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El Salvador: Official Election Results, Statements By President-elect

by Deborah Tyroler

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On March 22, Alfredo Cristiani, of the rightist Republican Nationalist Alliance (ARENA) was formally declared the winner in the March 19 presidential election. Final results released in the afternoon gave Cristiani 53.83% of the 989,078 votes cast, to 36.03% for Christian Democrat Fidel Chavez Mena. More than 1.8 million Salvadorans were registered to vote, and turnout was 52%. The Democratic Convergence announced its delegate to the elections council withdrew from the official vote-count to protest what it called the council's "fraudulent maneuvering." In a statement, the coalition charged that council members were voiding ballots cast for its candidate, Guillermo Ungo, and padding the vote for the candidate of the conservative National Conciliation Party. Under Salvadoran law, only the top three political parties, as determined by voting, are allowed to appoint a delegate to the elections council. "This maneuver is intended to force our representative out of the council," the Convergence statement said. In an interview on the evening of March 21 with the New York Times, Cristiani proposed an "indefinite cease-fire" and said talks with the Farabundo Marti National Liberation should start before his inauguration June 1. "Why wait?" he said. "We can gain two-and-a-half months." Cristiani compared ARENA to the US Republican party, which he said "has its very conservative, its moderates, and its liberals." He said that ARENA's image for extremism is based on misleading news reports. On US involvement in El Salvador: "All countries like to see their democracies respected, and we'd like to see ours respected as well. The Salvadoran people chose ARENA to be their next government. Give them at least the same chance you've given other parties." Cristiani proposed that discussions with the rebels be resumed, which broke down when the political parties refused to postpone the elections as demanded by the Marxist guerrillas. He said the rebels should agree to a cease-fire as a means of showing their sincerity. The FMLN has proposed a brief cease-fire while the two sides negotiate details to keep the armies apart for a longer truce. Cristiani asserted that human rights abuses by the military were declining, and charged that abuses by the guerrillas were more numerous than those of the army. The New York Times pointed out that virtually all independent monitors dispute this, saying that the army is responsible for most abuses. Cristiani also said the police should crack down on leftist demonstrators who destroy property. "You can't allow these people to go off like that just because you might be called repressive. This is not repressive. This is keeping law and order." (Basic data from AP, 03/23/89; New York Times, 03/22/89)

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