



The Carter Center
[Country] Election Observation
Mission
[Election, Month, Year]

Weekly Report **XX**

Observers' Names	
Team No.	
Area of Responsibility	
Reporting Period	

Please note that the sample questions and summaries below are meant as guidelines. These summaries are here to focus your discussions with key stakeholders and provide you with a general framework in which to make your assessment. Please do not hesitate to add additional thoughts, concerns, or questions into this template.

While an important part of your weekly reporting is the description of factual events, please note that it is vital for your team to understand such events in the larger framework of the electoral process. Please include in this report a consideration of possible implications, causes, and trends evidenced by your observations and interviews. Indication should also be given about your teams plan to follow up on unsubstantiated reports or concerns articulated by stakeholders. It is important to focus this report on factual primary-source reporting. Please clearly indicate any sections of the report that represent personal opinion or unsubstantiated reports received from others.

*You may not be able to complete all subject areas each week. This is OK. However, please ensure that your team has provided as complete an assessment as possible. **Because of the targeted nature of this mission we recommend that you focus most heavily on sections related to Electoral Dispute Resolution, Campaign Finance, and Election Administration. Please delete the guidance provided below when you complete the template.***

Executive Summary:

Please provide a summation of your major findings here. The executive summary should include the most relevant points elaborated upon in your weekly report. When determining the most pertinent points for inclusion in the executive summary please consider how activities in your area of responsibility might indicate larger trends in other parts of the country. This executive summary should not exceed one page in length.

Itinerary:

Please indicate your activities for the past week. This subject should include a list of your specific areas of observation, events attended, and meetings held. Note that there is space at the end of the report to include contact details for organizations with which you met. It is not necessary to do so here.

Political Environment:

Consideration of the political environment in which election preparations are proceeding can be indicative of many issues that might arise as election day nears, during polling, or in the post-election period. Possible questions for consideration while completing this section include:

- *What is the attitude of the public towards election preparations? Does the public seem apathetic? Concerned? Knowledgeable?*
- *Is there broad public discourse on elections?*
- *Do voters generally seem confident that the electoral process will be successful and will respect their fundamental right to universal suffrage and representation by duly elected representatives?*

The environment during the pre-election period may also illustrate the extent to which key political rights are being enjoyed. Rights relevant to the election process which may be undermined by an extremely tense or insecure electoral environment include the right to freedom of expression, to participate in public affairs, or even the right to be elected. Assessments may consider if all candidates and parties are enjoying such rights on the basis of equality and non-discrimination. Please also refer to the overarching questions included in your terms of reference for each of these obligations.

Election Administration:

The functioning of the election administration body is key to the enjoyment of a successful electoral process. **This is also a key area of assessment for the Carter Center's targeted EOM in [Country].** When preparing your weekly report please include all relevant information on the activities of the electoral commission in your area of responsibility, as well as any concerns expressed to you about the makeup, functions, or role of this body. Key questions for consideration in the assessment of election administration may include:

- *The body responsible for election administration is primarily responsible for ensuring adequate civic and voter education. What is the status of voter education efforts in your area of deployment? If voter education is being conducted is it appropriately focused towards including women and minorities?*
- *Do election administration bodies act transparently in their decision making and implementation of electoral legislation? (Transparency requires that interested citizens are provided information about the meeting agenda, appointment of members, and decision making process of the commission).*

- *Are election preparations proceeding on schedule? Does the commission have, or expect to have, all necessary materials in advance of election day to ensure that all registered voters may exercise their right to vote?*
- *What is the status of the voters register? Has the commission been effective in ensuring that citizens are included in the register, can review a provisional register, submit complaints, and have such complaints resolved?*

Rights relevant to the election process that are of particular importance to an assessment of election administration include the right of Universal suffrage (which is dependent on the proper allocation of materials and proper education on the process by which voting will occur), the Right of all citizens to be elected (which is impacted by the proper administration of elections), and Transparency in public decision making. Please also refer to the overarching questions included in your terms of reference for each of these obligations.

Party Campaigning:

The right to contest elections on the basis of equality must be extended to all candidates. Candidates should also enjoy the right to freely express their electoral platforms and freely assemble throughout the campaign period. Party campaigning is a vital part of an electoral process and ensures that the viewpoints of political contestants reach the general public. However, it is important to remember that campaigning must be conducted with respect for the rights of others and in a manner free from intimidation or violent rhetoric.

