



OAS Presents Recommendations for the Presidential Runoff Election in Guatemala and Announces It Will Observe the August Election

June 27, 2023

The Electoral Observation Mission (EOM) of the Organization of American States (OAS), headed by former Paraguayan Minister of Foreign Affairs Eladio Loizaga, congratulates the people of Guatemala on the general elections and elections of Central American Parliament deputies held on Sunday, June 25. The Mission applauds the civic commitment of the Guatemalans who went to the polls, while it congratulates the elected candidates and recognizes the work of the electoral authorities, representatives of political organizations, and other actors who contributed to the success of the elections.

The pre-electoral stage was characterized by a climate of tension and polarization that should be addressed prior to the second presidential round. On election day, the Mission observed 1,005 polling stations (*Juntas Receptoras de Votos - JRV*), providing it a comprehensive overview of the process. Although in general election day was peaceful nationwide, there were some incidents of violence, which resulted in the suspension of the elections in two municipalities. The Mission condemns this type of conduct and reiterates the importance of guaranteeing the free exercise of the vote in a civic environment and with unqualified respect for the will of the people.

For the second round, the Mission invites institutional, political, and social actors to embark upon the process with a sense of democratic responsibility, refraining from statements that could generate societal divisions. The OAS/EOM calls especially on the contending candidates to focus, in the campaign and debate, on ideas and proposals. It further invites reflection on the high levels of abstentionism, invalid ballots, and blank ballots, which clearly manifests citizen disaffection. Beyond public policies designed to increase electoral participation, the Mission urges the political authorities to seek greater connection with the citizens, to listen to their concerns and generate responses that address the reality of the country.

The OAS/EOM also considers it fundamental to recognize and respect the results of the vote in order to provide the electorate with certainty and ensure the stability of the preferences expressed by the vote of the citizenry.

The Mission observed the lack of correspondence between the official election day results and all duly publicized pre-election polling. The OAS has noted such inconsistency in various elections. Although the Mission understands that polls are not a results prediction instrument, but rather a snapshot of preferences indicated at a given time, it is also aware that they influence the implementation of the electoral process. For example, they influence the media attention



received by the candidates and their participation in discussion and debate forums. Therefore, the Mission urges the institutions and companies that carry out pre-electoral polling to revise their methodology so that it yields a more faithful reflection of reality.

After two preliminary visits to Guatemala in mid-May and early June 2023, the OAS/EOM was deployed to the country on June 13. The Mission was composed of 90 specialists and observers from 20 countries, who observed the elections in the 24 Departmental Electoral Boards (*Juntas Electorales Departamentales* - JED), corresponding to Guatemala's 22 departments, the Guatemala City Central District, and one polling station set up in Arlington, Virginia, in the United States of America.

During these elections, the Mission analyzed different aspects of the electoral process, including specialists in the areas of electoral organization and technology, electoral justice, political financing, electoral violence, and the political participation of women and indigenous peoples. The Mission met with electoral and governmental authorities, candidates, and representatives of political parties, civil society, and the academic community to learn about the election preparations, the different perspectives of the process, and the political context in which it was conducted. Based on these interviews, a study of the norms and information gathered on-site through direct observation nationwide, it was possible to make a comprehensive analysis of the electoral process and to monitor the implementation of the recommendations issued by prior OAS missions.

This Preliminary Report focuses on presenting findings and proposing recommendations for implementation for the second presidential round to be held on August 20. Subsequently, the OAS/EOM will present other technical observations on the Guatemalan electoral process, which will be set out in the Preliminary Report on the second presidential round and in the Final Report to the OAS Permanent Council.

PRE-ELECTORAL STAGE

The pre-electoral stage was marked by a climate of tension and anticipated conflict. The Mission condemns the violent incidents that took place in the days prior to the election, which resulted in several deaths, including those of candidates and other political actors. There were also attempted murders and various incidents of aggression and electoral intimidation, as will be described below. The night before the election, the OAS/EOM learned of multiple clashes over the transporting of voters and suspected voter transporting at various locations in the country.

