



**THE CARTER CENTER
SIERRA LEONE 2023 NATIONAL ELECTIONS PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

June 27, 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Carter Center was honored to observe the June 24, 2023, elections in Sierra Leone, with voters casting ballots for president, members of Parliament, city mayors, and local councilors. The elections – the fifth general elections in the country since the end of the decade-long civil war – took place in an atmosphere that was largely calm, with the people of Sierra Leone demonstrating their enthusiasm and determination to peacefully express their will at the ballot box.

The electoral process is ongoing, as the tabulation and finalization of election results is still underway. As the process continues, it is important for all Sierra Leoneans to await the announcement of final results by the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL), which

the will of the people is expressed. To ensure the transparency and verifiability of results, the ECSL should publish results at the polling station level.

This statement is a preliminary assessment of the process so far. The Carter Center mission visited 100-2 (1)-2 dinggsatiogs ope1(e)4 d ulateond t@kdosmltCiul

The voting process was assessed by Carter Center observers as “very good” in 93 percent of polling stations observed. In some polling stations, voters were noted who claimed to be registered at a polling station but their names could not be found on the list. Some polling stations in Freetown ran out of ballot papers and ran out in the mid-afternoon.

Closing and counting. Closing and counting procedures were assessed positively at 100% of poll closings observed.

Tabulation. Carter Center observers reported that the tabulation process lacked adequate levels of transparency. Carter Center observers directly observed instances of broken seals and inappropriately open ballot boxes in three of the five tally centers.

At this time The Carter Center offers the following priority recommendations:

Results from any ballot boxes that were opened in violation of procedure and international best practice

political party candidates must be women.⁹ The PEA supports the GEWE by stipulating that political party nomination lists that do not include the required number of female candidates will be rejected. The ECSL gazetted a final list of candidates on June 22, the last day of the campaign period. However, the list does not specify gender or which office candidates are contesting (parliament, mayor, local council)

the count through to its conclusion. Similarly, the overall environment was assessed as very good or reasonable in 100% of observations.

Counting

Accurate and fair vote counting plays an indispensable role in ensuring that the electoral process is democratic and reflects the will of the voters. International commitments require that votes be counted by an independent and impartial electoral management body. The counting process must be public, transparent, and free of corruption.¹²

The Carter Center observed counting in all 16 electoral districts. The counting process was observed to be good or very good in 100% of polling stations observed.

Tensions rose in some locations as closing and counting progressed, with a visibly increased security presence as counting took place. The Carter Center noted a high percentage of invalid ballots in some polling stations observed. In one polling station in Kenema, an unknown person who did not appear to be ECSL staff arrived towards the end of the count and took over the presiding officer's duties.

All observed polling stations had domestic observers and candidate agents present during the closing and counting, an important level of transparency.

Tabulation

Tabulation of results is an integral phase of the electoral process that ensures the will of votes is accurately and comprehensively reflected in final results.

observers did not observe the use of projectors to display data entry or results at tally centers as had been anticipated in accordance with information from the ECSL, which would have