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Center Preliminary Statement on the First Round of Voting in Egypt's Shura Council Elections

Carter Center witnesses in Egypt observed low levels of interest and participation among voters, political parties, and nongovernmental organizations elections. Despite the brief respite between council election authority was able to introduce several technical amendments for the Shura election including the use of more secure ballot boxes and the counting of votes at polling stations. While improving operational electoral processes, these changes also introduce new challenges for the training of election officials and to ensure the transparency of the process.

Assembly, and mere days after the anniversary of the Revolution, contributed to an unenthusiastic electoral process. In addition, the continuation of key parts of the Emergency Law, criticism of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) leadership of the transition, and uncertainty over investigations into civil society organizations have negatively influenced the overall election environment. The Carter Center notes that the environment in which elections are conducted has an important effect on the credibility of the process. resolve key points of contention about the transition expeditiously, transparently, and fairly. As part of these efforts, the Center urges authorities to lift the Emergency Law in its entirety.

The first stage of the two-phase election of the Sh governorates on Jan. 29-30, 2012. Carter Center witnesses were present across 11 governorates and will remain in place to witness runoff and rerun races. This election process is ongoing and therefore the findings of The Carter Center are preliminary. Additional statements regarding the process will be released as it unfolds. The Carter Center www.cartercenter.org.

The Carter Center has been present in Egypt since November 2011 and also witnessed all three phases of the People's

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This preliminary statement summarizes the observations of t

Shura Council (the upper house of parliament) elections held Jan. 29-30, 2012.¹ Runoff and rerun elections for the first phase will be held on Feb. 14-15², with any runoff or rerun races to be held Feb. 22. The Shura Council is then scheduled to hold its first session on Feb. 28, 2012³.

The Election Environment

The election of the Shura Council⁴ is the second representative election to be held since the fall of the Mubarak regime in February 2011. It is administered under the authority of the Supreme Judicial Commission for Elections (SJCE) as the supervising judicial authority for elections. Under the transition plan outlined by the interim-governing regime, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the 180⁵ elected members of the upper-house Shura Council will join with the 498⁶ elected members of the

voter fatigue and the exhaustion of party resources from the People s Assembly elections that only completed rerun races on Jan. 19, the convening of the first session of the People s Assembly on Jan. 23, and the focus of attention on the first anniversary of the Jan. 25 Revolution.

Party Participation The voter list and candidate and party registration processes for the Shura Council election were conducted simultaneous to those of the People s Assembly election. As such, voters were not provided with an opportunity to update their records between elections, and candidate and party registration for the Shura

Parliament will have so few women, the Center reiterates its recommendation that the People's Assembly and the Shura Council takes steps to ensure that women constitute at least 30 percent of the 100-member constitution drafting committee..

Voter Information

In general, Carter Center witnesses noted an absence of official public information¹⁹ campaigns about the Shura Council elections in the days preceding the first round of polling. Where official public information was in evidence, it was observed that the information was often drowned out by other news, such as the anniversary of the Revolution. Similarly, the Carter Center witnesses noted that there was little visible campaigning among political contestants in the days ahead of the election. Whereas political party campaigning compensated for minimal official information campaigns in the People's Assembly election, its diminished presence in these elections may have contributed to the lack of voter interest and

While notable advances were achieved in the polling process, several concerns witnessed in the People's Assembly election were still evident. The most commonly reported problems appear to stem from an ongoing lack of procedural definition, training, and clarity of institutional duties. Numerous incidents were reported of polling stations opening after the official start time of 8:00 a.m. due to the late arrival of judges or party representatives.

haphazardly collected, and concerns over their orderly collection and storage appears problematic. The efficiency of the tally centers was observed to have been hampered by a lack of staff and computers, creating a bottleneck for