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Angola's troubled election closes

Voting has ended in Angola on the second day of parliamentary elections which are seen as a vital step in the country's recovery from decades of war.

Polling was extended after chaos on Friday prevented many people in Luanda province from casting their vote.

Opponents of the ruling MPLA party have called for a re-run of the poll, which EU election observers have reportedly said broke domestic election laws.

However, African observers said the vote had been transparent and credible.

It is the oil-rich nation's first election in 16 years, but was marred by confusion from the outset.

Fourteen parties are taking part but the contest is mainly between the ruling MPLA party and its long-term rivals, Unita.

Mixed observations

On Friday, some polling stations opened late and others quickly ran out of ballot papers. The problems were particularly serious in the overcrowded capital.

Luisa Morgantini, head of the EU observer mission in Angola, blamed "woeful organisation" for the problems and said that a failure to provide voter registration lists at polling stations was a violation of the country's electoral laws.

"The law was broken because the electoral registration was not distributed," Luisa Morgantini, who is leading a 120-member EU team, told Reuters news agency.

She added that some election officials had failed to show up at some polling stations, and that there was a shortage of the ink used to mark voters' fingers and prevent multiple voting.

Observers from the regional grouping, Southern African Development Community (Sadc), saw things differently and said the vote had been "transparent and credible".

"The Sadc mission congratulates the people of Angola on peaceful, free, transparent and credible elections which reflect the will of the people," John Kunene of the observer mission told the AFP news agency.

Isaias Samakuva, leader of the Unita party, said the system in Luanda had collapsed, while another party leader said the vote was flawed.

The party says it will challenge the legitimacy of the vote in Luanda province at the country's Constitutional Court.

"We had no choice but to file the challenge. Conditions did not exist for the election in Luanda (province) yesterday and they still do not exist today," Unita spokesman Adalberto da Costa said.

However, the national electoral commission, which took the decision to run it for an unscheduled second day and reopen 320 polling stations, has blamed local officials for the problems.

Credibility

Rejecting demands that the election be held again, commission president Caetano de Sousa told journalists: "Other than this Luanda situation, we believe the process went well generally."

Although many voters were frustrated by the delays, they insisted they were prepared to wait in order to vote in the country's first election since the end of a 27-year civil war in 2002.