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# **Elections in El Salvador:** *2014 Presidential Elections*

Frequently Asked Questions

Americas

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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January 29, 2014

# Frequently Asked Questions

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*Disclosure:*  
*These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Salvadoran election authorities, to the best of our knowledge as of January 29, 2014. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.*

## When is Election Day?

On February 2, El Salvador will hold presidential elections.

## Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Citizens will cast their ballots for the next President and Vice President of El Salvador. There are five political parties participating in the elections, each with a presidential and vice presidential candidate.

If no political party or coalition receives an absolute majority, a second round of elections will be held on March 9 between the two political parties or coalitions that received the most votes on February 2.

## Who can vote in the country?

In El Salvador, all citizens 18 years of age or older can vote, unless forbidden by law. Under the nation's electoral law, the following citizens are prohibited from voting:

- Those who have formally received a prison sentence
- Those with mental disabilities
- Those under State guardianship
- Those suspended for refusing to hold an office for which they were elected
- Those who behaved notoriously under the influence of controlled and/or illicit substances
- Those who have been convicted for criminal offenses
- Those who have been involved in vote buying/selling

## Who are the presidential and vice presidential candidates?

**Salvador Sanchez Cerén, Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN):** A native of Quetzaltepeque in the department of Chalatenango, Sanchez Cerén is one of the founding fathers of the FMLN party. He is a teacher by trade and founder of the National Association of Salvadoran Educators. He was first elected into office in 1992 as a parliamentarian, serving until 2006. He was elected Vice President in 2009 and also served as Minister of Education through 2012 when he resigned to run for the presidency in 2014. Sanchez Cerén's vice presidential running mate is **Oscar Ortiz**, Mayor of Santa Tecla since 2000.

**Elías Antonio "Tony" Saca González, Movement of Unity Coalition:** A native of Usulután, Saca served as President of El Salvador from 2004-2009 as a member of the National Republican Alliance (ARENA). He is a radio and TV broadcaster, media mogul and businessman. He entered politics in 1989 with the ARENA party and rose through the ranks. He became ARENA's presidential candidate in 2003 and won in 2004. He is running for a second term under the Movement of Unity, a coalition of the National Grand Alliance for National Unity (GANAU), the National Coalition Party (PCN) and the Christian Democrat Party (CDP).

Saca's vice presidential running mate is **Francisco Laínez**, former Foreign Affairs Minister under the González administration.

**René Rodríguez Hurtado, Progressive Salvadoran Party (PSP):** Rodríguez-Hurtado is a political scientist and retired Lieutenant Colonel with the Salvadoran Armed Forces. He created the Central American Security Commission within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He also founded and served as President of the National Union of Security Companies from 1994-2002. Hurtado's vice presidential running mate is **Adriana Bonilla**, a young real estate broker.

**Oscar Lemus, Salvadoran Patriotic Fraternity Party (FPS):** A native of Santa Ana, Lemus is a lawyer and former member of the military. He founded the FPS in 2003, officially registering it as a party in 2011. Lemus' vice presidential running mate is **Rafael Menjivar**, a psychologist and political scientist.

**Norman Quijano, National Republican Alliance (ARENA):** A native of Santa Ana, Quijano has been the Mayor of San Salvador since 2009. A dentist by trade, he has been active in politics since 1989 when he became the manager of the Social Action Unit in the municipality of San Salvador under former Mayor Armando Calderon Sol. He also served as board secretary of the Legislative Assembly from 2006-2009, prior to becoming the Mayor. Quijano's vice presidential running mate is **Rene Portillo Cuadra**, a lawyer and the Secretary General of the Technological University of El Salvador.

## How many registered voters are there?

According to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, there are 4,955,107 registered voters.

## What is the structure of the government?

El Salvador is a sovereign and independent republic, with a representative presidential government system based on the division of three powers: executive, legislative and judicial.

The executive branch is made up of the President and Vice President, and a Cabinet of Ministers appointed by the President to serve as advisers. The legislative branch is a unicameral legislative assembly of 84 deputies. The judicial branch is headed by the Supreme Court and made up of 15 judges.