Some of the conflict stemmed from the exclusion of candidacies and the uncertainty regarding the validity of the challenged candidacies, which persisted until the eve of the election. The



uncertainty regarding those authorized to participate in the election led to confusion and unrest, and eroded citizen confidence in electoral and judicial authorities. On March 22, 2023, the OAS issued a press release expressing concern about the process for registering candidacies in Guatemala.¹ On that occasion, the Organization noted the large number of excluded candidacies, some very high profile, and reiterated the principles of inter-American jurisprudence that political rights can be restricted only when these restrictions pursue a legitimate purpose and meet the requirements of suitability, necessity, and proportionality.

According to information provided to the Mission, as of June 22, 30 political parties and 41,430 candidates had registered to participate in the election, 10% of whom (4,155 in total) were excluded, including four presidential tickets. The main grounds for dismissal was failure to meet one or more registration requirements. In addition to administrative disqualification, a large number of candidates were excluded through the courts.

The uncertainty regarding the validity of the candidacies challenged in the courts also influenced electoral organization, because ballot printing was delayed by a month. Even on June 23, two days before the election, changes were made to the registered candidacies, meaning that ballots had to be reprinted in two municipalities, as described in the Electoral Organization section.

Another relevant aspect at the pre-electoral stage was the further strengthening of the Preliminary Electoral Results Transmission (TREP) system. At the request of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), an OAS team provided technical cooperation from February to April 2023, with the aim of strengthening technological processes for the implementation of the TREP system for these elections. Through this collaboration, the TSE implemented various recommendations for the system's configuration, administration, optimization, transparency, and security, and adopted best practices in the management of related information technology processes.

In preparation for the Mission, during the preliminary visit and on days prior to the elections, the OAS/EOM observed a total of four test runs and/or pre-operation tests of the TREP.² The Mission recognizes that, after months of hard work, the system worked satisfactorily on election day, although transmission was delayed initially owing to delays in the vote count and transmission from polling stations.

ELECTION DAY

¹ OAS (2023). Available at: [OAS Secretariat for Strengthening Democracy Expresses Concern about Process of Registering Candidacies in Guatemala](#)

² The test runs were conducted on May 11 and June 3, and the pre-operation tests on June 22 and 23, 2023.



On election day, the OAS observers visited 1,005 JRVs in the country's 22 departments, in the Central District, and in Arlington, Virginia, in the United States. The OAS/EOM observed election day from the installation and opening of polling stations to the close of voting, ballot counting, results transmission, and removal of materials. The OAS observers verified that the average opening time of polling stations was 7:07 a.m., and that nearly all JRVs observed had the necessary materials. In addition, 97% of the JRVs observed were composed of the principal members.

The Mission applauds the punctuality and civic commitment of the polling station personnel. It also notes that the majority of those serving as JRV members were women (in 64% of centers observed), once again making evident their democratic vocation. In addition, over a fifth of the JRV observed were chaired by an indigenous person. The Mission also considers the large presence of political party delegates in the JRVs to be a very positive aspect of the process, with the CABAL, UNE, VAMOS, and VALOR organizations accounting for the largest percentage of party agents (*fiscales partidarios*) in the polling stations observed. The Mission reiterates the fundamental role of party agents in the transparency of the process and as a guarantee of mutual control among contenders.

In addition, the OAS/EOM observed that, in general, the voting center locations were appropriate for citizens to exercise their vote. However, it also noted that some centers lacked accessibility facilities for persons with disabilities.

