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Le Collectif Associatif
pour l'Observation des Elections
النسيج الجمعي لرصد الانتخابات
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Rabat, 24 September 2026

Press Release

Collective Associative for Election Observation (CAOE)

As part of its mandate for independent and impartial election observation, the Collective Associative for Election Observation (CAOE) monitored the various stages of the election of the members of the House of Representatives held on 23 September 2026, within the framework of the “Observation of the 2026 Legislative Elections” project. This exercise forms part of an independent civic practice aimed at contributing to the assessment of the extent to which the elections respected the relevant international and national standards for elections.

The CAOEs initial report is based on observation of the entire electoral process, which is not limited to polling day but also covers the legal and institutional framework, the pre-campaign period, the filing of candidacies, the electoral campaign and the digital space, and voting, counting and the announcement of results.

This statement presents preliminary observation findings; the data and conclusions it contains therefore remain subject to verification and completion in light of the final processing of forms and observation reports, as the final report will provide a more comprehensive analysis of the various stages of observation of the electoral process.

I. Observation Methodology

The CAOEs, which held its General Assembly on 9 May 2025 and elected its governing bodies — the Steering Council and the Oversight Committee — observed the legislative elections of 23 September 2026 through:

- 5 regional coordinators forming regional and local focal points covering all regions of the Kingdom;
- 48 supervisors covering 75 prefectures and provinces, enabling field monitoring of both local and regional constituencies, all of whom benefited from close to 160 training sessions coordinated with the National Human Rights Council (CNDH);
- The mobilisation of 1,622 observers deployed across the various provinces and prefectures, of whom 1,455 received accreditation, while 186 observers were refused accreditation without any justification being given;



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- The development of a set of observation tools, comprising guides and forms;
- The CAOEs' use of standardised observation forms for each stage, fixed and mobile teams, and a secure digital data-collection system fully compliant with personal data protection legislation, with real-time reporting enabling the issuance of periodic interim reports, in addition to a final consolidated report containing conclusions and recommendations.

II. Context

The legislative elections of 23 September 2026 were organised against the following backdrop:

- A 9.8% decline in the electorate, representing more than 1.7 million voters, alongside a drop in youth participation from 8% to 4% among the 18–24 age group;
- The “Gen Z” youth protests, which brought issues of health, education, employment and social justice back to the forefront of public debate, without receiving a political response from the State or the political parties;
- A crisis of access to justice linked to the adoption of the law on the legal profession, which was rejected by the defence bar;
- The events of mass irregular crossing towards the occupied cities of Ceuta and Melilla in July 2026, which served as a further indicator of the importance of youth, migration and social inclusion issues;
- Escalating rivalry and tension among the components of the governing majority, with public exchanges of accusations regarding the courting and pressuring of elected officials, alongside an intensification of certain rhetoric during the electoral period, reinforcing a widely expressed sense of distrust in institutions and parties within the digital space;
- A regressive trend with respect to fundamental rights and freedoms, with the State failing to take concrete steps to advance the situation of rights and freedoms so as to ease the political climate — namely by releasing prisoners of conscience and social-movement detainees, dropping all proceedings against journalists, bloggers and content creators, genuinely expanding freedom of opinion, expression and association, and adopting public policies guaranteeing social justice and dignity for all citizens;
- Weak engagement by the political parties with accredited civil-society institutions on several issues relating to the integrity of public life, the right to form associations, child protection, and equality between women and men;



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- Legislative developments covering eligibility conditions and grounds for ineligibility, the digitisation of related procedures and deadlines, support for the candidacies of young people and persons with disabilities, the criminalisation of certain forms of digital disinformation and the misuse of artificial intelligence, the setting of a ceiling on electoral and digital spending, provisions enabling Moroccans residing abroad to vote by proxy, and the reorganisation of the single ballot paper and of the conduct of voting and counting.

III. Preliminary Findings on the Overall Observation of the Electoral Process

The preliminary findings reflect the data collected by CAOÉ observers across the various stages of the electoral process, from the pre-campaign period, through the filing of candidacies, the electoral campaign and the digital space, to polling day and the counting and announcement of results. They offer a preliminary picture of how the electoral process unfolded as observed in the field, covering both aspects of organisational and procedural regularity and facts and practices requiring further verification or legal and human-rights analysis, including:

1. Pre-campaign period

Initial processing of 396 forms produced the following results: - 106 cases (approximately 27%) relating to the use of public projects, property and services in an electoral context; - 70 cases (approximately 18%) relating to the launch of associative activities serving the electoral interest of a party or candidate in an electoral context; - Passive neutrality on the part of the authorities regarding candidates' exploitation of public and associative projects and public property, despite official circulars issued by the Ministry of the Interior prohibiting all funding and charitable operations during the pre-election preparation period.