## What is the gender balance within the candidate list?

For this upcoming election, 52.7 percent of the registered voters are women – a historic high in El Salvador. However, the anticipated increase in women's participation at the polls is not reflected on the ballot. Only one female candidate, Adriana Bonilla, will appear on the ballot for Vice President, representing the Progressive Salvadoran Party (PSP).

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

Based on Article 208 of the constitution and Article 39 of the electoral code, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) is the authority on electoral issues in the country. According to Article 63 of the electoral code, it is the TSE's responsibility to call for, organize, manage and supervise all electoral events in El Salvador.

## **What changes has the Supreme Electoral Tribunal implemented for this upcoming election?**

This upcoming election has three major firsts for El Salvador:

- Out-of-country voting was implemented for the first time.
- Full implementation of residential voting will take place in all 14 departments and 262 municipalities across the country. Residential voting was implemented in only 60 percent of the country during the 2012 parliamentary and municipal elections.
- This election will be conducted under a new electoral code, which was approved by Congress in July 2013.

## **Is out-of-country voting allowed?**

Yes. Out-of-country voting (OCV) was implemented for the first time during this presidential election. There are 10,337 Salvadorans living abroad who are registered to vote. The majority of overseas voters are currently registered in the U.S., Canada, France, Korea and Italy.

The voting process was conducted through the postal service – free of cost to the voter. Ballots were delivered to the home addresses of registered voters overseas. For their votes to be counted, ballots should have been returned to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in San Salvador by January 20, 2014.

## **How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?**

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal has mechanisms in place to help administer the vote to persons with disabilities.

Voters with disabilities are allowed to go to the front of the line to cast their ballots. If requested by the voter, a member of the polling station can assist persons with physical disabilities to move around inside the polling station to reach the voting booth or to cast their ballot in the ballot box. Additionally, in targeted voting centers, there will be 3,000 scouts trained to assist voters with disabilities.

Braille ballots are available at all polling stations to assist the blind and/or individuals with low vision to vote independently. Alternatively, the voter may be assisted by a person of their choosing. This companion must be identified and registered by poll workers.

## **Where are voting, counting and tabulation held?**

Voting will be conducted in 10,446 polling stations within the 1,593 voting centers nationwide. This is a 40 percent increase in both polling stations and voting centers from the 2012 parliamentary and municipal elections.

Polls will be open on Election Day between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Votes will be counted at the voting center and the tally sheets will be transmitted to a central data center in San Salvador. The tally sheets are then validated and tabulated so preliminary results can be announced on election night.

The results are also disseminated by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) through live transmission and the Internet where tally sheets are posted for public viewing. Final vote counting and tabulation is done by the TSE in San Salvador at the National Processing Center, according to Article 216 of the electoral code.

## **When will official results be announced?**

Preliminary results are expected to be announced as early as 10:00 p.m. on election night, five hours after the polls close. Results will be made official after official counting of votes nationwide.

This year, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal will announce final results of the election on February 10. According to the electoral calendar, in the event that no party or coalition receives an absolute majority, a second round of elections will be announced by February 11.

## **Who can observe during Election Day? What is the accreditation process?**

Observation is allowed and regulated under the electoral code. El Salvador has both international and national observers accredited by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal after their individual or organizational request has been reviewed and authorized. Over 300 international observers have been accredited for the upcoming elections.

## **Who is managing security on Election Day?**

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) coordinated the electoral security operations plan with the National Civil Police (PNC) three months ahead of the election. However, unlike other countries in the region, security forces are not involved in the transportation and delivery of electoral materials.

The PNC are responsible for physically safeguarding voting centers and the TSE's main offices. It is anticipated that 22,900 PNC officials will be deployed throughout the country on Election Day.

## Resources

- Electoral Code ([Spanish](#))
- Constitution of El Salvador ([Spanish](#))
- Out-of-Country Voting Legislation ([Spanish](#))
- Candidate Biographies ([Spanish](#))
- Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) Website ([Spanish](#))