On election day, there were incidents in at least five locations in the country, according to TSE information.³ In the municipality of San José del Golfo, Guatemala,⁴ and San Martín Zapotitlán, Retalhuleu,⁵ the elections had to be canceled due to clashes. The Mission was also informed of

³ TSE (2023). Available at: https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-IOS_GK0T-GK1C&mibextid=2Rb1fB&ref=watch_permalink&v=794155458834933

⁴ According to media information, in San José del Golfo, residents of the locale prevented the installation of polling stations after mistaking the JRV members for transported voters, leading them to violently block the entry of these authorities. Despite Municipal Electoral Council (*Junta Electoral Municipal* - JEM) attempts at dialogue, at noon, it was reported that the vote could not take place in the municipality, where 24 JRV were located in four polling stations and where 8,736 voters were registered. Subsequently, the TSE announced that the election would be held together with the second presidential round. TSE (2023). Available at: https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-IOS_GK0T-GK1C&mibextid=2Rb1fB&ref=watch_permalink&v=794155458834933

⁵ The media reported unrest and ballot burning at a polling station following reports of voters being transported to that location. In the afternoon, the Public Prosecutor's Office reported that 11 arrests had been made for the burning of electoral material. Available at: <https://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/elecciones-generales-guatemala-2023/en-directo-elecciones-generales-en-guatemala-2023/>



incidents in Sipacate, Escuintla; Chisec, Alta Verapaz; Nentón, Huehuetenango; Jocotales, Chinautla, and Tutuapa, San Marcos.

At the close of voting, there were also incidents of intimidation in zones 10, 14, and 16 of Guatemala City, where small explosive devices were thrown at a polling station and a vehicle. A third explosive device was found by public security authorities. Through the media, the Mission also learned of a fire in a polling station in Petén. The OAS observers received reports of intimidation in Jutiapa, Jalpatagua, voter abuse in Inso, Quetzaltenango, and breach of the secrecy of the vote in Guatemala City, among other misconduct. The OAS/EOM also received reports of the transport of voters to polling stations in some areas of the country observed.

At about 5:45 p.m., the TSE carried out the public resetting of the TREP, which was activated to begin to receive records when the polls closed. According to OAS observer reports, the average polling station closing time was 6:08 p.m. With few exceptions, the Mission observed that when the polls closed, no voters were still waiting in line to exercise their right to vote. At 6:04 p.m., the OAS/EOM observed the first transmission of records through the TREP system, which corresponded to an overseas polling station. The records continued to be reflected in this system without interruption throughout the night, although initially they were slow to arrive.

The delayed transmission of results is explained by the time it took to count the vote at polling stations and the failure in several departments to follow the instruction to accord priority to the presidential election in the vote count and transmission. Despite the instructions contained in the TSE instruction manuals,⁶ the OAS/EOM established that many polling places began the count with the municipal elections. Others began with the elections of national representatives or the Central American Parliament representative elections. Additionally, in half of the JEDs observed, the instruction was given to count the presidential ticket vote and submit the corresponding election results record (Document 4, yellow copy) for transmission over the TREP system before counting the vote for the other high offices.⁷ In the remaining JEDs, the instruction was given to count the vote for all five high offices prior to transmission.⁸

At 10 p.m., the OAS Mission established that only 6.85% of all election results records had been processed, with 18.5% at the presidential level. In order to report the election trend with a higher percentage of records processed, the plenary of the TSE postponed the press conference

⁶ TSE (2023). Instructivo para Juntas Receptoras de Votos [Instructions for Vote Collection/Compilation Committees]. Tema 2 [Topic 2]. Momentos del día de la votación [Stages of Election Day]. Momento 4 [Stage 4], p. 9. Available at: <https://www.tse.org.gt/images/eg23/INSTRUCTIVO%20JRV-M5.pdf>

⁷ Those that accorded priority to transmission of the presidential election results: San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Quiché, El Progreso, Guatemala, Chiquimula, Baja Verapaz, Izabal, and Totonicapán.

⁸ Those counting the results of the five elections prior to transmission: Jalapa, Quetzaltenango, Alta Verapaz, Zacapa, Retalhuleu, Chimaltenango, Guatemala City, Santa Rosa.



scheduled for 10 p.m. until 11:30 p.m., when it announced a total of 1,838,467 presidential election votes processed, with the UNE party in the lead, followed by Movimiento Semilla.⁹ The two leads were clearly established early on in the transmission and were maintained throughout the night and into the morning.

