

Carter Center Preliminary Statement
International Election Observation Mission to Liberia Presidential Runoff
Dec. 28, 2017

This is the Carter Center's preliminary report on the Dec. 26 voting and counting processes for Liberia's presidential runoff election. It is important to note that the election process is ongoing and that there are still important steps to be completed before the Center can provide an overall assessment.

The Carter Center has made seven previous statements about the electoral process in Liberia. This statement is limited to observations of the Dec. 26 polling and counting processes. Further reports addressing the tabulation process, the resolution of election disputes, and the post-election environment will follow, concluding in a comprehensive final report on the electoral process as a whole. These will provide additional detail and analysis of the electoral dispute-resolution process and the period between the first and second rounds of the presidential election.



Background

The Dec. 26 presidential runoff elections followed a first round of voting that took place on Oct. 10, 2017, during which 75.2 percent of Liberians patiently and peacefully expressed their will at the ballot box. On Oct. 19, the National Election Commission announced the first-round results, declaring that Ambassador George Weah had won 38.4 percent of the vote and Vice President Joseph Boakai had won 28.8 percent of the vote and would be contesting in the runoff.

In October, the NEC received a number of complaints related to the elections for the House of Representatives and the presidency. Complaints were addressed within the timeframes provided in the law, and complainants were given ample opportunity to be heard. However, at times, requests from complainants for additional time and numerous witnesses affected the efficiency of the process.

The presidential runoff was originally scheduled for Nov. 7, but preparations were put on hold by Liberia's Supreme Court to allow time to resolve disputes from the first round. The Liberty Party complaint, joined later by the Unity Party, was rejected by the Supreme Court. The NEC was required to proceed with the runoff elections after fulfilling several conditions set by the court to address difficulties faced in the first round. The Supreme Court issued its ruling verbally on Dec. 7, and in writing the following week. In line with the constitution, the NEC then called the runoff elections for Dec. 26.¹

The Carter Center International Election Observation Mission in Liberia

The Center's observation mission for the Dec. 26 presidential runoff election was led by Dr. Aminata Touré, former prime minister of Senegal, and Jordan Ryan, vice president of peace programs for The Carter Center. On Dec. 26, the Center deployed 45 observers from 24 countries. Carter Center observers visited 171 polling stations in all 15 counties to observe voting and counting. On Dec. 27, they began observation of the tabulation process. The Carter Center's long-term observers continue to monitor the ongoing tabulation process and finalization of official results. Carter Center representatives will remain in Liberia to observe the resolution of any post-election disputes.

Runoff Campaign

The Liberty Party and Unity Party complaint reshaped the political landscape and dominated political discourse in the time between the two rounds. Initially, political activity centered on the two leading contenders' competition for the endorsements of the 18 other presidential candidates and Liberia's more than 20 other political parties. As the LP/UP electoral complaint gained traction, focus shifted to the political parties joining the legal challenge and calls for a re-run of the election.

The Supreme Co

The postponement of the runoff election significantly hindered civic and voter education activities. Through the media, the country closely followed developments in the legal process, and many people were therefore aware of the runoff election date. However, the circumstances limited the opportunities for voter education activities on key topics, including the runoff procedures, the commission's efforts to address deficiencies in the voter lists, and the new restrictions on the use of supplemental voter lists.

As a result of the electoral dispute-resolution process and associated delays, the NEC had to halt, and then restart, training efforts for polling staff, and procedures had to be adjusted multiple times to reflect the Supreme Court instructions. Despite these late changes and the lack of a fully updated training manual for distribution to all polling

A concerted effort to increase women's participation in the political process, through targeted voter education, recruitment as election staff, and the strengthening of requirements for their representation in political parties.

A strengthened training program for poll workers and the further elaboration of polling and counting procedures.

A stronger emphasis on civic and voter education, which was affected in the runoff by the dispute-resolution process and the stay on electoral activity.

A plan to ensure the equal access of marginalized groups to all part Tf1 0 0 1 210.25 614.83 Tm0 g0 G{o