



UNIÓN EUROPEA
MISIÓN DE OBSERVACIÓN ELECTORAL
ELECCIONES GENERALES
HONDURAS – 2017



**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION
TO HONDURAS FOLLOWING THE DECLARATION OF PROVISIONAL
RESULTS OF THE 2017 GENERAL ELECTIONS**

Tegucigalpa, 17 December 2017

Background

The EU EOM has been in Honduras since 11 October, and has observed the different stages of the election process, within the framework of its commitment to neutrality, objectivity and non-interference, and it has shared its observations with Honduran citizens at key moments.

On 28 November, the Mission presented a preliminary statement, which set out the conclusions of its observation up to that point. Alongside a number of improvements, the statement noted the persistence of certain problems which it had observed in the previous elections, and which had led to recommendations by the 2013 EU EOM, including the widespread trafficking in accreditations in polling stations. Among other recommendations, the statement emphasised the advisability of depoliticising the electoral administration at all levels, as well as the need to update and modernise the Civil Registry, which serves as the basis for the Voter Register.

The statement concluded with a generally positive evaluation of the Tribunal Supremo Electoral's (TSE) organisation of the elections, while at the same time noting the generally negative public perception concerning the body's neutrality. The statement also documented a clear disparity between the resources and visibility enjoyed by the candidate for the Partido Nacional as compared to his competitors. This disparity was evident in the media, and was particularly grave in the case of public social programmes, which often blurred the line between government and ruling party.

Post-electoral period

The Mission's Chief Observer, Marisa Matias, spoke to Honduran stakeholders again on 31 November, to emphasise the importance of no-one being declared winner of the election until all votes had been counted, by which she included the conclusion of the special recounts, in conditions of absolute transparency. A few days later, Marisa Matias suggested to the TSE that it would be appropriate to be flexible with regard to the deadlines for submitting challenges, in order to ensure that political parties and candidates would have sufficient time to prepare and document any complaints they wished to submit.

Once the deadline was extended, the EU EOM noted the TSE's open approach to possible complaints and expressed its conviction that, given the tense political conditions prevalent in the country, nothing could better contribute to reassuring the public than for political parties and candidates to present all the challenges and demands for recounts that they judged necessary, naturally within the legal framework and accompanied by the evidence they had available to support their claims.



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The Mission underlined the responsibilities of different actors to the Hondurans citizens, namely, on the one hand, the TSE's responsibility to agree to all reasonable demands for verification, and on the other, the responsibility of the parties alleging manipulation of the results, to support their allegations with their copies of results forms or other evidence, and to participate in the verifications when they were carried out. It should be noted that on 26 November, the EU EOM observed that representatives from the three main political parties, who are given a certified copy of results, were present in virtually 100% of the observed polling stations, both during opening and voting periods, and during closing and counting procedures.

The TSE's and political parties' respective responsibilities to actively help clarify any doubts held by Honduran citizens were all the greater as a result of two factors which contributed to a deterioration in trust during the days immediately following election day. The first factor concerned the progressive change in the trend of results after the TSE's first announcement, after which data was entered from results forms which had not been transmitted electronically from polling stations and which, according to the EU EOM's analysis, were in 90% of cases from polling stations in rural areas. The second incident which fuelled suspicions was the interruption of the publication of results for several hours in the afternoon of 29 November, as a result of a capacity problem in one of the servers, which then had to be replaced, and its data transferred. The EU EOM technicians, who analysed the problem and received explanations regarding the incident from the moment it occurred, have found no indication that there was any manipulation of data during this server replacement.

In fact, the main purpose of the publication system is to make public both the images of the results forms for each polling station, and the results themselves once they are entered, in order to ensure that parties, candidates, observers and citizens may compare them with the copies they have available, or with the results they observed. The EU EOM notes that the results forms and the results data for all of the country's polling stations, for all three elections, are published on the TSE website and are easily accessible.

Before the deadline for submitting challenges or complaints, the TSE sought to dispel doubts and took the initiative to carry out a recount of the votes from the close to 5000 polling stations from which results forms were not electronically transmitted on the night of the elections. The recount was undertaken in conditions of full transparency and in the presence of national and international observers.

The Mission observed these special recounts and noted that, despite numerous invitations from the TSE, neither of the two parties which had denounced irregularities attended the recounts and verifications, nor did they come to compare their copies of results forms with the TSE originals. The recount did not reveal any significant differences from the results previously published on the TSE website.

The EU EOM notes that the Partido Liberal and the Alianza de Oposición contra la dictadura each presented challenges calling for the annulment of the presidential vote – though not the votes for Congress or the municipalities – but they did not request any special recounts. The Mission also notes that neither appeal was accompanied by a significant number of results forms, which would



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have served to demonstrate to the Honduran public what the alleged divergences were between the forms in the parties' possession, and those published on the TSE website, which formed the basis of the declaration of results.

Thereafter, on 12 December, the Alianza de Oposición delivered a digital file to the EU EOM, containing their copies of 14,363 results forms, of the total 18,128 polling stations across the country. The EU EOM did not receive copies of the remaining forms. Following a cross-check between a large random sample of the results forms provided by the Alianza and the original published on the TSE website, the Mission concluded that there was virtually no difference between the two sets of results forms.

Declaration of results

On 16 December, the TSE rejected the annulment challenges submitted by the Alianza and the Partido Liberal and announced election results. The EU EOM will continue to analyse any appeal which may be submitted in response to the publication of results, for consideration either by the TSE or the Supreme Court of Justice. The Mission re-iterates that it is essential that the treatment of any such appeals fulfil all necessary guarantees and that all the institutional bodies concerned fully fulfil their mandate.

The EU EOM is preparing a final report which will include a detailed account of its observations and conclusions, and will also present a series of recommendations for the improvement of future electoral processes, for the consideration of Honduran society.

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