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# **Elections in Honduras**

## *November 18 Primary Elections*

Frequently Asked Questions

Latin America and the Caribbean  
International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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### *Disclosure:*

*These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Honduran elections authorities as of November 16, 2012, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.*

## What type of electoral system does Honduras operate under?

Presidents and mayors are elected by a simple majority. Congressional deputies are elected under an open-list proportional representation system.

## Who will Hondurans vote for in the November 18 primaries?

Hondurans will select the candidates who will participate in next year's general elections for the presidency and vice presidency, and open seats in the Central American Parliament, National Congress, and municipal councils. Honduran voters will also have the opportunity to elect their parties' internal authorities. More than 120,000 candidates are participating in the upcoming elections.

## Why are these primary elections so important?

The 2012 elections are the first primary elections held in Honduras since the 2009 coup d'état. To many, these elections also represent the full normalization and restoration of the country's political system and its continued path toward democracy. Coupled with post-coup tensions, the introduction of new actors to the electoral scene has added another layer of concern for an already anxious political establishment. Against this backdrop, the Honduran election management body, the *Tribunal Supremo Electoral* (TSE), is preparing and organizing what is shaping up to be one of the country's most anticipated electoral events.

## Who will be participating in the primary elections?

Three of the country's nine legally registered parties will be participating in the primary elections. Only parties with more than one internal movement have to register, and thus, participate in primary elections. Of the nine existing parties, only three have more than one internal movement. The other six do not have to participate in primaries.

The main contenders for each party's presidential nomination in these primary elections are as follows:

- *Partido Liberal de Honduras*/Liberal Party (PL), Three Party Movements, Three Candidates:
  - *Liberal Ful Toro*
    - Esteban Handal
  - *Liberal Villedista*
    - Mauricio Villeda
  - *Liberal Yanista*
    - Yani Rosenthal
- *Partido Nacional de Honduras*/National Party (PN), Seven Party Movements, Seven Candidates:
  - *Acción Barnica*
    - Victor Hugo Barnica
  - *Auténticos Nacionalistas*

- Fernando Anduray
- *Azules Unidos*
  - Juan Orlando Hernandez
- *Corazón Azul*
  - Eva Fernandez
- *Por mi País*
  - Miguel Pastor
- *Por Una Nueva Honduras*
  - Loreley Fernandez
- *Salvemos a Honduras*
  - Ricardo Alvarez
- *Partido Libertad y Refundación*/Liberty and Refoundation Party (Libre), Four Party Movements, One Candidate:
  - *28 de Junio*
    - Xiomara Castro
  - *Fuerza de Refundación Popular*
    - Xiomara Castro
  - *Pueblo Organizado en Resistencia*
    - Xiomara Castro
  - *Resistencia Progresista*
    - Xiomara Castro

## Which institution is responsible for administering elections?

In Honduras, the highest electoral body with a legal mandate to conduct elections is the *Tribunal Supremo Electoral* (TSE). This body is tasked with the organization, administration and protection of all electoral processes. The TSE calls for elections and approves the electoral calendar and the plan for electoral security. It is also responsible for the safekeeping and verification of documentation and materials used in all electoral processes; registering parties, alliances and candidates running for office; and serving as the final authority in the resolution of electoral disputes and the total or partial nullification of votes, among other key duties.

## How is election administration organized?

The primary elections are organized by the *Tribunal Supremo Electoral* (TSE) in coordination with political parties.

In organizing and administering internal elections, each central party authority is responsible for creating a national electoral commission with equal representation for all internal political party movements. Once internal elections take place, each national electoral commission declares its candidates and registers them with the party's central authority, which then notifies the TSE of the results.

## Who will observe the primary elections?

Honduran law allows for national and international observation as long as groups are properly identified and accredited by the TSE.

The primary elections will have national observers, including the *Hagamos Democracia* (Making Democracy) and the Human Rights Ombudsman Office. The Organization of American States will also be observing the primary elections as an international observer.

## Who can be a candidate in these elections?

Any candidate for president or vice president must be a Honduran citizen by birth, at least 30 years of age, a civilian and a layman/laywoman (i.e., not a member of the clergy).

