



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

Election FAQs: El Salvador

2024 Presidential Elections

February 4, 2024

Americas

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

2011 Crystal Drive | Floor 10 | Arlington, VA 22202 | USA | www.IFES.org

[Publication Date: February 02, 2024]

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Election Snapshot..... 1

When is Election Day?..... 1

Why are these elections important? 1

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?..... 1

What is the electoral system?..... 1

What is the election management body? What are its powers?..... 2

How does the Out of Country Voting (OCV) Operate? 2

How will votes be counted, tabulated and reported? 3

Who are the presidential candidates? 3

What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits? 4

To what extent do women have equal access to political participation? 4

What measures are in place to mitigate electoral violence?..... 5

What provisions are in place that support the equal rights of persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups? 6

Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation? 6

When will official results be announced? 6

Resources 7

About IFES in El Salvador 7

Disclosure 7

Election Snapshot

- Election Day: February 4, 2024
- Number of registered voters: 6,214,399 (3,256,205 women and 2,958,194 men)
- Number of polling stations (*Juntas Receptoras de Votos, JRVs*): 8,562 in El Salvador and 42 in the United States
- Number of national voting centers: 1,595
- Seats: President and vice president; all 60 seats in the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly
- National and international observers: Approximately 3,000

When is Election Day?

On Sunday, February 4, 2024, El Salvador will hold its general elections for the presidency and all Legislative Assembly seats. If no presidential candidate wins an absolute majority, a runoff between the two candidates who receive the largest numbers of votes will be held on March 10. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Why are these elections important?

In 2024, Salvadorans will elect their next president and all 60 representatives to the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly. While El Salvador has made recent strides in battling organized crime, improving security, and boosting economic prosperity, these elections will determine the direction of the country's policies for the coming years. The incumbent president's Nuevas Ideas party hopes to capitalize on its gains over the last five years to maintain a majority in the Legislative Assembly and re-elect the president and vice president for a second consecutive term. Among the ruling party's priorities is an emphasis on security and the continuation of the state of emergency that has been in place since March 27, 2022. Voters will choose whether they wish to maintain the current party in office or set the country on a different path.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

During these elections, citizens registered to vote in El Salvador will go to the polls to elect their president and vice president and representatives to the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly.

The president and vice president are elected on the same ballot by an absolute majority of over 50 percent of the votes. A second round will take place if no candidate receives an absolute majority during the first round. The current president and vice president of El Salvador are running to serve a second five-year term.

All 60 seats of the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly are up for election. All members serve three-year terms and are elected via an open list proportional representation vote from multi-seat constituencies. In the previous elections, the Nuevas Ideas party won a majority of 46 seats; eight other parties also won seats. In June 2023, the Legislative Assembly passed a law reducing its size from 84 seats to 60. The smaller number of seats to be filled by this election is expected to affect the extent to which opposition parties will be represented.

What is the electoral system?

El Salvador is a presidential republic with three branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial, as established in its 1983 Constitution.

The executive branch consists of the president and vice president of the Republic of El Salvador and the ministers of their respective departments. The president leads the government, state, and multi-party system.

The Legislative Assembly exercises legislative power. This unicameral legislature, elected by open list proportional representation, previously consisted of 84 deputies. The passage of a new law in June 2023 law reduced the body to 60 deputies. All are elected in 14 multi-seat constituencies, corresponding to the country's 14 departments, which will return between two and 16 deputies each.

The judicial branch is led by the Supreme Court of Justice, made up of 15 judges whom the Legislative Assembly appoint to nine-year terms. The magistrates of the Supreme Court are divided among four chambers: the Constitutional Chamber, led by the president of the Supreme Court; the Civil Chamber; the Criminal Chamber; and the Administrative Disputes Chamber.

Because of the unusual system in El Salvador, which holds presidential elections every five years, and legislative and municipal authority elections every three years, the balance of political power in the country is constantly changing.