At 7 a.m. on Monday, June 26, the TSE results portal¹⁰ showed that 97.6% of election results records had been processed. UNE Party presidential candidate Sandra Torres and her Vice Presidential running mate Romeo Guerra were in first place, with 15.7% of the valid votes. In second place was Movimiento Semilla candidate Bernardo Arévalo and Vice Presidential candidate Karin Herrera, with 11.8% of the valid votes. Since no presidential ticket had won over 50% of the valid vote required for declaration of the winners, the TSE announced that a second electoral round would be held August 20. The preliminary results of the presidential election publicized by the TSE are consistent with the information compiled by the Mission.

The OAS/EOM also noted the steady flow of official tally sheets processed for the other four high office elections. The Mission learned that, initially, about one fifth of the new seats in the Congress of the Republic would be occupied by women, a percentage similar to that seen in 2019, but far below their rates of party membership and political participation now recorded in the Guatemalan system.

The Mission notes, that in general, the political authorities and citizens peacefully awaited the results, with very few instances where victory was declared prior to the publication of official figures indicating a clear trend and with a high percentage of the official tally sheets processed. The day after the elections, the Mission noted that in general, peace prevailed.

Based on the preliminary figures provided by the TSE, approximately 60.47% of the electorate participated in the general elections. Abroad, only 1.59% of those registered to vote in the United States exercised their right to vote. As in 2019, the Mission considers that, although the implementation of the overseas vote constitutes progress in the exercise of the political rights of Guatemalan migrants, steps should be taken to raise participation rates in future elections, including the presidential runoff .

⁹ TSE (2023). Available at: https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-IO5_GK0T-GK1C&mibextid=2Rb1fB&ref=watch_permalink&v=816572473372983

¹⁰ TSE (2023). Resultados Electorales Preliminares 2023 [Preliminary Election Results 2023]. Available at: <https://www.trep.gt/#!/tc1/ENT>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL RUNOFF

As indicated above, this report includes only recommendations that can be implemented for the presidential runoff on August 20, 2023. The findings and substantive recommendations on structural aspects of the electoral process will be provided in the Preliminary Report on the second round and expanded upon in the Final Report that the Mission will present to the OAS Permanent Council.

1. Electoral Organization and Overseas Voting

TSE and temporary bodies

The Mission noted the lack of coordination and standardization between the highest electoral authority and the temporary bodies, an aspect that should be accorded priority attention for the second presidential round. This was evident, for example, in the instructions regarding the order of the vote count, protocol for transmission of the official tally sheets in the TREP system, and removal of the electoral material. The Mission wishes to underscore that, beyond the authorities attributed by law to the temporary bodies, the Constitution clearly establishes the TSE as the highest electoral authority. The autonomy of the temporary bodies is compatible with the coordination, linkage, and flow of information throughout the system.

In addition, the OAS/EOM noted that 87.5% of the JEDs had undergone changes in personnel since 2019.¹¹ On-site observers also reported various resignations, not only at the level of the JED, but also of the Municipal Electoral Boards (*Juntas Electorales Municipales* - JEM) and the JRV. Among the reasons compiled by OAS observers were administrative disqualification stemming from the 2019 election, arrest for administrative liability associated with the position and lack of knowledge of its functions, and lack of time availability, since this is a voluntary citizen role.

For the second round, the OAS/EOM recommends:

- Strengthening coordination and communication channels within the TSE areas, and between the TSE and the temporary boards, in order to guarantee the dissemination of information and proper performance of electoral tasks.

¹¹ TSE (2023). General List of JED Members. Available at: https://elecciones2023.tse.org.gt/sites/default/files/2023-05/Integrantes_Juntas_Electorales_Departamentales.pdf



- Adopting measures to retain the authorities of the temporary electoral bodies of the first round so that the cumulative experience is not lost.

Training

On-site observers reported that, from one department to another, percentages of JRV members who had received training as of June 24 ranged from 19% to 100%. The Mission noted that the training days continued until the day before the election and that national statistics on percentages achieved were not available. The training component was of vital importance in this process, given the high turnover rate among committee and board members. This was compounded by the resignations, meaning that last minute training was required.

