

THE
CARTER CENTER



Venezuela

Frequently Asked Questions About Election Observation Missions

July 2024

How many elections has The Carter Center observed?

Impartial, credible election observers play a key role in shaping perceptions about the quality and legitimacy of electoral processes. Since 1989, The Carter Center has been a pioneer of election observation, forging many of the techniques now common to the field. The Center has monitored 124 full and limited observation missions in 40 countries and three Native American nations. In addition, 17 expert missions have been conducted in 15 countries. To ensure a meaningful, nonpartisan role for its election observation activities, The Carter Center must be invited by a country's election authorities and welcomed by the major political parties.

How big is the Carter Center's election observation mission in Venezuela?

The Carter Center has 17 accredited international observers in Venezuela, including electoral experts in Caracas and three teams of regional observers based in Barinas, Maracaibo, and Valencia. Mission members come from 11 countries.

What is the Carter Center's status in Venezuela?

The Carter Center was invited to observe the July 28 election by the government of Venezuela and is accredited by the country's National Electoral Council (CNE).

What do Carter Center international observers do?

Many people think election observation is about watching people vote on election day. That's only one part of it. Well before election day, the Center assembles a core team of experts and long-term observers to analyze election laws, the work of election administration, and campaign rules and behavior, election dispute processes, and whether fundamental freedoms associated with voting and civic participation are being upheld.

They hold a wide range of meetings — with political party representatives, election officials, journalists, and members of civil society. They observe political rallies. They analyze media and social media. They also stay after the election to observe the final tabulation and publication of results and resolution of any electoral disputes.

The goal is to make an accurate assessment of the electoral process. In Venezuela, The Carter Center will not conduct comprehensive observation of election day processes because of the relatively small size of the mission.

What sort of standards do observers use when assessing an election?

Observers assess the electoral process against a country's own laws and against regional and international obligations and standards as outlined in relevant treaties, conventions, and inter-governmental political agreements.

Do international observers interfere with the election process — and do they have any authority to certify elections or overrule election results?

No. Carter Center election observers follow a strict code of conduct that prohibits them from interfering in any part of the electoral process. They are present to observe and to report on what they witnessed. They simply issue their assessment of the process, what went well, and what could be improved.

How can having international observers present be helpful?

Fundamentally, election observation is about providing transparency and impartial information and analysis about election processes. In that way, observers can help facilitate peaceful, democratic, and credible elections and offer recommendations for improvement. Observation missions commend the parts of electoral processes that are functioning well, highlight areas that fall short of standards or legal requirements, and provide constructive recommendations for improving them. Their reports can provide information that might bolster the legitimacy of successful electoral processes and increase public confidence in them. In addition, the presence of observers can sometimes ease citizens' fears of election-related intimidation and violence. Observer reports also can attract attention to poorly conducted elections and possibly deter politically motivated misconduct while encouraging greater transparency.

What sort of principles and guidelines do credible international election observers adhere to?

The Carter Center conducts its work in strict accordance with recognized international and regional principles and guidelines for election observation, including the Declaration of Principles for International Observation endorsed at the United Nations in 2005. These guidelines require all mission members to be neutral and non-biased in their work, to respect the laws and regulations of the host country, and to not interfere in the electoral process.

How will you let the public know what observers found?

The Carter Center is transparent in its election observation work. It typically issues preliminary findings shortly after election day and shares those findings on cartercenter.org and on official Carter Center social media accounts. After the conclusion of the full election process, it will issue a final report, which it will share with key stakeholders and make available on cartercenter.org.