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (Tribunal Supremo Electoral, TSE) is responsible for calling, organizing, and managing all electoral processes in El Salvador. The TSE consists of five main and five alternate magistrates who are elected by the Legislative Assembly to five-year terms that coincide with Salvadoran presidential terms. In accordance with Article 208 of El Salvador's Constitution, one judge will come from each of the three political parties or coalitions that garnered the greatest number of votes in the last presidential election, and the remaining two judges will be chosen from two slates of judges with no political affiliation proposed by the Supreme Court.¹

How does out-of-country voting operate?

On October 18, 2022, the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly passed the Special Law for the Exercise of Suffrage Abroad (*Ley Especial para el Sufragio en el Exterior*). The law ensures the right to vote for Salvadorans living outside El Salvador and to regulate the implementation of a remote voting system over the internet and an in-person electronic voting system that guarantees the free, equal, transparent, personal and secret exercise of the vote for Salvadorans outside the national territory.² Those voting from abroad will be able to do so through the Supreme Electoral

¹ [Asamblea Legislativa de El Salvador](#). (2023). Asamblea.gob.sv.

² [voto en el exterior | Asamblea Legislativa de El Salvador](#). (2024). Asamblea.gob.sv.

Tribunal (Tribunal Supremo Electoral) online voting system, which operates through an online platform, or in person at polling stations throughout the United States.³

How will votes be counted, tabulated, and reported?

Votes will be counted at each voting center, and tally sheets will be transmitted electronically to a central data center in San Salvador (Centro de Procesamiento de Resultados Electorales). The tally sheets will then be validated and tabulated so preliminary results can be announced as quickly as possible. The results will also be disseminated by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (Tribunal Supremo Electoral, (TSE) through live transmission and the internet, where the preliminary results will be posted for public viewing.

The TSE will conduct a final vote count and tabulation in San Salvador at the National Processing Center, according to Article 216 of the Electoral Code.

Who are the presidential candidates?

Six candidates are contesting the presidential race:

- Nayib Bukele, with running mate Félix Ulloa
 - **Political party:** Nuevas Ideas
 - President Bukele is the incumbent and the former mayor of San Salvador. He has made national and international headlines for his handling of El Salvador's security issues, including the declaration of a state of emergency (in place since March 27, 2022) and the mass incarceration of people suspected of involvement with organized crime. Despite a negative reception outside El Salvador, President Bukele's domestic approval rating continually hovers around 90 percent, making him the frontrunner for the presidential election.⁴
- Juan Manuel Flores Cornejo, with running mate Werner Marroquín
 - **Political party:** Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN)
 - Manuel Flores is the former mayor of Quezaltepeque and a former deputy in the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly. He is a vocal critic of President Bukele's administration and has stated that he hopes to purge the Salvadoran state of corruption and continue to strengthen diplomatic relations with China.
- Joel Humberto Sánchez Maldonado, with running mate Hilcia Bonilla
 - **Political party:** Alianza Republicana Nacionalista
 - Joel Sánchez is a Salvadoran entrepreneur and political newcomer. He supports the ongoing crackdown on organized crime and believes additional reforms are needed to protect human rights in El Salvador. His campaign has also focused on economic recovery, job creation, and restoring security.
- Ana Marina Murillo Aguilar, with running mate Fausto Carranza
 - **Political party:** Fraternidad Patriota Salvadoreña
 - Marina Murillo, the only female candidate, is a conservative businesswoman who advocates for traditional values and family unity.
- José Javier Renderos Vásquez, with running mate Rafael Montalvo
 - **Political party:** Fuerza Solidaria

³ [Elecciones 2024 – Sufragio en el extranjero](#). (2024, January 29). www.tse.gob.sv.

⁴ [Encuesta UFG: Nayib Bukele con preferencia del 70.9% para presidente de 2024](#). (2024, January 16).

www.contrapunto.com.sv/.

- Javier Renderos is a former FMLN commander who focuses on social justice and poverty alleviation.
- Luís Alberto Parada Fuentes with running mate Celia Parada
 - **Political party:** Nuestro Tiempo
 - Luis Parada, a former member of the FMLN, leads the new Nuestro Tiempo party and is campaigning on an anticorruption platform.

What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits?

El Salvador's campaign finance system employs a mixed approach with limitations on both private and public funding.

Private Campaign Finance

Individual donors can contribute a maximum of \$4,500 to a single candidate or party per election cycle. This limit applies to all donations made by a single individual, regardless of the recipient. Anonymous donations are prohibited; all donations must be identifiable and reported.