To complete your assessment of party campaigning, please attend political rallies, speak with candidates and parties, and consider the views of other key stakeholders. A few key points to remember are:

- 1. All political parties should be able to freely assemble for rallies, limited only by domestic legislation intended to ensure public order and which is objectively applied.*
- 2. Freedom of expression may be reasonably restricted to ensure that no candidates incite violence or employ hate speech during his/her campaign.*
- 3. Party campaigning may be limited as election day approaches. This period of silence is meant to allow voters the opportunity for reflection prior to polling.*
- 4. Campaigning is not limited to campaign speeches and rallies. The right to freely express opinions includes through written and other media (posters, newsletters).*

When completing this section, please reflect and consider that all citizens should be able to campaign on the basis of equality and free from discrimination, and that they should enjoy freedom of expression and of assembly. Please also refer to the overarching questions included in your terms of reference for each of these obligations.

Campaign Finance

This is a key area of assessment for the Carter Center's targeted EOM in [Country]. Campaign finance can be one of the most difficult areas of the observation of effectively observe. These difficulties stem from both a lack of international standards against which to assess finance systems and the reluctance of many stakeholders to discuss the subject. In addition, much of the relevant information regarding campaign finance observation occurs long before election day. We recognize that your limited period of deployment means you will not be able to complete a full assessment of the financial system. However, please gather as much information as possible from officials and party representatives in your area of responsibility. PLEASE BE TACTFUL WHEN ASKING QUESTIONS REGARDING CAMPAIGN FINANCE – it is an incredibly sensitive topic. It is always better to err on the side of caution.

The nature of a State's campaign finance system can greatly affect the electoral process and the ability for all candidates to contest for the election on the basis of equality. While there are few international standards on what constitutes acceptable campaign finance, observations of the process may be linked to key electoral rights including the need for transparency and right to freely express ideas and opinions (a judicially precedent has been established in many regions which considers monetary contributions as a form of expression). Some key points to remember when evaluating the campaign finance system are:

- *Public support can be offered by the State, and often acts as an important equalizer to ensure all candidates have a real chance at being elected. Such support should be given on the basis of equality to all parties and candidates.*
- *Parties should be expected to disclose their sources of funding. Generally, such disclosure should take the form of periodic reports to the election administration or an appropriate monitoring body.. While all contributions are generally disclosed, the system can allow for non-disclosure of contributions under a certain amount to ensure ordinary citizens can freely express their opinion through the allocation of support.*
- *The system of campaign finance should limit appropriate sources for campaign donations. For example, foreign governments should not be allowed to contribute to campaigns, although foreign nationals should not be restricted.*
- *Limits of campaign expenditures may be enacted to ensure the ability of all candidates to compete in on an equitable basis. Such limits should not be overly restrictive and should reflect a consideration of the costs concerned with the purchase of media, transportation, and materials in the individual State.*

Questions for consideration concerning campaign finance may include:

- *What activities does the party have planned for the campaign period (often there is a schedule and you should try to get it)*
- *Based on what the regional party campaign chief tells, what are the sorts of expenses that the party faces (what are they expending money on)?*

- *How do the parties/candidates fund their campaigns (this should be asked of party officials in broad strokes as it is a sensitive topic)?*
- *Have parties/candidates received any public funding for campaigns? Private funding? What the ratio of public to private funding is – how important are public funds to the functioning of parties?*
- *Does the public feel that too much money is spent on campaigns, or not enough, or is it about right for the purposes of informing the voters about their choices?*
- *Does the public think there should be limits on the amounts that candidates can raise and spend?*

Knowledge of the system for campaign finance can lead to a better understanding other key issues in the electoral process, including the right for all citizens to be elected to public office, and for all individuals to freely express their opinion. Additionally, there are particular requirements which campaign finance systems must meet, (ex. The public disclosure of funds is necessary to ensure transparency). Please also refer to the overarching questions included in your terms of reference for each of these obligations.

Please note that the Carter Center will be holding a meeting on April 1-2, 2009 to discuss their observation methodology for campaign finance. Following this meeting, changes to the above guidelines may be enacted. Thank you in advance for your flexibility.

Use of Public Resources:

Public resources can be misused by incumbents and can constitute an unfair advantage which undermines the equality of opportunity which should be provided to all political parties. It is important to consider carefully the use of public resources and to carefully note any unlawful discrepancies in your assessment. Please remember that this does not refer only to monetary resources, for example, public vehicles might be used to transport party supporters or display the incumbent's party symbol or incumbents may have begun public works projects in the time period immediately prior to elections with an aim at increasing public support. It is important to balance your assessment of the use of resources between the obligation of equality and the need for the government to fulfill its administrative functions.

