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Bulletin
The Carter Center
Mission to Observe the 2001 Elections in Nicaragua
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As the election campaign comes to a close and Nicaraguans enter a period of reflection in preparation for voting Sunday, The Carter Center wishes to report the following electoral developments:

1. The electoral period was marred by violence last night in Masaya that resulted in the death of one person and wounding of others. We deplore this loss of life and urge the appropriate authorities to carry out a full investigation into the matter, and hold those responsible accountable. We urge the political leaders to step forward and make a credible commitment to assuring a peaceful election.
2. We remain concerned if the system for vote transmission to the National Counting Center will be fully operational in time for the elections. Although most of the 121 municipalities that have participated in testing the system did transmit many tally sheets successfully, they were not able to transmit all of them. The tests did not include the city of Managua, which will transmit its vote separately or a number of smaller towns where satellite phones will be used. The CSE has held five simulations, and each one brought improvements. A final simulation Saturday that should include Managua may demonstrate the readiness of the system. Our observers have helped inform electoral authorities of problems in Municipal Counting Centers, such as the lack of ink for fax machines and inadequate training of personnel in the use of fax machines. There is still time to resolve those problems if election authorities move quickly.
3. Since our last visit in early October, the CSE has made progress in issuing credentials to election observers. Domestic observers report that they are being issued credentials to enter the JRVs and observe the vote and count. However, it was recently decided that additional credentials would be needed to observe in some restricted areas on election night. The CSE should ensure that such credentials are made available to observers immediately so that we can reassure the international community and the Nicaraguan public that the election process was transparent and no element of procedure was unmonitored. Observation of the decisions made about challenged votes will be essential if the number of challenged votes exceeds the difference between the two leading candidates in any race.
4. The CSE has clarified the timing for release of quick counts by domestic observers. Ethics and Transparency has said it will abide by the law. Although

quick counts are an important tool in election analysis, they do not substitute for official results, and should not overshadow the excellent qualitative reporting that election observers conduct on voting day. We also wish to note that quick counts are calculated using a carefully drawn sample of voting sites, and are based on actual results, making them more accurate than exit polls. By contrast, the earliest partial results reported by the CSE will reflect voting patterns in only a few places and will likely not be an accurate reflection of the national vote, so they should not be considered a predictor of the final outcome. Political leaders should pledge publicly not to celebrate their victories prematurely, and to instruct their adherents to await the official announcement of definitive results before engaging in any festivities.

5. Technical experts estimate that the closure of polls and counting of four ballots will take as much as five and one-half hours, meaning that only a few JRVs will have reported before midnight on November 4. Full results and the outcome of the presidential race may not be known until late Monday morning, particularly if the vote is close. If the transmission system is not fully functional or if the data entry of the tally sheets is slower than anticipated or if many JRVs are challenged, the process could take even longer. We urge election authorities to work as expeditiously as possible to reduce the time required to count the vote, but also remind the political parties and the Nicaraguan people that precision is more important than rapidity.
6. The Carter Center has deployed observers to every department and region in the country and will place observers in the political party headquarters and at the National Counting Center. Together with other domestic and international observers, we hope to verify that the election is free, fair and transparent. Nicaraguans who applied for a *cedula* may go to pick it up as late as Saturday, Nov. 3. We urge all Nicaraguans who have not yet done so to pick up their *cedula* or *documento supletorio* and vote on Sunday. Your vote is secret and it counts.