



OAS Electoral Observation Mission Congratulates Brazil for Holding its General Elections and Announces that It Will Observe the Second Round

The Electoral Observation Mission of the Organization of American States (OAS/EOM) deployed in Brazil for the October 7 general elections calls attention to the successful holding of elections that were extremely complex because of the vastness of the country and the size of the electorate. The Mission recognizes the work and efforts of the Brazilian electoral authorities to address this enormous challenge and highlights the professionalism and technical expertise with which they organized the electoral process.

This is the first time the OAS has observed an election in Brazil, and it provides an opportunity to become more familiar with the particular characteristics of the Brazilian electoral system and to be able to learn from its good practices while helping to strengthen it by making technical recommendations. The Mission appreciates the invitation to observe such an important event and appreciates the openness of the electoral authorities, who provided the Mission with all the information and access it needed to carry out its work.

Led by former Costa Rican President Laura Chinchilla, the Mission was made up of 41 experts and observers of 18 nationalities who were deployed in 12 states and the Federal District. Six additional individuals observed the voting abroad in Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Montreal, Paris, Santiago de Chile, and Washington, D.C. The OAS/EOM applauds the logistical, human, and financial efforts made so that Brazilians abroad could cast their ballots.

Mission experts analyzed critical aspects of the electoral process, including electoral organization and technology, campaign financing, women's political participation, access to media and freedom of expression, electoral justice, and the participation of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants. To collect information about the electoral process, the Mission met with authorities and technical experts from the Superior Electoral Court and Regional Electoral Courts, government authorities, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, political parties, campaign teams and candidates, academic experts, and representatives of civil society and the diplomatic community, among others.

During the pre-electoral phase, the Mission was concerned to observe the polarization and aggressiveness of the campaign, which manifested itself not only in the rhetoric but also through physical attacks, such as the one suffered by the presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro and by other contenders at the subnational level. In addition, there were digital and physical threats reported against journalists and groups of women who were behind the #EleNão ("Not Him") campaign. The Mission forcefully condemns these attacks.

In addition, the OAS/EOM, which had a specialist in freedom of expression on the team, believes that the tone of some of the discourse during the campaign was discriminatory and exclusionary. With a view to the second round of the presidential race, the Mission calls on the contenders to focus their campaigns on presenting proposals to the citizenry instead of on discrediting or stigmatizing opponents.

In this regard, the Mission believes that debates have proved to be a proper forum for candidates to lay out the main pillars of their platforms.

The online propagation of disinformation and fake news was a constant during the pre-electoral phase and even continued into Election Day. The Mission recognizes the joint efforts made by the Superior Electoral Court, the media, online platforms, and civil society to combat the dissemination of this type of content through fact-checking initiatives. It also welcomes the role played by the country's media outlets in providing critical coverage of the disinformation and propaganda as part of their service of reporting the news. The dissemination of truthful information is the most effective tool for combatting fake news.

The Mission noted that when Election Day arrived, there were still a significant number of candidates, both to the national congress and to state governments and parliaments, whose candidate registrations had not been ruled on. The lack of a final decision on whether some of the candidates included on the ballot were eligible to run created uncertainty as the election unfolded. The Mission recommends reviewing the time periods established for candidacies to be presented and approved and even recommends considering whether legal oversight should be exercised at an earlier phase, before the parties register their candidates, leaving enough time to resolve any challenges that may arise.

On Election Day, the OAS observers visited 390 polling stations at 130 voting centers in 12 states and the Federal District. The Mission was also present at the Superior Electoral Court's vote tally verification area and the Electoral Command and Control Center. The OAS/EOM views the creation of the Command Center as a positive step which facilitated the coordinated efforts of different institutions involved in looking after election security.

At the opening of the polls, the Mission observed that the setup of the electronic voting machines—along with the printing of a document certifying that the machine is set at zero and no vote has yet been cast—occurred normally and within the established time frames, making it possible for the polling stations it observed to open at the predetermined time. None of the 390 polling stations observed by the Mission had problems with the electronic voting machines.

Information provided by the Superior Electoral Court indicates that 41.3 percent of all members of polling stations were volunteers. The OAS/EOM recognizes the efforts of all those involved in the administration of the polling stations and particularly applauds the civic commitment of the citizens who volunteered for this important role.

The Mission noted the limited presence of poll watchers at the polling stations it observed and regrets that the political parties do not make use of the opportunities ensured to them to keep watch over the various stages of the electoral process, including the security tests of the voting machines. As the second round approaches, the OAS/EOM encourage the candidates still in contention to increase their efforts to register, in a timely manner, enough representatives who can keep an eye on the process and watch over the voting on the front lines.

The Mission observed that there were problems with biometric identification at some of the voter check-in areas, with some voters' fingerprints unable to be read. However, this did not keep these voters from being able to exercise their right to vote. As established in the predetermined procedures, in these cases the presidents of the polling stations used their own fingerprint to enable the voting

machine to operate. This was done after requesting the voter's document and date of birth to confirm his or her identity.

The OAS observers reported large numbers of voters at the voting centers, which led to long lines at 55 percent of the polling stations observed. Nevertheless, the voting proceeded peacefully, without major incidents. The Mission applauds the fact that at all the polling stations it observed, elderly voters, women who were pregnant or had children with them, and people with disabilities were given preference when it came time to vote.

The first official results were disseminated beginning at 7 p.m., and two and a half hours later the information was already available from 97.4 percent of the polling stations. The Mission congratulates the Brazilian electoral authorities for their results transmission system, which gives citizens fast access to official information, contributing to the certainty of the process.

The OAS/EOM congratulates the candidates who have moved to the second round and hopes that the campaign of the next few weeks will be less tense and more focused on the discussion of ideas and proposals than on personal attacks. The Mission also urges the candidates to assume a measured, responsible political attitude that helps to reduce social polarization.

The Mission will continue to gather information and will present a consolidated report after the second round of the presidential election. This will include observations and recommendations on structural aspects of the process, including campaign financing, women's political participation, electoral justice, access to the media and freedom of expression, and the participation of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants. The OAS Observation Mission will continue to support the Brazilian electoral process and will be present for the second round of the presidential election.

The Mission thanks the government of Brazil for its invitation to observe these elections and the Superior Electoral Court for its openness and cooperation. The Mission would also like to draw attention to the hospitality of the Brazilian people and the way the Mission was welcomed by the various people with whom it met.

The OAS/EOM also appreciates the financial contributions from the governments of Argentina, Spain, the United States, France, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Portugal, and Serbia which made the deployment of this Mission possible.