Key obligations to consider in your assessment are: Every Citizen has the Right to be Elected, Equality and Absence of Discrimination, and Transparency (in public decision making). Please also refer to the overarching questions included in your terms of reference for each of these obligations.

Media Environment:

All candidates should have access to the public media on the basis of equality and non-discrimination. Furthermore, news coverage should not constitute additional free airtime for any candidate and paid advertising, if permitted, should be allocated fairly. The State has an obligation to provide for a pluralist media through which all candidates can express their opinions freely and without censorship. Please listen and watch as much local media as possible in your free time. Key questions for consideration when assessing the media environment include:

- *Is news coverage of candidates conducted in an unbiased and non-discriminatory manner?*
- *Are candidates generally awarded equal coverage by all State owned media outlets?*
- *Does the media provide a platform for enjoyment of all candidates' freedom of expression, and act as an outlet for effective outreach to voters and citizens?*

To the extent possible, keep a written list of what media is available in your area of responsibility.

Fundamental rights which are directly impacted by the media environment include the right to free expression, the citizenry's right to access information, and the enjoyment of equality and an absence of discrimination. Please also refer to the overarching questions included in your terms of reference for each of these obligations.

Participation of Women:

The participation of women may be impacted by a variety of subtle and overt factors. Please note that an assessment of women's participation must be made with a background understanding of the cultural mores of an observed State. However, there is an international legal obligation that women be able to enjoy all fundamental rights, including those related to political participation, on an equal footing with men-both in law and practice.

The participation of women should include an assessment of their prominence and role within political parties and civil society organizations as well as their participation in the political process as citizens (voters) and representation at all levels of election administration. Questions to consider in your assessment of women's participation might include:

- *Are women represented in the regional or local election commission bodies in your area of responsibility? If so, do any hold positions of seniority?*
- *Of the contesting candidates in your area of representation, what percentage are women? What factors do stakeholders feel contribute to this level of representation (low or high)?*
- *Are there cultural or social barriers to women's representation in the political process? If so, what are these factors? Is civil society or the election commission engaged in efforts to overcome them?*

- *How do women feel about their role and ability to participate in the political process?*

Equality and absence of discrimination and the right to participate in public affairs are the two fundamental rights most directly associated with the need to assess the participation of women. Please also refer to the overarching questions included in your terms of reference for each of these obligations.

Minority Participation:

Much like women, minorities are guaranteed equal enjoyment of all political rights by international law. You may consider similar questions in your assessment of minority participation as you did in the earlier sections, including:

- *Are minorities represented in the regional or local election commission bodies in your area of responsibility? If so, do any hold positions of seniority?*
- *Of the contesting candidates in your area of representation, what percentage are national minorities? What factors do stakeholders feel contribute to this level of representation (low or high)?*
- *Are their cultural or social barriers to minority representation in the political process? If so, what are these factors? Is civil society or the election commission engaged in efforts to overcome them?*
- *How do minorities feel about their role and ability to participate in the political process?*

Equality and absence of discrimination and the right to participate in public affairs are the two fundamental rights most directly associated with the need to assess the participation of minorities. Please also refer to the overarching questions included in your terms of reference for each of these obligations.

Participation of Civil Society:

An assessment of the participation of civil society in the electoral process may include questions about their role in increasing public confidence, providing civic and voter education, or conducting domestic monitoring, such as:

- *Are there civil society organizations which play an active role in the electoral process in your area of responsibility? Are these organizations able to freely and actively conduct their activities?*
- *Do civil society organizations play any formal role in the electoral process (ex. have election administrators included civil society participation in any advisory committees or engaged their efforts to forward voter education?)*

Carefully consider civil society's ability to fully participate in public affairs of the country when completing your report. Please also refer to the overarching questions included in your terms of reference for each of these obligations.

Election Disputes:

The effective resolution of election disputes is necessary to ensure the credibility of electoral processes and public confidence in the results. While the system for the resolution of election disputes is often difficult to monitor without significant familiarity with domestic law, there are several key points to consider as you complete your assessment of the dispute process.

