

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

GUATEMALA: ELECTIONS

14 November 2003

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 180 countries.

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This document is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Situation

On Sunday 9 November Guatemala held its second general elections since the end of the civil war in 1996. Thousands of Guatemalans turned out to elect a President and Vice President, 331 municipal council members, 158 congressional representatives and 20 members of Parliament. There were approximately 1,285 voting stations across the country. There were also 2,300 international observers posted at voting stations throughout Guatemala to ensure the transparency of this process.

There were some disturbances in various stations during the voting period. Three people died in the department of Quiché, in the west of the country, when a crowd tried to enter the voting station early in the morning on Sunday. In addition, a political secretary of the National Union of Hope party was attacked on Saturday, shortly before the voting began. Other incidents were also reported, such as ballot burning, electrical outages and chaos in some voting stations in the interior.

In spite of these incidents, representatives of the United Nations Mission in Guatemala (Minugua), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the European Union, among others, expressed their satisfaction at the high voter turnout.

At this time, preliminary results of the elections indicate that it will be necessary to conduct a runoff election in December, according to the rules of the Guatemalan Constitution, which state that if no one candidate receives 50 per cent of the vote there will be a runoff election for the first two candidates. General Efraín Ríos Montt, the official party candidate and former dictator, came third in this round of elections; therefore, once these results are verified, he will be disqualified from the runoff. The remainder of the votes are being counted in a climate that is generally calm.

Red Cross Red Crescent Action

The Guatemalan Red Cross (GRC) has been working in coordination with the Federation, Participating National Societies in the country and the ICRC to implement the GRC's contingency plan for the election period, which includes a yellow alert that was in place from Saturday, 8 November until noon on Monday, 10 November.

In accordance with the plan, the Red Cross mobilized volunteers from 17 branches to provide first aid care, transport patients to medical facilities, install first aid stations in areas with high concentrations of people, trace missing persons and manage emergency vehicles that could be used as mobile medical clinics.

The following is a list of specific actions taken by the Guatemalan Red Cross, based on information from the disaster relief director of the GRC:

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Branch	Number of disturbances	Persons affected by violent disturbances	Persons affected by long waiting hours in voting stations	Persons affected by accidents or common illnesses	Missing persons
Chiquimula	0	0	1	0	0
Coatepeque	0	1	0	3	0
Cobán	0	0	0	1	0
El Estor	0	0	0	4	0
El Palmar	0	0	0	12	0
Guatemala	0	0	50	7	3
Mazatenango	Cuyotenango	0	18	0	0
Petén					
Sayaxché, Petén	0	0	0	0	0
Puerto Barrios	0	0	0	2	0
Purulhá	0	0	0	0	0
Quetzaltenango	0	0	300	No information available	0
Quiché	Sacapulas	0	0	0	0
Retalhuleu	0	0	78	3	1
San Juan Colzal	No information available	No information available	No information available	No information available	No information available
San Marcos	0	0	0	0	
Tecún Umán	0	0	0	2	0
Tejutla	0	0	0	4	0
TOTAL	2	1	447	38	3

The emergency committee of the National Society, with the assistance of the relief director, will continue to monitor the situation together with all Red Cross activities as the process of counting votes continues and for as long as the GRC contingency plan is in force.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

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For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.