A candidate for a seat in the National Congress or the Central American Parliament must be a Honduran citizen by birth, at least 21 years of age, a layman/laywoman and a civilian. In addition, each candidate must have been born in, or for the last five years resided in, the department in which the candidate is running for election.

To run for a municipal council seat, a candidate must be Honduran by birth, and must either have been born in the municipality or have been a resident of the same for a minimum of five years. In addition, the candidate must be 18 years of age or older, literate and a citizen fully exercising his or her civil and political rights.

## Who is eligible to vote?

According to the constitution and the Electoral Law of Honduras, any person who was born in Honduran territory and is at least 18 has the right to vote, with the exception of military personnel and those in jail for major crimes.

## How is voter registration conducted?

The *Registro Nacional de las Personas* (RNP, the National Registry of Persons) provides the *Tribunal Supremo Electoral* (TSE) with each citizen's information by department, municipality and polling station for use in the *Censo Nacional Electoral* (National Electoral Census).

In accordance with the law, all citizens who are eligible to vote must register with the *Censo Nacional Electoral*, by using their national identification card.

Citizens who will turn 18 within the five months prior to the election are entitled to receive identification cards to exercise their right to vote.

## How many registered voters are there in Honduras?

Honduras has a total of 5,138,113 registered voters.

## **Can Hondurans residing outside of the country vote?**

Yes. Voters residing abroad can exercise their right to vote; however, they may only cast votes for the president and vice president during the general elections.

## **Is voting in more than one political party primary permitted?**

No. Each voter is only permitted to vote in one political party's primary elections.

## **What are the rules on campaigning?**

Electoral campaigning is only allowed 50 days prior to the primary and internal party elections and within the 90 days prior to the general election.

Electoral advertisement outside of the delineated time periods is forbidden. Any use of TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, mobile or stationary megaphones and/or public gatherings is punishable by law.

## **What are the sanctions for pre-campaigning?**

The penalties for not complying with campaigning regulations are compulsory payments of 100 to 500 times the Honduran minimum salary, which stands at approximately USD \$7,915 per year.

## **What are the rules for campaign finance?**

In Honduras, political parties receive public financing at the equivalent of 20 lempiras, or about USD \$1, per valid vote cast. Funds are distributed based on votes received in the prior election, and payment is made in two tranches: 60 percent of the funds after the call for elections and 40 percent after all calculations of final electoral results have been completed.

Private financing is also permitted in Honduras, but five rules restrict the source of donations:

1. Anonymous donations are not permitted unless they are obtained through a mass public gathering.
2. Public administration officials or employees are not allowed to make donations without prior authorization.
3. Donations made by executives, administrators or associates of companies that benefit from contracts with the state are forbidden.
4. Foreign subsidiaries and foreign organizations are not allowed to make donations.
5. Donations made by foreign particulars are not allowed in any capacity.

All donations must be accounted for in the political party's financial records, and those that exceed 120 times the Honduran minimum salary must be reported to the *Tribunal Supremo Electoral* (TSE). Any violation of this rule will be sanctioned with a fine of twice the value of the amount for the first offense, and three times the value for the second infraction.

Political party funds must be deposited in a national financial institution in the party's name, and records must be made readily available to authorities to be in compliance with statutes and laws.

Finally, parties must establish systems of accounting to control financial operations, and must present the TSE with reports of their income and expenses – including origin and destination, details which are published and made available nationally.

## **Who may serve as poll workers for the primary elections? How are poll workers selected?**

Polling stations will be staffed by one member of each political party (or a substitute from that party), who are proposed by political parties, alliances and independent candidates up for election.

Each movement can be represented at the polling station through a poll worker. While they are there to help in conducting the electoral process, they are also there to protect their movements' interests.

## **How many poll workers will be at the voting stations? What will their main duties be?**

According to the Electoral Law, each participating political party can designate two poll workers for every voting table: a principal and an alternate. For primary elections, this extends to every movement within a party. Thus, during the current electoral process, the National Party could designate up to 14 poll workers for every table: seven principals (one for each of the seven movements within the National Party) and seven alternates.