2. Filing of candidacies

Of the 75 candidacy-filing offices observed, and more than 179 forms analysed, the following was recorded: - Allegations and counter-allegations concerning the payment of money in exchange for endorsements for candidacy at the regional-constituency level; - 26 cases in which candidates were unable to access the platform, representing 14.5% of all cases observed, mostly (around 85%) due to platform malfunctions; - Multiple recorded incidents of the use of violence by a party against political parties; - 11 cases in which a party's list was disqualified without being replaced.



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3. Electoral campaign

Initial processing of 676 forms relating to observation of the electoral campaign produced the following results: - Restrictions, the removal of publications, and arrests affecting members of a legally recognised party that called for a boycott, carried out during the official electoral campaign period, aimed at publicising their position calling for a boycott of the elections; - Mutual defamation between parties and candidates, and defamation targeting party officials and members of parliament currently standing as candidates; - 12% of cases involving the posting of campaign material in unauthorised public locations; - 15 cases of prohibition of mobile processions organised by political parties; - 53 cases (8.5%) of use of public property for the benefit of a candidate or political party; - 59 cases suspected of involving the use of money and bribery to win voters' support; - 194 cases (32%) of the exploitation of children in the distribution of campaign material and in campaign activities and rallies.

4. Polling day

Observation on polling day covered approximately 4,645 polling stations, with 1,409 observers deployed across 12 regions and 91 local constituencies, using both a fixed methodology (600 observers) and a mobile methodology (809 observers). Observation covered the opening of polling stations, the availability of equipment and materials, pre-voting procedures, the conduct of voting, ballot secrecy, the conditions for the participation of persons with disabilities, the closing of polling stations, counting operations, and the drafting and handover of records. Preliminary findings indicate that:

- 40 cases involved observers being denied access to polling stations;
- 8% of polling stations displayed campaign material;
- 8% had campaign material in the vicinity of polling centres;
- 21% of polling stations recorded a queue of voters before opening;
- 87% of polling stations opened at 8:00 a.m.;
- 71.8% of polling stations had at least one party-appointed monitor present;
- In 15% of cases, the voter's name was not announced clearly and audibly during voting;
- In 28% of cases, voters did not take their ballot paper themselves;
- 6% of cases involved voters being directed inside the polling station in favour of a candidate or list;
- In 32% of cases involving voters with disabilities, they were not assisted by a person of their own choosing;



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- 15% of polling stations experienced a suspension of voting for various reasons, with an average stoppage exceeding 15 minutes;
- 99% of polling stations closed exactly at 7:00 p.m.;
- In 48% of cases, ballots were declared invalid simply because the voting mark extended beyond the symbol's box without reaching the box of another candidate;
- 3% of polling stations did not draw up the record in three (3) copies;
- 6% of polling stations did not hand over a copy of the record drawn up for the counting operation to the representative of each candidate or list.

IV. Thematic Preliminary Findings

In addition to presenting findings by stage of the electoral process, the CAOÉ adopted a thematic reading of the data collected, in order to examine certain rights-related issues that span more than one electoral stage and cannot be captured through chronological analysis alone. This approach makes it possible to bring together scattered indicators and link them to one another, helping to assess the conditions for political participation from the standpoint of the media and digital space during the electoral campaign, equality and non-discrimination, effective access to political rights, youth issues, and respect for linguistic plurality. These conclusions remain tied to the scope and volume of the data covered by the observation and will be deepened in the final report through legal and human-rights analysis and the territorial distribution of indicators.

