

PANORAMA ELECTORAL CONSORTIUM

STATEMENT ON MORNING VOTING

6 November 2016

The Panorama Electoral Consortium presents preliminary findings from its observation of the morning voting process.

The Supreme Electoral Council's refusal to respond to our accreditation request, made in June, resulted in Panorama Electoral's observers having very limited access to the voting process. They were unable to monitor the set-up of polling stations or to oversee the voting process inside these during the course of the day. This lack of transparency has pervaded many aspects of the elections and hinders Nicaraguan citizens from knowing whether they can trust the electoral process.

In spite of this, during the morning observers have been able to observe key aspects in an exhaustive and systematic manner from the outside of the polling stations. Their findings are as follows:

Preliminary findings

With 98% of its short-term observers reporting, complemented by 158 municipal coordinators, including those in the districts of Managua, Panorama Electoral has summarized its preliminary findings regarding this morning's vote.

Our observers were able to establish that almost all polling stations they surveyed were open and that citizens were free to move about in the area.

In the morning hours the turnout of voters at the polling stations observed in different parts of the country was moderate.

The mood outside the polling stations observed was peaceful throughout the morning. Nevertheless, there were several incidents of threats and intimidation, as detailed below in the section on critical incidents.

During the morning observers saw voters being transported at 16% of the polling stations they were monitoring.

Critical Incidents

In the course of the morning the critical incidents reported most frequently by Panorama Electoral observers were intimidation, threats and harassment. Among the events reported, most of the aggressors involved were FSLN sympathizers, while victims were usually voters and civil society representatives.

At the polling station located at the Wilike School in the municipality of Paiwas, someone outside the station was heard asking voters their names and what polling station they had voted at.

Our observer in Kukra Hill reported that FSLN political secretary arrived at the polling station and instructed people to vote for the party.

In the municipality of Matagalpa, at the polling station installed at the San Francisco de Assis Worker's Training Center, our observer entered the area for the purpose of exercising her right to vote. The person in charge of the polling station demanded she leave immediately lest he call the police, thus denying her the right to vote.

Worth highlighting is the occurrence in the municipality of El Ayote, where an armed group went into the communities of Curingucito and El Cacao, where they intimidated PLI and PLC sympathizers in order to prevent them from voting. This action spread fear among citizens, and they have abstained from going to the polling station and exercising their right to vote.

What to expect next from Panorama Electoral

Panorama Electoral has deployed nearly 650 well-trained election observers to all municipalities. Of these, 158 are municipal supervisors, while the remaining 492 are short-term observers. The Consortium deployed the latter nationwide in a systematic and proportional manner. It will continue observing throughout the day and intends to release some of its key findings on the voting process to the media this evening.

Panorama Electoral will issue a preliminary report with an evaluation of the electoral process as a whole, including Election Day, on Monday 7 November, at 11 a.m. at the Barceló Hotel in Managua.

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