

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

Carter Center witnesses observing the People's Assembly elections in Egypt reported progress in several aspects of polling during the second round of voting on Dec. 14-15, but found that there are numerous areas where procedures need further improvement.

On the positive side, the experience gained by judges supervising the first round of the elections was evident in the second round of voting, as many of the logistic and administrative operations improved. In addition, Carter Center witnesses reported a reduction of illicit political campaigning during the campaign silence period in most areas.

Nevertheless, many problems observed in the first round were still evident in the second round of voting. Assistance to illiterate voters has been inconsistent across polling stations and would be improved by issuing clear instructions to election officials. In addition, there are areas in the implementation of vote counting where the process should be enhanced, including through the development of specific and clear procedures

and Tahrir Square. The Carter Center condemns the violence and the excessive use of force by security forces and urges a thorough and detailed investigation into these events. Such violence undermines the fundamental right of security, which is vital for all Egyptian citizens and essential to ensure their rights of freedom of expression and of association, which are especially important during elections.

The Carter Center mission witnessed the second round of Egypt's People's Assembly elections held on Dec. 14-15 across nine of the nation's 27 governorates.

### **Counting Centers**

- Assign additional judicial officials to counting centers with the task of coordinating, liaising, and supervising security forces in their management of access, to ensure the orderly and timely access by authorized people, including judges, party agents, domestic and international witnesses, and others;
- Issue clear procedures to election officials to standardize the conduct of the counting process;
- Provide more information to electoral stakeholders on how and when the votes from the out-of-country voting process are integrated into the election results;

### **Complaints Procedures**

- Improve the clarity of the complaints procedures and implement systems to record and track complaints that are lodged;
- Make concerted efforts to inform and raise the awareness of the complaints procedures among electoral stakeholders;
- Ensure that the handling of complaints, appeals and resolutions is in accordance with the legal framework.

The full Carter Center preliminary statement may be found at



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The Carter Center mission witnessed the second round of Egypt's People's Assembly elections held Dec. 14 -15 across nine of the nation's 27 governorates,<sup>5</sup> deploying more than 40 international witnesses to all governorates to directly observe the pre-election environment, polling, and counting processes. As these elections are being conducted in phases, The Carter Center is issuing this statement as a preliminary assessment. It builds on previous statements issued during and after the first round. The goal of these statements is to provide substantive and constructive feedback to the electoral authorities in the interest of achieving progressive improvements in the electoral process.<sup>6</sup> The main findings of Carter Center witnesses during the second round of voting include the following.

***Illicit Campaigning:*** Witnesses noted an improvement in several aspects of the polling activities compared to the first round. A noticeable decline of illicit political campaigning during the 48 hour campaign-silence period ahead of polls was evident in urban areas, although a similar level of campaign-related violations still took place in several rural districts. Illicit campaigning inside polling stations during election days was considerably reduced in most areas, due in part to the heightened vigilance of presiding judges.

***Access to Polling Centers:*** Administrative and logistical difficulties that caused late openings of polling stations in the first round were less frequently reported. In spite of this, late openings continued to be a problem. Carter Center witnesses reported a number of instances where security forces controlling access to polling centers impeded the access of party and candidate agents

- Security forces at polling stations should be better briefed in their duties, which include being responsive to the instructions of supervising judges; and
- Accredited party and candidate agents and representatives should be provided and required to wear clearly displayed identification at all times to facilitate access to polling centers.

***Inside the Polling Stations:*** Within polling stations, the effect of the Supreme Judicial Commission for Election's (SJCE's) recent instruction to require a female poll worker in all polling stations was broadly implemented, which is a positive development. However, consistent checking for the presence of indelible ink on voters' fingers prior to voting remained weak, as did the correct application of ink. Of particular concern also is a continued lack of clarity and consistency over assistance to illiterate and disabled voters. The Law on the Exercise of Political Rights (Article 29) is clear that disabled voters may be assisted as they cast their ballot. However, for illiterate voters, the degree of assistance that may be provided is not stated, and as a result, has been inconsistent. To ensure consistency in the polling process and preserve its credibility, The Carter Center therefore strongly urges the SJCE to ensure instructions

this problem. The fact that judges, agents, and observers encountered problems in gaining access to the count centers was strong evidence of a breakdown in communication between security forces and the supervising judicial officials.<sup>8</sup> To improve procedures for access to count centers in future rounds of polling, The Carter Center strongly recommends that the SJCE consider the following suggestions:

- Additional judicial officials should be assigned to count centers and be dedicated to supervising security forces controlling access to count centers;
- Security force personnel with command and management functions should be better briefed on their duties and be responsive to the instructions of the supervising judges;
- A system to verify the arrival and in-take of ballot boxes and other sensitive materials from polling stations should be implemented to register and confirm the arrival of materials;
- Where possible, vehicle access to count centers should be separate to pedestrian access. That would allow the presiding judge and a few poll workers to accompany the ballot boxes by vehicle, while other poll workers, party and candidate representatives, and domestic and international witnesses could enter via the pedestrian route; and
- Where there is difficult physical access to count center facilities, a secondary staging site should be used to control and manage the flow of vehicles, materials, and staff into the count center.

previously excluded parties to be included on the ballot in three proportional representation district races  
on

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