.

COUNTING OF BALLOTS

We confirmed the presence of at least three members of the election boards (full or substitute members) at all of the boards observed; 69.2 percent had five members.

In almost all of the election boards, FMLN observers (99.7 percent) and ARENA observers (99.5 percent) were present. PDC observers were present at 74.7 percent; the PCN at 78 percent; the CD at 44 percent; and the FDR at 32 percent.

One-third of the election boards made mistakes in completing the official reports (*actas*) and 34 percent of the boards conducted the count behind closed doors.

The count ended before 7:00 p.m. at 23.9 percent of voting tables; between 7:00 and 8:00 p.m. at 66.7 percent of tables; and after 8:00 p.m. at the remaining 9.4 percent of tables.

RESULTS IN SAN SALVADOR

Based on our random sample of election boards in San Salvador, we derived a statistical estimate of the results, with the goal of providing this estimate to the TSE and later, in the legal timeframe, to the public. However, the closeness of the results hindered our efforts to produce an acceptable estimate within the margin of error established in our sample design.

DIFFICULTIES DURING THE OBSERVATION

Isolated problems experienced by some observers in conducting their work—due to obstacles imposed by some election board members or by some municipal election boards (*Juntas Electorales Municipales*, JEM), and listed in our prior press release—recurred in the afternoon when observers of various election boards were prevented from attending the vote counting process. In the municipality of Mercedes Umaña, in Usulután department, an observer was even harassed by members of the FMLN when leaving the voting center (*centro de votación*).

The fact that members of the local and municipal election boards obstructed the national observation leads us to believe that their members were not familiar with our agreement with the TSE authorizing the election observation, as well as the recently approved General Regulations on Election Observation that permit any duly accredited citizen to independently observe election day. In this respect it is important to remember the contribution of various civic groups and organizations in promoting greater transparency in electoral processes around the world, making transparency broadly recognized today.

We remain committed to delivering our detailed report of the observation to the TSE in the coming days, and we reiterate our congratulations to Salvadorans for their exemplary participation in these legislative and municipal elections. We particularly thank those in IUDOP's network of volunteer observers for their civic spirit throughout election day, and the departmental and municipal coordinators, citizen data handlers and the UCA personnel who contributed their support to this initiative.

San Salvador, January 20, 2009