Public Campaign Finance

Public campaign funds are allocated to legally registered political parties based on their performance in the previous legislative election. Parties receive \$0.10 per valid vote obtained. Parties must comply with reporting requirements, avoid exceeding spending limits, and demonstrate transparency to receive the full subsidy.⁵

While both public and private campaign finance regulations exist, they have been criticized for their limited scope and weak enforcement.

To what extent do women have equal access to political participation?

Women in El Salvador have increased their participation in politics through increased access to political spaces and positions in recent years, but significant challenges remain. Legal frameworks guarantee the equal rights of women, but disparities persist in the disparities of the sexes.

Progress:

- Legislative quota: A 30 percent quota for women candidates falls short; female representation in the Legislative Assembly currently stands at 27.4 percent.⁶ The Nuevas Ideas party boasts the highest percentage of female lawmakers in any party, with over 50 percent.

⁵ [Asamblea Legislativa -República de El Salvador](#) (n.d.).

⁶ IPU Parline. (2024). [Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments](#). January 2024.

- Landmark legislation: In 2021, El Salvador recognized violence against women in politics (VAW-P) as a distinct form of violence. The legislation aims to address harassment and threats.⁷

Challenges:

- VAW-P persists: Despite legislation, VAW-P remains a significant deterrent, with thousands of incidents recorded in 2021 and several ahead of the 2024 elections.⁸
- Implementation gap: Despite quotas, women remain underrepresented in top government positions, holding only 2 of 12 cabinet seats and 8.4 percent of mayoral positions.
- Unequal resources: Political parties control campaign funding in El Salvador, and women-led campaigns are often disadvantaged and underfunded.

While El Salvador has legal measures in place and has made measurable progress in women's political participation, significant work remains to be done to address funding disparities, combat VAW-P, and achieve equitable representation across all levels of government and political parties.

What measures are in place to mitigate electoral violence?

Ahead of the 2024 elections, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (Tribunal Supremo Electoral, TSE) and El Salvador's political parties have taken several measures to prevent or mitigate electoral violence. On July 20, 2023, the TSE signed an inter-institutional agreement with the National Civil Police (Policia Nacional Civil, PNC). Under that agreement, the PNC will have a presence at polling stations and electoral events before, during, and after the elections to ensure order and security for the entirety of the elections. The agreement includes provisions for the PNC's assistance with the security of citizens and international observers; custody of electoral materials before and after the elections; security during the distribution, collection, and storage of electoral packages; presence at the 1,595 voting centers and facilities used by the TSE; and receipt and assessment of complaints and notices of possible crimes.⁹

Additionally, on November 24, the ruling party Nuevas Ideas, together with six other political parties signed a pact including 15 commitments for an electoral campaign without political violence, respecting freedom of the press and information, and accepting the electoral results. Notably, the principal opposition parties refused to sign the agreement, stating that the TSE has not guaranteed compliance with the commitments set forth in it.¹⁰

Additionally, the TSE has taken considerable steps to prevent political violence against women including circulating a protocol for attention to and prevention of political violence against

⁷ <https://www.asamblea.gob.sv/sites/default/files/documents/decretos/376CCF05-00E1-4883-A091-246334827B12.pdf>

⁸ Franklin, S. (2022, December 8). [Violence is #NottheCost of Women's Engagement in Salvadoran Politics](#). [Www.ndi.org](#).

⁹ Policia Nacional Civil. (2023, July 20). [Director General firma convenio de cooperación interinstitucional con TSE](#).

¹⁰ Crespín, Y. M. (2023, November 24). [Bajo críticas de la oposición Nuevas Ideas y partidos firman pacto de no agresión](#). [Diario El Mundo](#).

women in El Salvador.¹¹ The protocol is meant as a framework that highlight the ways in which women entering political spaces can face physical, verbal, and socio-economic violence and how institutions can actively work to prevent continued perpetuation.

What provisions are in place that support the equal rights of persons with disabilities?

On October 4, 2007, El Salvador became the eighth country to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). It is now one of the most widely accepted United Nations conventions, with 177 ratifications and accessions. The CRPD promotes and protects the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in society.

