

washingtonpost.com

## Mexican Candidate Ready for Long Battle

By MARK STEVENSON  
The Associated Press  
Sunday, August 6, 2006; 5:26 PM

MEXICO CITY -- Leftist candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Sunday that he was digging in for a long battle to ensure his ruling-party rival isn't declared the winner in the July 2 presidential election, calling on his supporters to hold a massive demonstration in front of the court that ruled against his demand for a full recount.

Lopez Obrador told tens of thousands of followers in Mexico City's main Zocalo plaza that they should indefinitely man the sprawling, week-old protest camps that have brought much of the capital's normally thriving center to a halt. The blockades have snarled traffic, costing the city an estimated \$23 million a day.

The former Mexico City mayor said that he would continue to demand a full recount in the presidential race, despite the Federal Electoral Tribunal's decision Saturday in favor of a partial recount. Electoral officials across the nation will begin sifting through ballots from 9 percent of the nation's 130,000 polling places on Wednesday, wrapping up their work by the weekend.

Lopez Obrador asked his supporters to gather in front of the tribunal Monday evening, likely halting traffic on yet another main Mexico City street. He said he would demand the court "correct" its decision.

Before Lopez Obrador's speech, protesters chanted in favor of seizing Mexico City's airport. Some suggested taking over Congress, a move that would almost certainly trigger confrontations. Security has been increased at both facilities.

While Lopez Obrador did not say whether he would eventually approve such actions, he did promise "new actions, new measure of civil resistance." He asked his followers "to prepare ourselves for a struggle that may last longer."

"Even if I wind up alone, if I have the conviction that I am fighting for a just cause, I would continue, stubbornly," Lopez Obrador said.

The Mexico City government, controlled by Lopez Obrador's Democratic Revolution Party, has protected the protest camps that have blocked the elegant Reforma Avenue and the Zocalo. But on Sunday, police chief Joel Ortega indicated his patience was wearing thin.

"Everything has a limit," he told a news conference.

Advertisement

Help us improve what you see on [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com)

Click here to take a brief survey and be entered to win

**\$250**



Lopez Obrador's supporters were enraged by the tribunal's ruling against their demands for a ballot-by-ballot recount, which they argue will show the leftist was the true winner of the election.

"We don't want anybody except him as president," said protester Maria Acosta, 52, a Mexico City housewife. "The people are tired. We are not going to allow this fraud. The people are not going to allow it. We will take this as far as is necessary."

An official count found that conservative Felipe Calderon of President Vicente Fox's National Action Party has an advantage of less than 0.6 percent, or about 240,000 votes.

The tribunal has until Sept. 6 to declare a president-elect or annul the vote. The partial recount could swing the vote in favor of Lopez Obrador, if electoral officials \_ supervised by judges \_ find evidence of widespread problems.

The Federal Electoral Institute, an autonomous agency often credited for bringing democracy to Mexico, has said the election was clean and fair and defended the work of thousands of volunteer poll workers. Most international observers have said they did not note major problems.

The election has divided the nation along class and social lines. Lopez Obrador has promised to govern for the poor, while Calderon has the backing of the nation's growing middle classes and ruling elite.

Lopez Obrador accused the ruling party and its followers of trying to maintain its hold on power, recalling 71 years of one-party rule that ended with Fox's historic victory in 2000.

"The powerful ... have fed classism, racism and intolerance," he said, adding: "They have made \_ although they hypocritically try to hide it \_ the color of someone's skin and contempt for the poor and those under them, their main cause."

Leaders of other parties supporting Lopez Obrador called on protesters to follow Fox and protest at every one of the president's public events.

Early Sunday, hundreds of Mexicans celebrated a Mass at Mexico City's Basilica, praying for unity, reconciliation and peace.

© 2006 The Associated Press

#### Ads by Google

##### [George W. Bush](#)

Should He Step Down As President? Vote Now To See Survey Results!

[www.popularq.com](http://www.popularq.com)

##### [2006 Arizona Elections](#)

Get informed before you vote. Find out more on Arizona elections

[www.azcleanelections.gov](http://www.azcleanelections.gov)

##### [Republican Robo Calls](#)

Let a Republican owned firm make your automated phone calls.

[www.GOPcalls.com](http://www.GOPcalls.com)