On the day of the vote, the Mission noted a lack of training in the JRV visited, especially evident at the vote count and tally sheet completion stage. Since the records are fed into the TREP system, poor completion of documents also impacted the transmission system's agility and smooth operation.

The OAS/EOM recommends:

- Maintaining an updated record of progress made with training by each JRV and keeping municipal, departmental, and national statistics so as to identify in advance the municipalities and polling stations that may require additional support on election day.
- Revising training materials in light of the experience of the first round to strengthen aspects that may need special attention, especially procedures for completion of the official tally sheets fed into the TREP.

Assembling electoral material

The OAS/EOM observed the electoral kit assembly line and identified five audit points in the process. It also observed that the cartons were sealed with adhesives and plastic locks. The Mission noted that some electoral kits were damaged during distribution and arrived broken at the distribution centers, and without the security sticker. However, JED personnel reported that they had resolved the problem by using new seals in the presence of auditors and the media. For the second round, the Mission recommends:

- Using a more resilient material for the electoral kits to guarantee that they reach the JRV in good condition.



- Improving the quality of the seals and locks so that they can withstand the climatic conditions and have more safeguards against possible breaches.

Auditing the process

The OAS/EOM verified the participation of political party agents in 100% of centers observed. Nonetheless, in nearly 30% of the JRVs visited by the Mission, some problem with agent accreditation was evident. The OAS Electoral Observation Missions throughout the region have systematically underscored the importance of political organization observation of the electoral process, an aspect of particular importance in contexts of political polarization. Party agents carry out work of fundamental importance to democracy and constitute a guarantee of transparency on election day.

The OAS/EOM recommends:

- Optimizing and standardizing the party agent accreditation process, such as the development of a single registration form or tool.

Overseas voting

The OAS/EOM recognizes the efforts to increase numbers of persons registered overseas and their electoral participation compared to the last election. In this process, 90,846 citizens registered to vote overseas, a 43.59% increase over 2019. The TSE authorized 15 cities and 17 polling stations for overseas voting, all in the United States. The Mission was informed that many electors who had expressed their wish to vote did not have a Personal Identification Document (DPI) to be able to register and cast a vote. Several JRV members observed abroad were volunteers invited by diaspora organizations who were not even authorized to vote.

The Mission also learned that when voters registered to vote overseas, the location of the polling stations had not yet been decided. These were only decided in early June. Despite TSE efforts to establish multiple voting locations, the distance to polling stations may have influenced the overseas abstention rate (98.4%). For the second round, the OAS/EOM recommends:

- Studying the reasons for electoral abstentionism in the overseas vote in order to develop a short-term strategy that helps to increase participation in the second round.



- Improving coordination between the State institutions that participate in the overseas voting process and the Guatemalan diaspora civil society organizations in order to publicize campaigns on the exercise of the vote by citizens abroad.

Official publication

Throughout election day, the Mission noted that official TSE communication on the progress of the general elections was infrequent and not forceful enough, nor did it notice a control of the narrative by the highest electoral authority. Most of the information provided to the citizens came from sources other than the TSE. For the second presidential round, the OAS/EOM recommends:

- Preparing a strategic communication plan through which the TSE provides a steady flow of timely information, in coordination with the temporary bodies, so as to prevent communication lapses and disinformation during the campaign and on election day.

With regard to the information issued by the TSE, the Mission also noted that although Indigenous peoples make up nearly half of the Guatemalan population, very little material was available in indigenous languages, limited mostly to clips disseminated over the TSE's social media. Observers deployed on-site noted that indigenous persons found it difficult to navigate polling stations and to understand basic aspects of the election. In order to provide indigenous communities with more information on the voting process, authorized locations, and other relevant aspects of the election, for the second electoral round, the Mission recommends:

- Increasing the communication in indigenous languages of information regarding the electoral process by means of community radio slots and signage in the polling stations and communities.

