

MEXICO - Calderón Becomes Mexican President-Elect (by Will Wissert, Truthout)

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[Truthout](#) - Mexico City - Felipe Calderon became president-elect of Mexico on Tuesday, two months after disputed elections, when the nation's top electoral court voted unanimously to reject allegations of fraud and certify his narrow victory.

His leftist rival, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, had said he would not recognize the ruling. His supporters wept as the decision was announced and the courthouse shook as protesters set off fireworks outside.

"Felipe Calderon didn't win. Fraud won," opposition supporter Francisca Ojeda said, screaming to be heard over protesters throwing trash at the court and screaming "Fraud! Fraud!"

The court found no evidence of systematic fraud, although it threw out some polling place results for mathematical errors, irregularities, and other problems that trimmed Calderon's 240,000-vote advantage to 233,831 votes out of 41.6 million cast.

"There are no perfect elections," Judge Alfonsina Berta Navarro Hidalgo said.

The tribunal's decision was final and cannot be appealed.

Tuesday's long-awaited ruling by the Federal Electoral Tribunal - which came two months, three days, and tens of thousands of pages of legal challenges after voters cast their ballots - was unlikely to end potentially explosive protests or close the growing political divide gripping the country.

Calderon, staying out of sight at the ruling party offices, now must win over millions of Mexicans angry that President Vicente Fox didn't make good on promises of sweeping change - and fend off thousands of radicalized leftists who say they will stop at nothing to undermine his presidency.

Lopez Obrador and his supporters claimed fraud, illicit government spending and dirty tricks swayed the election in favor of Calderon, a member of Fox's National Action Party.

"This has been fraudulent from start to finish," 23-year-old protester Claudio Martinez said.

The court rejected Lopez Obrador's "dirty campaign" allegations, but said Fox put the election at risk with his comments on the campaign.

Lopez Obrador had argued that an ad campaign comparing him to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez illegally affected the elections. But the court said that while the ads had a strong impact, it was not enough to change the result. It also pointed out that Lopez Obrador used his own attack ads against Calderon.

The court said there was "no logical connection" to Lopez Obrador's claim that television ads by pro-Calderon businesses had subliminal messages in favor of Calderon. It also rejected claims that the popular soap opera "La Fea Mas Bella," or "The Prettiest Ugly Girl," indirectly supported Calderon, and said there was no evidence electoral authorities were biased against the leftist.

The court's president, Leonel Castillo, called on Mexicans to unite and heal the deep divisions the election revealed.

"I hope we conclude this electoral process leaving confrontation behind," he said.

Neither candidate was at the session. Lopez Obrador ate breakfast with lawmakers from his Democratic Revolution Party, then arrived at his protest tent in Mexico City's Zocalo plaza where he has been sleeping for nearly two months.

He was greeted by supporters yelling: "You are not alone."

Lopez Obrador adviser Manuel Camacho told The Associated Press that the court's recommendation "does not take into account what is actually happening in the country."

"The court is going to be questioned seriously about its decision," he said, adding: "We have the responsibility to conduct ourselves peacefully."

Busloads of riot police guarded Calderon's campaign headquarters where he was expected to celebrate his victory Tuesday evening.

Lopez Obrador barely mentioned the impending decision Monday during his nightly address to followers in the Zocalo.

Instead, he focused on an upcoming national convention of his supporters to decide if he should declare himself head of a parallel government whose members would propose a series of government reforms.

"This movement is now about transforming the country," he said.

"What we are proposing now could just be a dream - maybe it won't bear fruit, maybe it will be that we fail - but you know what we have? We have confidence, and above all the responsibility to do it," he later added. "The dreams of the men and women of today will be the realities of tomorrow."

The convention is planned for Sept. 16, Mexico's Independence Day in the Zocalo, where the armed forces traditionally gather for a march down Mexico City's main Reforma avenue. Both places have been occupied by protesters for more than a month.

Mexican presidents are limited by the constitution to one, six-year term, and Fox leaves office Dec. 1.

Tensions spilled from the streets to the halls of Congress on Friday, when lawmakers from Lopez Obrador's party the podium of the legislature and blocked Fox from delivering his final state-of-the-nation address.

http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/090506S.shtml