The organizational and logistical efforts necessary to undertake such an extensive poll worker training campaign are massive. More than 200,000 people will be required to fill the principal and alternate poll worker positions.

Poll worker duties include guaranteeing the secrecy, efficacy and freedom of the vote on Election Day; taking action necessary in order to preserve order during voting and vote counting; admitting properly accredited and identified international observers; following all electoral rules; and communicating electoral results to the *Tribunal Supremo Electoral* (TSE).

## **What legal provisions exist to promote access to elections for persons with disabilities?**

According to Honduras' Electoral Law, voters are unable to vote on their own may voice their votes publicly in front of the voting center's members. The president of the polling station will mark the ballot with the voter's candidate of choice while repeatedly showing the ballot to the voting center's members. Finally, the voter will deposit the ballot independently or with the assistance of the president of the polling station.

## When will counting take place?

Vote counting will begin immediately after polls close. Polls open at 7:00 a.m. and close at 4:00 p.m. After this time, only those still waiting in line will be allowed to vote. Then TSE officials on authorized duty will cast their ballots, followed by members of the voting station. Once these people have voted, voting will cease and tallying will commence.

## Who will count the votes?

Once voting has ceased, the president of the poll station will, in the presence of all the other poll members, count all unused ballots and mark them with a seal that reads “SURPLUS.”

Ballot boxes will be opened, and each ballot will be extracted and examined individually by poll workers to verify that it is unaltered. Then the ballot will be passed to the president who will display it for all other members to see. Ballots that have been tampered or altered will be nullified.

Then each cast ballot will be opened, and votes will be counted in the following order:

1. President and vice president
2. National Congress
3. Municipal councils

Once all the ballots have been counted, each will be sealed with a mark reading “COUNTED.” Those ballots that were not filled out will be sealed with a mark reading “BLANK VOTE,” and those that are valid will be sealed with a mark reading “VALID.”

In all other cases, filled-out ballots marked “NULLIFIED” for no justifiable reason will, according to the president’s discretion, be considered valid and marked as “RATIFIED.”

Finally, ballots will be counted to verify that the number of ballots matches the number of people that voted and the number of votes tallied (including blank ballots). All incidents and protests will also be reported to the TSE at this time.

## How will preliminary results be transmitted to election authorities?

The *Tribunal Supremo Electoral* (TSE) will conduct a preliminary transmission of results using a secured phone and computer system. After the votes are counted, the president of the table will call in the results through a secured cell phone line; a security code is required to access the system. These calls go to a call center where operators collect and enter the information into a secured system; each call is recorded. The recorded information is verified by a second person before being locked and counted within the system.

The TSE has outsourced the technical aspects of this activity to a local company, *Mapas Soluciones*, which is overseen by a team of TSE technical experts and IFES.



## **When will final election results be announced?**

The TSE has 30 calendar days after the elections to declare the election results, and on the day following the declaration, will publish the results in its official newspaper, *La Gaceta*.

## **What measures are being taken to mitigate violence during the elections?**

Under the Electoral Law, anyone who is carrying a weapon or is intoxicated – by alcohol or any other substance – is not allowed to remain at any polling station. In addition, from Saturday, November 17, at 6:00 a.m. until Monday, November 19, at 6 p.m., a dry law will go into effect in Honduras prohibiting the distribution of alcohol.

Anyone who uses violence or a show of force to impede someone from exercising his or her right to vote will face prosecution and a sentence of between four and six years. This also applies to those who obstruct electoral management bodies and the individuals who represent them at the polls and limit their ability to carry out their duties.

A twofold deployment of security forces will be on hand during the elections. Members of the national armed forces as well as the police will be stationed in and around voting stations and as part of a larger security presence in the country. The office of the attorney general will be on high alert in case of any reports of electoral violence.

Historically, electoral violence has not been a problem in Honduras; however, with polls predicting close elections, the possibility of such violence does exist.

## Resources

- *Tribunal Supremo Electoral* (TSE) [website](#)
- Honduran electoral [calendar](#)
- Honduran electoral [rules and laws](#)
- Honduran [constitution and other laws](#)