II. Electoral Technology

Preliminary Election Results Transmission (TREP) program

Between its two preliminary visits and its on-site deployment, the Mission noted that good progress had been made with the development of the TREP system, providing important functionalities for the implementation of its objectives. This progress was verified through direct observation of the TREP system in the two test runs, carried out on May 11 and June 3, and in the pre-operation of the TREP system on June 22 and 23. On the latter two dates, the Mission noted that the performance of the TREP system's central infrastructure was satisfactory, as effectively evidenced on election night. Although preliminary results were slow to be presented



on June 25, the system performed acceptably and stably. As indicated above, the delay was primarily due to delays in the JRV and not at the data entry and transmission points.

One positive aspect of this process noted by the Mission was the TREP cloud-filing system, which enhanced the security of the process. The OAS/EOM also noted the contingency measure adopted in case of power outage or loss of connectivity, providing polling stations with an offline method that used a cellular device in the event that the assigned computer was unable to link with the TREP system. A public verification module for authentication of official tally sheet images was also included, using blockchain technology, which increased the certainty of the results published.

For the second electoral round, the OAS/EOM recommends:

- Continuing to make progress with the strengthening of the TREP system, documenting all its processes and developing formal protocols for finalizing the software, and its sealing and encryption, as well as the verification, resetting, and sealing of the database.
- Establishing a TREP system station protocol for infrastructure and connectivity testing from the polling stations on election day.

Technology-assisted vote counting tool for the central Departmental Electoral Boards

As in earlier elections, the Central District Electoral Boards (JEDC) and Guatemala City Electoral Boards (JEDG) procured a vote counting tool that worked differently from and for other purposes than that of the TREP system. The tool did not publicize any results, but only took the Document 4 data (official tally sheet, white copy) and counted it in an internal system. Therefore, the TREP system was oriented towards the transmission and dissemination of official preliminary results centralized in the TSE, whereas the Boards' internal system was used for the JED to make progress with counting of results.

Although the OAS/EOM understands that the use of the Central District Boards' and Guatemala City Boards' software is not at odds with the TREP system, it also noted that this required double the institutional effort. Additionally, in some centers observed by the OAS, priority was given to inputting the white sheet in the JEDs' system before transmitting the yellow copy fed into the TREP system, since the yellow copy was retained until the white copy had been processed, which caused significant delay in the agility of the TREP system. The OAS/EOM recommends:

- Establishing mechanisms for coordination and cooperation between the TSE and these JED so that the yellow copy of Document 4 is released immediately after the JRV vote count for processing in the TREP system.



III. Electoral Justice

Constancy of candidacies and litigation in the electoral process

The high levels of litigation involving candidacies led to lack of confidence and uncertainty among citizens and eroded the credibility of the process. The state of uncertainty characterizing the first electoral round should be avoided in the second round. Finality is essential for the candidacies that have obtained support to proceed to the balloting so that citizen support can be expressed at the polls. Therefore, the Mission recommends:

- Prompt resolution of disputes stemming from the first round and meeting the electoral calendar deadlines, so that the second round voting takes place without pending challenges and political actors and citizens go to the polls fully certain of the conditions of the electoral contest.

IV. Electoral Violence

The Mission observed a climate of anticipation of an election day marked by electoral clashes in various municipalities in the country, a concern expressed by nearly everyone interviewed. Although the Mission noted that the concept of “electoral clashes” was not unambiguously defined, in general, it referred to unrest caused by groups harboring some dissatisfaction with the election (especially the municipal election) that could impact the regularity of the balloting or the processing of results.

Through the media, the Mission learned of six direct firearm attacks on municipal election candidates from January to June 2023, resulting in four murders¹² and two attempted murders.¹³ Three other armed attacks against political party members were also reported during the electoral period (two murders and one attempted murder),¹⁴ as well as the armed attack on a

¹² Of a TODOS party pre-candidate for mayor in Chahal, Alta Verapaz, on February 26, 2023; a VIVA party candidate for deputy council membership in Zacapa, Zacapa, on March 28, 2023; a Victoria party candidate for principal council membership in San Lucas Tolimán, Sololá; and a candidate for principal council membership in Concepción Las Minas, Chiquimula, on June 17, 2023.

