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### ***Inside the Polling Station***

In general, Carter Center witnesses reported that the process of voting within polling stations was calm and orderly. Polling station judges and workers were generally cooperative; voters generally respectful of the officials administering the vote within the station. Additionally, the procedures for using voter identification cards and numbers to identify voters within the station, and for checking off voters after they had cast their votes, seemed to be a great success, and apparently a significant improvement over procedures used in elections prior to 2011.

However, Carter Center witnesses continued to report serious inconsistencies in the use of indelible ink to mark the fingers of voters once they had voted. In almost no cases were poll workers or others inspecting voters' hands to ensure that their fingers were not already inked. Some poll workers used the cap of the inkbottle as the vessel in which a voter was to dip his or her finger. If the use of ink is continued, election administrators must do more to train judges and poll workers on its appropriate use. They should ensure that fingers are checked both upon entry to the polling station and again upon departure, to ensure that a voter's finger, including the finger of a voter wearing gloves, has been properly inked. To facilitate procedures in this area, election officials should require that a particular finger, such as the right index finger, be the finger that is to be inked.

Carter Center witnesses observed in many polling stations that voters were not casting their votes in absolute secrecy. This appeared to be occurring for a number of reasons. First, polling booths are small, and not constructed to allow voters to bring easily the large, individual candidate ballot behind the metal privacy screen. Some polling booths faced the wrong way, so that voters were exposed to the queuing area as they voted. Voters in several instances found it easier to vote on a tabletop or elsewhere outside of the voting booth. In a rare number of instances, voting booths were not available. In the overwhelming number of cases, however, voters themselves appeared to disregard the opportunity to vote secretly, and instead voluntarily chose to vote in a common area where others could potentially view their votes. In future elections, The Carter Center encourages election administrators to consider acquiring larger polling booths to ensure the secrecy of the vote. Election officials should also ensure that the important right to vote secretly is incorporated into voter education efforts.<sup>94</sup>

### ***Securing Ballot Boxes at the End of the First Polling Day***

Carter Center witnesses reported that judges took different approaches to closing procedures, including the waxing of ballot boxes and ballot box locks; the securing of the rooms where ballot boxes were to be stored; and the recording of numbers of, and securing of, unused ballots and other sensitive materials. In some cases, unauthorized persons, such as party representatives, domestic observers, and others assisted the judge and poll workers in applying the wax to the ballot boxes. To bolster public confidence in these processes, The Carter Center encourages the SJCE to ensure that judges and poll workers are consistent in their application of protocols for the securing and storage of ballot boxes and other sensitive materials and that protocols are implemented by authorized persons only.

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<sup>94</sup> ICCPR, Art. 25(b), which codifies the rights "[t]o vote and be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the voter."

## COUNTING

Although witnesses reported no clear evidence of fraud or other subversions of the counting process,<sup>95</sup> they did report that counting centers were often chaotic and disorganized. Above all, a lack of clear procedures resulted in different approaches being adopted. In particular, a lack of intake process at counting centers, the sorting and counting of votes, the criteria to determine valid and invalid ballots, and the reporting of results by Counting Committees undermined the organization of the counting process.

According to Carter Center witnesses, accessing counting centers was challenging at times. Party agents and representatives attempting to maintain sight of the ballot boxes as they were being transported and delivered to the counting centers pushed against vehicle access gates, and the security forces guarding them, to attempt to gain access. Inside some counting centers, particularly during phase one, the scene was nearly as chaotic.<sup>96</sup> In general, efficiency was undermined by waiting in cold, uncomfortable premises, into the early morning hours, to conduct the count.

The Carter Center strongly recommends that the SJCE promulgate standard procedures that include the following:

- Intake – to record and track the arrival and receipt of materials to centralized count or tally centers;
- Sorting and counting – to standardize the process of sorting and counting ballots;
- Valid and invalid ballot classification – clear and prescriptive criteria for determining if a ballot is valid or invalid;
- Definition of election official roles – a clear definition of the roles of election officials and committees;
- Complaint and appeal process – a clear definition of who, how and when complaints and appeals about the sorting and counting process can be submitted;
- Announcement of results – defining results as preliminary, provisional and final;
- Posting of results by polling station – physically at counting locations and via the official website;
- Disposal of materials – clear procedures for the disposal or archiving of election materials at the conclusion of the counting process; and
- Forms – where appropriate, to support the above procedures, standard forms be designed and produced for use by all election officials.

Protocols regarding access and the physical space of, and around, counting centers or tally centers, should include the following:

- Criteria to ensure that counting centers can comfortably hold the required number of personnel, ballot boxes, candidates, candidate and party representatives, media, domestic and international witnesses, and others;
- The use of separate entrances for materials and authorized personnel, to safely and better manage controlled access;
- Consider the use of a secondary staging area to control and manage the flow of vehicles into centers;

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<sup>95</sup> In the case of the counting center in the Al-Sahel/Shubra district of Cairo, where there were credible accusations of potential fraud or mismanagement of ballot boxes during phase one, electoral authorities acted expeditiously by ordering a nullification of results in that district and a rerun election.

<sup>96</sup> For example, poll workers and others chanted for pay increases in one case, while intermittent scuffles broke out in other centers.

- Prohibitions against allowing candidate and party representatives from handling ballot boxes during transport, or from otherwise participating directly in any aspect of the intake or counting process that should be handled exclusively by election officials;
- Establishment of uniform guidelines for the proper conduct of party and candidate representatives, candidates, domestic and international witnesses, media, judges, poll workers, and security personnel inside counting centers; and
- As with polling centers, a requirement that every counting center committee include a judge who is responsible for liaising with security personnel outside the counting center and otherwise resolving issues involving security and access.

### **About The Carter Center**

The Carter Center mission to witness Egypt's Parliamentary Elections is accredited by the Supreme Judicial Commission for Elections (SJCE). The Carter Center deployed the first phase of its international delegation on Nov. 6, 2011. The Carter Center deployed 40 long-and medium-term observers from 24 countries including: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, Palestine, Philippines, Slovakia, Somalia, Spain, Sudan, Tunisia, United Kingdom, and the United States. While deployed, these witnesses observed the election administration, campaigning, voting and counting operations, among other activities related to Egypt's electoral process. Carter Center observers continue to assess the conclusion of counting and vote tabulation and will remain in Egypt to observe the post-election environment and the upcoming Shura Council (Upper House) elections. All assessments are made in accordance with international standards for elections, and the observation mission is conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation adopted at the United Nations in 2005.

**This statement is preliminary. A final report will be published four months after the end of the electoral process.**

The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide. A not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization, the Center has helped to improve life for people in more than 70 countries by resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; improving mental health care; and teaching farmers to increase crop production. Visit: [www.cartercenter.org](http://www.cartercenter.org) to learn more about The Carter Center.