- *Aggrieved parties should be able to file complaints and disputes throughout the process, not just in the post-election period. In order to ensure the remedy for disputes that occur during the electoral process are effective they must be timely (ex. A dispute about inclusion on the voters register should be resolved before the register is closed for amendment)*
- *Many disputes are best dealt with by the electoral commission or other administrative bodies. These non-judicial channels for dispute resolution can increase the efficacy of the resolution process and allow for election administrators to correct the casual factors before their impact increases.*
- *While administrative bodies may play a significant role in the dispute process, a judicial remedy should be available for the resolution of electoral disputes. This remedy must be provided by a tribunal which is fully independent and impartial. If an administrative body is the decider of first instance, parties should be able to appeal to a tribunal which meets the criteria for a fair and public hearing.*
- *Disputes which require adjudication must be based on the infringement of fundamental rights. Complaints about administrative issues which don't impact fundamental rights may be dealt with by bodies such as the electoral commission without appeal as they do not illustrate a systematic infringement of rights. (ex. Ballot papers which do not include symbols or pictures to allow for voting by illiterate citizens infringe upon a fundamental right that all citizens have the right to vote, but a complaint concerning the size or color of a ballot paper, while perhaps important to the efficiency of the voting process, is administrative in nature).*

Questions for consideration when evaluating the dispute process may include:

- *Are the procedures for the filing of complaints and disputes simple to understand and widely known by the public? Are there overly burdensome fees or procedural requirements that limit the ability for the filing of disputes on the basis of equality?*
- *Are appropriate bodies of the State (electoral commission, judiciary) investigating, addressing, and providing remedy for disputes in a manner which recognizes the need for efficacy? Are resolutions being offered in time for appropriate remedies to be enacted with respect for the electoral timeline?*
- *If judicial channels are used for the resolution of disputes are you able to observe these proceedings? Are hearings being conducted in line with the obligations for a fair and public hearing, including through impartial adjudication, publication of decisions, and equal standing for all parties?*

The right to an effective remedy for the infringement of fundamental rights and the right for a fair and public hearing are the paramount obligations which relate to the electoral dispute process. Additionally, it is necessary that these rights be enjoyed on the basis of equality and free from discrimination. Please note that the obligation for a State to provide an effective remedy for the violation of rights may be implemented through non-judicial channels. However, when the judiciary plays a role, it must meet all of the provisions of the right to fair and public hearing. Please refer to the overarching questions included in your terms of reference for each of these obligations

Security Issues:

All voters' and candidates should enjoy security of the person throughout the electoral process. Security forces and the military have historically played a positive role in keeping the peace in many electoral processes. However, such forces may also have a negative effect on the electoral process if they act in such a manner to intimidate or restrict the rights of citizens and candidates. In fact, sometimes the mere presence of security forces will curtail the political freedoms of voters who fear that intimidation is possible. Key questions for consideration in assessing the security environment of your areas responsibility include:

- *Generally, do security forces seem to be playing a positive role in the election?*
- *Are security forces or military publicly present throughout your area of responsibility?*
- *Interviews of key stakeholders often reveal their attitudes concerning security forces and their role in the electoral process. Through speaking with voters, election administrators, and candidates what information have you learned relating to the public perception of security forces?*
- *Do security forces play a non-peacekeeping role in election processes, (for example, escorting ballot boxes to aggregation centers, or delivering election materials to polling places)? If so, are they prepared to conduct such activities adequately and efficiently?*

All citizens have a right to security of the person. This right is directly applicable to electoral processes as electoral periods are often marked by intense displays of public opinion and debate, heightened tension, and the possibility for conflict. Especially when deploying to historically combative areas please be cognizant of the role of security forces in ensuring this right. Conversely, security forces must not act in ways that infringe upon the rights of citizens to participate in public affairs, express opinions freely, and move about the country without restriction. Such restrictions might be caused by the security forces or military's direct action, but might also stem from more passive causes such as a lack of public trust in these bodies or voter intimidation caused by their presence alone. Please refer to the overarching questions included in your terms of reference for each of these obligations

Other Issues not yet covered:

Please include here any other issues which you feel are relevant to your assessment but have not been included elsewhere in the document.

Organizations Met (with contact details as appropriate):

Please complete the table as necessary with the contact information of organizations and individuals with which your team has met.

Contact Person/Organization	Contact Information

Proposed Activities for the upcoming week:

Please list your proposed activities for the upcoming week.

Action Required by [City] Coordination Team:

Include here any points on which you feel you need support or coordination from the [City] based field office. Request may include such things as necessary materials, contact information, or help in arranging travel or transportation.

Feedback from [City] Team:

This area will be used for any feedback from the [City] team. Such feedback may include requests that you follow-up on particular events or activities described within the report, questions or clarification of key points, or any other response deemed necessary by the content of your weekly report.