

El Salvador electoral body wants observers deployed early



**Police guard truck that carried FMLN supporters, attacked in San Salvador on January 31.
(Photo: Marvin Recinos / AFP)**

San Salvador, February 4 (RHC)-- The highest electoral body in El Salvador is calling for international election observers to be deployed early in the Central American country, after a deadly shooting in the middle of campaigning in recent days.

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) has urged the United Nations, the European Union and Organization of American States (OAS) to expedite their observer missions after a shooting in San

Salvador on Sunday killed two political activists and wounded five others.

Officials said assailants opened fire on members of the country's left-wing FMLN party in one of the worst political attacks in decades. In a statement, the TSE asked the international bodies "to advance their observer missions to the country in order to monitor, prevent and denounce any act of political violence."

The observers were scheduled to arrive one week before legislative and local polls on February 28th; they will now be deployed at least a week earlier.

The shooting took place days after President Nayib Bukele criticised the peace deal signed between the army and the FMLN to end a civil war in 1992. "All those responsible will pay for their actions," Bukele tweeted after the incident. Two government employees and a private security guard have been arrested in the case. No group has taken responsibility for the shooting.

In its statement, the election tribunal said it wished to prevent any actions that could "tarnish" the election, also citing recent death threats levelled against judges. It also urged supporters of rival parties to "respect" one another and ensure a peaceful poll.

Approximately 5.4 million Salvadorians will vote for 84 national lawmakers and 262 local representatives from 10 political groups later this month. President Bukele's New Ideas (NI) party currently leads in the polls.

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