1. The electoral campaign in the media and the digital space

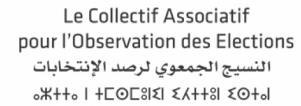
The CAOÉ paid particular attention to practices relating to the digital space, given the growing presence of social media and digital platforms in electoral campaigns. Monitoring, within the limits of the available data, covered:

- 10% of election-related content broadcast contained false or misleading information;
- 21% involved the use of fake news and rumours to influence voters' choices;
- 14% involved the use of digital content containing false claims or documents defaming or infringing on the privacy of candidates;
- 66 cases of AI-generated content used to produce or alter false or fabricated electoral content;
- 89.4% of public audiovisual media coverage was predominantly neutral in tone, with an emphasis on encouraging participation;



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- In this regard, the CAO takes care not to describe any content as misleading or unlawful except on the basis of verified elements and clear criteria, distinguishing between political opinion or electoral discourse on the one hand, and information whose accuracy can be objectively verified on the other.

Women's political participation constitutes a cross-cutting focus of the observation process. Its assessment is not limited to the number of women candidates but also covers women's position on candidate lists, the conditions of their participation in the campaign, their exposure to violence, restrictions or gender-based discrimination, as well as their presence in the various bodies managing the electoral process. The CAO recorded:

- ### 3. Participation of persons with disabilities





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The CAOEE monitored the conditions for the political participation of persons with disabilities from the candidacy stage through to polling day, including access to facilities, the adequacy of equipment, ease of voting, and access to assistance when needed. It recorded:

- More than a third of candidacy-filing offices did not provide accessibility features;
- 36.8% of cases of difficulty for persons with disabilities in accessing public gatherings;
- 80% of campaign-rally venues did not provide explanatory guidance for persons with visual or intellectual disabilities;
- 77% recorded the absence of persons with disabilities from the platforms at campaign rallies;
- 89% of cases in which persons with disabilities present on the platform did not take the floor at rallies;
- 27% of polling stations did not allow persons with disabilities to access, move around and vote;
- 58% of polling stations did not provide explanatory guidance for persons with visual disabilities;
- An overall scant-to-non-existent presence of persons with disabilities at rallies.

4. Respect for young people

Observation paid particular attention to the presence of young people and their concerns throughout the various stages of the electoral campaign, whether through programmes, slogans and processions, or through their actual participation in rallies and on platforms and taking the floor there. Preliminary findings show:

- Defamation and infringement of the privacy of certain women candidates via social media platforms;
- 80% presence of young people on rally platforms, including taking the floor;
- A generally high level of youth presence at campaign rallies.

5. Respect for linguistic plurality

Observation paid attention to the presence of linguistic plurality, in particular the use of the Amazigh language alongside Arabic, in electoral communication, as one of the dimensions of equal access to information and political participation. Preliminary findings, within the limits of the material and activities covered by the observation, show that:



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- Amazigh was used in 59% of written campaign advertisements;
- Amazigh was used in 38% of campaign rallies.

V. Preliminary Conclusions

In light of the data collected and analysed up to the issuance of this statement, the CAOEE records the following preliminary conclusions:

1. Satisfaction that the elections took place on schedule, with the electoral timetable and deadlines respected;
2. Efforts made by the State to raise awareness of the electoral process, opening it up to all, through several communication channels;
3. An increase in the financial allocations dedicated to funding political parties for the electoral campaign;
4. The adoption of new incentive measures in favour of candidacies from young people and persons with disabilities aged 35 or under;
5. The exclusive allocation of the regional list to women candidates.

However, the CAOEE notes with concern:

1. The failure to adopt a participatory approach, with civil society excluded from discussions on electoral legislation;
2. The retention of the electoral divisor, despite the criticism directed at it;
3. The limitations of the legal framework, which falls short of guaranteeing political parity for women;
4. The weak criminalisation of conduct undermining the integrity of electoral competition, particularly the use of money and the exploitation of public property;
5. The limited impact of the legal measures and steps taken by the State and political parties to encourage youth participation in the electoral process (the 18–24 age group represents only 4%, compared with 8% previously, and the 25–34 age group 15%, compared with 19% in 2021);
6. Continued disparity in women's political presence depending on the type of constituency: of 2,658 women's candidacies, 1,783 are concentrated in the regional constituencies reserved for women, against 875 in local constituencies, with only 121 women heading local lists — underscoring the need not to reduce women's participation to the overall candidacy rate;
7. The exercise of voting rights by Moroccans residing abroad remains essentially tied to the proxy mechanism, despite the procedural progress represented by the launch



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of an electronic platform for this purpose, meaning that assessment of this group's effective participation depends on the ease and effectiveness of this mechanism and the number of beneficiaries;