¹³ Of a Movimiento Semilla pre-candidate for mayor in Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa, Escuintla, on January 24, 2023, who was wounded in the arm; and of an Azul party candidate for mayor in Moyuta, Jutiapa, on April 20, 2023, whose car was followed by men who then shot repeatedly at it, although she was not injured.

¹⁴ Of a VAMOS party syndic (*síndico*) [member of the municipal council responsible for monitoring and defending municipal interests] (who was not a candidate) on June 6, 2023, in Gualán, Zacapa; of a Cabal party polling station auditor in Guatemala City, on June 13, 2023; and the attempted murder of two CABAL party members in Retalhuleu, Retalhuleu, who were shot while riding in a car bearing the party logos (not seriously injured) on June 4, 2023.



party headquarters for purposes of intimidation.¹⁵ As indicated above, the Mission categorically condemns these acts and urges the corresponding authorities to clarify them and assign responsibilities. For the days ahead, the OAS/EOM recommends:

- Maintaining security measures in the municipalities with potential for conflict during the vote count and publication of official results stage.

The Mission recognizes the implementation of one of its 2019 recommendations, to strengthen coordination and communication channels among the various authorities responsible for guaranteeing security in the context of the electoral process. Formed in this process were the National Board for Electoral Conflict Prevention and the Interinstitutional Electoral Security Board and the regionalization of the latter through the Security and Social Conflict Reduction Boards at the departmental level and in some municipalities. The OAS/EOM also underscores the importance of the Agreements for an Ethical, Peaceful and Programmatic Campaign with Democratic Values, promoted by the TSE at both the national and local levels. The Mission underscores the importance of involving in these measures, to the greatest possible extent, all political parties and civil society actors.

For continued progress with the implementation of effective policies for safeguarding the electoral process and those participating in it, for the second round, the OAS/EOM recommends:

- Including in security plans the safeguarding of the physical well-being of the electoral authorities working on-site during the pre-electoral phase, the day of the vote, and the post-electoral phase.
- Developing a security protocol for JRV members, to be delivered together with the instruction manuals, so that they know how to react in the event of electoral conflict incidents at the polling station or in the municipality.
- Maintaining a high level of collaboration and coordination in order to prevent and handle incidents that may affect the campaign and election day, always in a context of respect for functions, competences, and jurisdictions.

¹⁵ Early in the morning of June 14, 2023, in the CABAL party municipal headquarters in El Tejar, Chimaltenango, two persons on a motorcycle left a package with a threatening note and shot 13 times into the house where the temporary headquarters was located when no one was inside.



V. Political Financing

The Mission learned of possible patronage activities and the giving or offering of perks, gifts, or compensation in the context of the electoral process. Observers deployed on-site observed vote buying in Alta Verapaz. Civil society organizations also reported the possible use of public resources for electoral purposes. These activities are illegal under the Electoral and Political Parties Law of Guatemala and undermine the equity of the contest. For the second round, the OAS/EOM recommends:

- Stepping up efforts for timely oversight of electoral expenditure to combat vote buying and, in general, political patronage, and to ensure that campaign activities are not being funded from prohibited sources, including public resources, or with illicit resources.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Mission expresses appreciation to the authorities and officials of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), of the temporary electoral bodies, and of the different Guatemalan State institutions for their openness and collaboration, which allowed it to carry out its work. It also expresses special appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the security forces for the protection provided. This is the 21st time that the OAS has deployed a Mission to observe electoral processes in Guatemala. On this occasion, it expresses appreciation to Canada, Italy, The Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Spain, Switzerland and the United States for their financial contributions, which made the deployment of this Mission possible.

As indicated above, the OAS/EOM will monitor the preparations for the second round and will return to Guatemala to observe the August 20 vote. Following the second round, the Mission will publish a second Preliminary Report. When the entire process is completed, it will present a Final Report to the OAS Permanent Council with all structural and substantive findings regarding the election, together with the Mission's recommendations.