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Carter Center Preliminary Statement on the First Round of Voting in Egypt's People's Assembly Elections

The Carter Center deployed witnesses to observe two days of polling on Nov. 28-29 in the first of three rounds of Egypt's parliamentary elections, as well as the preceding election preparation period. Carter Center witnesses visited more than 300 polling stations in all nine active governorates, and followed the process through to the counting exercise.

“Carter Center witnesses in Egypt reported enthusiastic participation in the election and a largely peaceful process, for which the Egyptian people should be proud,” former U.S. President Jimmy Carter said. “However, the process is far from complete, and there are several areas for improvement before the next two rounds of voting. We hope that steps can be taken to help _____ ters and other politi
_____ warmly received Carter Center witnesses, a sentiment that was deeply

The Carter Center notes the deep skepticism of activists in Tahrir and in other parts of the country

Elections' (SJCE) regulations on campaigning. The Center suggests that the SJCE provide clear instruction to the parties on what constitutes improper campaigning.

- Despite reports of some isolated incidents of violence, the Carter Center witnesses found the voting environment to be generally peaceful, and that security personnel, while present did not interfere in the process.
- The process thus far has suffered from a lack of clear and well communicated information about election day processes and procedures. The Carter Center hopes that clear information about the process will be disseminated widely and in sufficient time to guarantee that voters and other stakeholders have the opportunity to understand and adapt to it.
- In general, Center witnesses reported considerable disorganization and confusion stemming from inadequate preparation and instructions to the judges and workers on how to efficiently count the ballots and report the results to the supervising sorting committee. It is recommended that the SJCE publicize clear vote count procedures, as well as regulations on the access of candidates, parties and their agents to the counting centers, and that they enforce these rules fairly.
- While Carter Center witnesses received accreditation, there were isolated incidents in which access to polling stations and counting centers was denied or limited. For the next two future rounds of elections it is important to ensure that accredited domestic and international witnesses have access to polling stations and counting facilities without obstruction.
- Any complaints regarding the Nov. 28-29 election days are yet to be heard. The Center reiterates the importance of providing information on the complaints process to voters and candidates.'

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A not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization, The Carter Center has helped to improve life for people in more than 70 countries by resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; improving mental health care; and teaching farmers in developing nations to increase crop production. The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide.

THE
CARTER CENTER



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The Legal Framework

The People's Assembly elections are governed primarily by the Constitution, the Law of Political Rights,

to them.

Campaigning

The campaign environment in the weeks leading up to the elections was vibrant with campaign banners, posters and graffiti widespread throughout both urban and rural areas. Candidates and parties used face-to-face meetings, going from house-to-house and holding public gatherings to receive voters.⁴ Although the campaign period was held under the shadow of an arbitrary Emergency Law, in general, candidates of all political persuasions appeared to be able to campaign freely and openly.⁵ There was, however, confusion over the official start date of the campaign period, and as a result, Carter Center witnesses observed active campaigning before the campaign period commenced.

The campaigning process, however, was disrupted by the violence used by state security forces in response to protests in Tahrir and public squares throughout major Egyptian cities starting on November 19. It should be acknowledged that two of the Egyptian Current Party's activists were

fundamental right that should be fully respected in order to ensure credible elections. To this end, steps should be considered before the next two rounds of elections.

Voter Identification

The use of indelible ink can be an effective means of preventing multiple voting. Carter Center witnesses reported that, in almost all cases, indelible

application of the Law Concerning People's Assembly Article 15,¹¹ and other provisions regarding seat allocation could bolster trust in the system and promote comity between the parties during the electoral phases.

In addition, ambiguity remains about the types of legislation the future parliament will be able to pass within the current constitutional framework. At the moment, the 2012 parliament will operate within a legal framework that is designed and regulated by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), making it difficult for the civilian parliament to have oversight of the military and serve as an equal partner in the continued transition process. In particular, it is important that representatives, elected freely by citizens, are able, in fact, to exercise governmental power and be held accountable through the electoral process for their exercise of that power. ¹²The Carter Center hopes that the Egyptian authorities will ensure that the parliamentary elections facilitate a more inclusive and participatory transition, and result in a parliament with genuine authority to select the Constitutional Assembly.

The Carter Center mission to witness Egypt's Parliamentary Elections has been accredited by the Supreme Judicial Commission for Elections. The Carter Center deployed the first phase of its international delegation on Nov. 6, 2011. The Carter Center has deployed 40 long- and medium-term observers from 21 countries including: Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, Palestine, Philippines, Slovakia, Somalia, Spain, Sudan, Tunisia, United Kingdom, and the United States. While deployed, these