8. The digital space has become one of the central arenas of electoral competition and observation, with the growing use of social media, personal data and artificial intelligence, alongside challenges relating to respect for consent and transparency rules, data protection, and disclosure of AI-generated content and deepfakes;
9. A persistent gap between legal recognition of the political participation of persons with disabilities and the actual guarantee of the conditions for exercising it: despite the introduction of new incentives to strengthen their representation, the human-rights standard remains tied to the availability of accessibility features, reasonable accommodation and independent participation throughout the electoral process;
10. Linguistic plurality, and in particular the presence of Amazigh, remains an issue requiring genuine monitoring in electoral practice, as coverage of plurality in the audiovisual media alone is not sufficient to assess the actual presence of Amazigh in parties' campaign material, discourse and various forms of communication.

VI. Preliminary Recommendations

Based on the findings that could be verified as of the date of issuance of this statement, the CAOEE recommends the following:

1. Establishing an independent body to oversee elections;
2. Involving civil-society organisations in the development of electoral legislation, through the establishment of regular consultation mechanisms with active civic organisations, ensuring the implementation of the constitutional provisions on civil-society participation in the design and evaluation of public policy;
3. Strengthening the transparency of the electoral process and the availability of relevant electoral information and data, given the current difficulty in accessing information;
4. Regulating and framing pre-campaign activities and addressing all related electoral violations;
5. Strengthening the effectiveness of mechanisms for monitoring, reporting on and addressing electoral violations, and ensuring follow-up of complaints and the attribution of legal responsibility where facts are established, so as to limit impunity;
6. Ensuring equal access to public media and diversity in election media coverage, so as to guarantee freedom of expression and fair competition among the various



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- political actors, including opinions opposed to or calling for non-participation in or boycott of the elections;
7. Establishing a legal and ethical framework for paid digital advertising and strengthening transparency regarding its funding sources, along with clear guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence in electoral content, whether in the media or on social media platforms;
 8. Ensuring the State's proper application of the legal provisions on independent and impartial election observation, and working to develop them based on the proposals put forward by the CAOÉ;
 9. Adopting a sustainable strategy for education on citizenship, human rights and political participation, with particular attention to young people and groups that are underrepresented in the electoral process;
 10. Strengthening women's political participation and representation through more effective measures to achieve equality and parity, alongside developing mechanisms to prevent political violence and discrimination linked to women's political participation, and facilitating avenues for reporting, protection and follow-up;
 11. Ensuring the effective political participation of persons with disabilities by providing accessibility features and reasonable accommodation at all stages of the electoral process, enabling them to exercise their political rights independently, with dignity and on an equal footing with others;
 12. Taking practical measures to give effect to linguistic plurality in the electoral process, and strengthening the presence of Amazigh alongside Arabic in electoral information, materials and communication, so as to ensure fairer access to political information;
 13. Strengthening the protection of children from exploitation or inappropriate involvement in electoral campaigns and activities, and clarifying the legal rules governing their presence or participation in activities of a political nature;
 14. Ensuring respect for the protection of personal data in political and electoral communication, strengthening transparency of digital political content and advertising and its funding sources, and developing mechanisms for monitoring and verifying digital practices that could undermine freedom of choice or the integrity of electoral competition;
 15. Developing the legal and regulatory mechanisms needed to strengthen the political participation of Moroccans residing abroad and enable them to exercise their political rights under clear and effective conditions, including the right to stand as candidates;



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16. Ensuring that prisoners who have not been stripped of their civil and political rights are able to exercise their right to vote, through the provision of appropriate legal and organisational arrangements. The authorities are called upon to inform the public of the outcome of the judicial investigations opened into all the irregularities that marred the electoral process;
17. Informing the public of the full details of the results of the 23 September 2026 electoral process.

The Collective Associative for Election Observation reaffirms its commitment to the principles of independence, impartiality, objectivity, non-discrimination, accuracy and transparency, and confirms that election observation does not seek to influence voters' choices or to evaluate parties, candidates or their programmes, but rather to assess the conditions under which the electoral process itself was organised and conducted, on the basis of the law, the facts and the human-rights standards applied.

Once the processing of its database and final verification of the facts have been completed, the CAO E will issue its final report, including a detailed presentation of the methodology, quantitative and qualitative findings, the thematic and territorial distribution of indicators, legal and human-rights analysis, and recommendations addressed to the various parties concerned.

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