



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Mexican citizens massively protest presidential election results, 2006

2 July

2006

to: 1 December

2006

Country: Mexico

Location City/State/Province: *Mexico City*

Location Description: *Protests took place primarily throughout Mexico City*

Goals:

To pressure the Mexican authorities to recount the votes of the 2006, ballot by ballot.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches › López Obrador gave speeches at rallies and protests against the alleged fraudulent elections.
- 002. Letters of opposition or support › López Obrador and followers filed 227 complaints against the election and submitted a mass amount of evidence suggesting fraudulent electoral counting.
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions › López Obrador and protestors declared their intention to protest until their demands were met. They also refused to acknowledge Calderón as president.
- 038. Marches › Protestors of the election marched at Mexico City against the election, demanding a recount.
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › López Obrador led protests in Mexico City against the election. Some of these were called "Informative Assemblies."
- 048. Protest meetings › Establishment of 47 tents in Mexico City to inhibit daily life and pressure the authorities.
- 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance › López Obrador gave speeches encouraging protests and marches against the election nationwide.
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials › López Obrador and followers refused to accept Calderón as president.
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 001. Public speeches › López Obrador continued to give speeches demanding a vote-by-vote recount and encouraging continued protests and sit-ins.
- 002. Letters of opposition or support › Protestors continued to place claims demanding a vote recount.
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › Supporters of López Obrador continued protesting; one protest, in particular, contained 300 women outside of the Confederación Patronal de la República Mexicana with women carrying pots and spoons.
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials › López Obrador and followers refused to accept Calderón as president.
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction
- 196. Civil disobedience of "neutral" laws

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials › López Obrador and followers refused to accept Calderón as president.
- 177. Speak-in

Methods in 4th segment:

- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials › López Obrador and followers refused to accept Calderón as president.

Methods in 5th segment:

- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials › López Obrador and followers refused to accept Calderón as president.

Methods in 6th segment:

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast) › Hunger strikes.
- 162. Sit-in

Notes on Methods:

Much is unknown/undocumented regarding protests and actions during segments 4-6.

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

Group characterization:

- Party of the Democratic Revolution supporters
- Politicians

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Andres Manuel López Obrador, presidential candidate

Partners:

Members of López Obrador's Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD)

External allies:

Not known

Involvement of social elites:

Not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length: *Approximately 1 month*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Vicente Fox (current president), Felipe Calderón (elected candidate), the Mexican government and authorities.

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

Clash during November in which PRD members shoved Calderón's PAN members off of stage at Legislative Palace.

Repressive Violence:

Police clash in August when protestors attempted to set up an encampment.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

1 point out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

The group of protestors did not get a vote-by-vote recount, but they did get a partial recount and remained mostly nonviolent. Also, the protests grew during the campaign and covered a large geographical area.

Mexico's political atmosphere has long dealt with corruption. For over 70 years, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) retained strict control over the government, manipulating elections in its favor. In 2000, Vicente Fox, of the National Action Party (PAN), gained presidential office. This election shocked the nation, as it broke the PRI's uninterrupted rule. To Mexico, the 2000 elections marked a change in the government; Fox's victory represented free and fair democratic elections.

On 2 July 2006, thousands of Mexican citizens gathered in Mexico City's Zócalo center to await the results of the next presidential elections. Three candidates had run for presidency: Felipe Calderón, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and Roberto Madrazo. It had been a competitive election, and much of crowd was tense with anticipation. Once vote counters announced the initial "Quick Count" that determined Calderón, of the PAN, as the winner, protestors began marching. Candidate López Obrador, of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), led these citizens to challenge the results of the election, as election officials of the Federal Electoral Tribunal (TEPFJ), claimed that Calderón won by a small majority of 243,934 votes.

Once election officials had announced that Calderón would become president, López Obrador claimed that he and his party, the PRD, would fight for a vote recount. He began to organize mass protests, marches, and civil disobedience, vowing not to stop until the authorities agreed to a ballot-by-ballot recount. Many citizens were upset because Calderón's victory seemed to be fraudulent, and given that Fox's victory in 2000 represented free and fair democracy, these results appeared as a threat to the democratic progress.

One of the many actions that López Obrador took against the election results was the Informative Assembly. The purpose of these assemblies was to gather citizens together in protest of the election officials that played a role in the election and to pressure these authorities to recount the ballots. On 8 July 2006, López Obrador held the first of these Informative Assemblies. Nearly 280,000 citizens gathered together and chanted “No to the damn fraud!”

On 16 July 2006, López Obrador organized a Second Informative Assembly in the Zócalo. Nearly 1.1 million citizens were present at the daylong protests. Then, on 30 July 2006, López Obrador led a march along Paseo de la Reforma that ended with the Third Informative Assembly. Reports on the numbers present at this assembly vary from 180,000 to 1.2 million to 2.4 million. At this assembly, López Obrador called for nation-wide protests. Supporters established 47 protest camps in the capital. Urging peaceful civil resistance, López Obrador supported direct action to prevent or obstruct daily life in Mexico City. These encampments slowed down traffic and blocked major transportation arteries.

Following the Third Informative Assembly, on 31 July 2006, protestors blocked traffic and disrupted Mexico City’s business district, including the stock exchange, banks, businesses, and hotels.

Leaders of López Obrador’s party filed 227 separate complaints across Mexico to challenge the election. Protestors kept demanding a recount throughout protests and rallies. López Obrador and his supporters filed one master complaint that consisted of 900 pages and 9 boxes of evidence that demonstrated the mathematical errors in tallying the vote.

On 5 August 2006, the TEPFJ met to decide on what to do in regards to López Obrador’s request for a recount. They decided that they would only recount 9.2% of the total ballots.

The TEPFJ was to hold this recount from 9 August 2006 to 13 August 2006. Then, on 8 August 2006, the TEPJF annulled 237,736 votes of the 4 million recounted. López Obrador continued to demand a vote-by-vote recount and promised to continue civil disobedience and sit-ins. He claimed that he and his supporters would refuse to acknowledge Calderón as president.

Throughout these recounts, protests continued to expand. On 8 August 2006, protestors seized five highway tollbooths that led into Mexico City, allowing motorists free access. The next day, on 9 August 2006, these protestors surrounded foreign banks and initiated a march towards Benito Juárez International Airport. The federal forces disrupted this march.

On 11 August 2006, protestors seized the Córdoba international bridge, protested in front of an international airport in Sonora and a national migration institute in Guerrero, blocked public credit offices, and occupied the office of the Confederación Patronal de la República Mexicana. This last action was particularly notable because most of the 300 demonstrators were women armed with pots and spoons. Then, on 12 August 2006, a day before the end of the recount, López Obrador’s coalition threatened with mobilizations to prevent Calderón from entering presidency.

Following the recount, López Obrador called for protests throughout September against the government and the election. On 14 August 2006, supporters of López Obrador clashed with the Federal Police when they attempted to build an encampment in front of the Congress building.

On 1 September 2006, protestors seized the podium of Congress, blocking Vicente Fox’s State of the Nation address. Then, on 5 September 2006, the tribunal declared that Calderón met all the constitutional requirements necessary to be elected, despite the votes that the recount cancelled.

López Obrador continued to lead some civil resistance to change the country’s opinion, but Calderón continued to prepare for his inauguration. On 28 November 2006, there was a confrontation when members of Calderón’s PAN and López Obrador’s PRD shoved each other off of a stage in the Legislative Palace. The efforts of Obrador's campaign were not, however, successful in preventing Calderón’s presidency. On 1 December 2006, Calderón took office. Protests largely died out.

Research Notes

Sources:

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