In keeping with the CRPD, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (Tribunal Supremo Electoral, TSE) has mechanisms in place to help administer the vote to persons with disabilities. One of these is the Law for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, which was passed 2021.¹² Voters with disabilities are permitted to proceed to the front of the line to cast their ballots. Upon request, a polling station staff member can assist persons with physical disabilities to move around inside the polling station to reach a voting booth or to cast a ballot. Alternatively, the voter may be accompanied and assisted by an adult of his or her choice. This companion must be identified and registered by poll workers.

Additionally, the TSE signed an inter-institutional agreement with the National Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities with the goal of guaranteeing the effective electoral participation of persons with disabilities in the 2024 elections.¹³ The TSE also signed an agreement with the Scouts Association in El Salvador,¹⁴ which will provide special assistance to persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and elderly citizens on Election Day.

Who can observe on Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

El Salvador will host both national and international electoral observers for the February elections. These will include international observation missions from the European Union and the Organization of American States. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (Tribunal Supremo Electoral, TSE) reviews and authorizes individual and group requests for accreditation. Requests can be made through the TSE's website under the electoral observation tab.¹⁵ Approximately 3,000 national and international observers are expected to monitor the February 4 election.

When will official results be announced?

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (Tribunal Supremo Electoral, TSE) will make preliminary results available soon after votes are counted, with the count following the close of polls at 5 pm. The

¹¹ [Protocolo para la Prevención y Atención de las Mujeres víctimas de Violencia Política en El Salvador](#). (n.d.). [Www.youtube.com](#).

¹² [Consejo Nacional para la Inclusión de las Personas con Discapacidad](#). (n.d.).

¹³ [Firma de Acuerdo de Cooperación Interinstitucional entre el CONAIPD y el TSE](#). (2023, May 2).

Consejo Nacional Para La Inclusión de Las Personas Con Discapacidad.

¹⁴ Crespín, V. (2023, November 10). [Scouts brindarán atención a personas con discapacidad en las elecciones 2024](#). [Diario El Mundo](#).

¹⁵ Tribunal Supremo Electoral. (2024, January 8). [Observación Electoral](#).

TSE will finalize the vote count by February 20 for the presidential election and February 24 for the congressional elections.¹⁶

Resources

- [Electoral Code \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Constitution of El Salvador \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Constitution of El Salvador \(English\)](#)
- [Law of Political Parties \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Out of Country Voting Law \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Supreme Electoral Tribunal Elections 2024 website](#)

About IFES in El Salvador

El Salvador's 2024 general elections promise to be pivotal in defining the country's future. IFES is supporting Salvadoran election authorities in building capacity ahead of the elections and stimulating dialogue to engage local civil society and encourage broader civic participation. IFES began work with El Salvador in 2003 as part of its Global Initiative to Enfranchise Citizens with Disabilities campaign and has since assembled a local team of experts across a diverse portfolio of projects devoted to strengthening civic engagement and election integrity in El Salvador.

In the run-up to the February 2021 legislative election, IFES assisted the Salvadoran electoral body in boosting confidence in elections and democracy. Now, during this post-2021 electoral period and the 2024 election cycle, IFES recognizes a window of opportunity for El Salvador to protect and consolidate its democratic system. IFES is working alongside the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (Tribunal Supremo Electoral, TSE) to build its long-term capacity to implement electoral integrity initiatives. IFES will support the TSE in enhancing its vote counting and results transmission systems, elaborating out-of-country voting processes, and increasing dialogue with Salvadoran civil society. IFES will also support the TSE on a modernization project that will evaluate and update its organizational structure and use of technology as well as the design and implementation of an updated communications strategy. In addition to streamlining internal processes and digitalizing logistical and technical components of the electoral process, this project will support the TSE in implementing the necessary changes to ensure it can continue to build upon those changes in the future.

Disclosure

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the TSE as of [publication date: February 01, 2024, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any International Foundation for Electoral Systems policy or technical recommendations.

These FAQs are made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The information is provided by the author(s) and does not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

¹⁶ [Las fechas claves para las elecciones de 2024 en El Salvador](#). (2023, September 5). Infodemia.

