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Colombia: Towards a progressive government?

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Bogota rally for the Petro-Márquez slate.

The probable victory of the progressive candidate Gustavo Petro in the Colombian presidential elections, taking place this Sunday, arouses great hopes there, in our region and in other corners of the planet. Polls show him winning, although not quite with half and the plus one of the valid votes needed to declare him the winner in the first round. So, unless there is a surprise, Petro would have to fight in a second round on June 19 with whoever comes in second, a place occupied until a few days ago by the pro-Uribe Fico Gutiérrez in the polls, which now show him in a technical tie with Rodolfo Hernández. Hernandez could snatch votes from Petro, a probable

scenario to force a second round in which Uribeism and all the right-wing currents would throw themselves at the neck of the progressive slate together with the hegemonic media. Petro, a former guerrilla and former mayor of Bogotá is the standard bearer of the very broad coalition Historic Pact (PH) together with the prominent Afro-Colombian activist, feminist and environmentalist Francia Marquez who is running with him, in the difficult task of reaching the Nariño Palace.

The system always erects enormous obstacles to alternative candidates in any country. How complicated it will be in Colombia, a country ruled by an entrenched oligarchy for two centuries, which the United States considers its property. On March 28, after the legislative and primary elections, in which the PH obtained the largest number of seats, although not the majority in both chambers, General Laura Richardson, head of the Southern Command (SC) met with General Luis Navarro, Commander General of the Armed Forces to ask him about the possible deactivation of the seven US military bases in Colombian territory, in the event Petro wins. Navarro replied that both the legislators and the armed forces would oppose such a move, which earned the military chief a press release from the SC stating that Colombia “is an unconditional security partner of Washington”.

Petro has publicly claimed that there is a conspiracy to stage a coup or cancel the election rather than accept his triumph. He and Marquez, who have been the target of attacks in the past, have received death threats and in Colombia’s peculiar democracy they must appear at rallies protected by armored shields in this last week leading up to the elections

Colombia: towards a progressive government?

Four leftist or progressive presidential candidates have been assassinated in Colombia since 1980. Not to mention the murder in 1948 of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, candidate of the Liberal Party, but with definite popular national roots and vocation, which ushered in the period known as La Violencia.

In the Andean country, where rivers of blood have flowed since the famous massacre of the banana plantations (1928), according to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, created by the peace agreements in 2016, there had been between 2002 and 2008 alone 6400 people killed by the repressive practice of “false positives”, consisting of the murder by the army of innocent citizens presented as guerrillas. If we take the data issued by the prestigious INDEPAZ, in 2022, 78 social leaders and human rights defenders have been murdered, as well as 21 FARC combatants who signed the peace agreement, a tragedy that took off shortly after the election of the current president Iván Duque, a puppet of the neo-fascist former president Álvaro Uribe, a staunch enemy of the peace accords. It is also worth highlighting the repressive viciousness of the Colombian security forces during the great popular rebellions of 2019-2020 and 2021, the 70 percent rejection of Duque in the polls and the collapse of Uribism. A rekindled phenomena, which, like Petro’s rise, are closely related to the awareness created by the non-compliance with the peace agreements, also sparked popular protests in the streets at the same time there was increased sufferings imposed on the many by neoliberal policies.

Petro insists on full compliance with the peace accords. The need for agrarian reform to provide land to rural families and boost food production, but without expropriation; he promotes a tax reform to tax the 4000 largest fortunes in the country and combat tax evasion to finance health and education. It also proposes a new unified pension system supported mainly by the State, the renegotiation of free trade agreements and 50/50 parity positions in the government between men and women, as well as the recognition of the rights of minorities and sexual diversity. Petro and Marquez have been promoting the gradual transition from fossil to sustainable energy.

Ideally, Petro-Márquez could win in the first round because to ensure victory in the second round they will have to weave alliances with spaces outside the popular camp and negotiate away aspects of their program. But, in one way or the other,

their victory would be an important step forward for Colombia and our America.

Source: [Telesur](#), translation [Resumen Latinoamericano - English](#)

