

Right-Wing Alejandro Giammattei elected president of Guatemala



Guatemala City, August 12 (RHC)-- In a key presidential race in Guatemala between center-left Sandra Torres (UNE) and right-wing Alejandro Giammattei from the Vamos party, Giammattei has won by 59.47 percent of votes against 40.53 percent in Sunday's runoff elections, in what seems an irreversible trend with 86 percent of votes counted according to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal.

"Tomorrow I will sleep and a day after tomorrow the transition period will begin," Giammattei told reporters after claiming his victory Sunday night. The right-wing president-elect will inherit a country with a 60 percent poverty rate, widespread crime, and unemployment, which have led hundreds of thousands of Guatemalans to migrate north.

At the same time, the new Guatemalan president will face a major challenge after the country agreed with Washington to act as a buffer against migration under pressure from United States President Donald Trump.

Threatened with economic sanctions if it said no, the administration of outgoing President Jimmy Morales reached an accord in late July to make Guatemala a so-called safe third country for migrants, despite the

endemic poverty and violence plaguing the Central American nation.

Morales, who terminated the commission's mandate effective as of September, was barred by law from standing again. But his legacy could prove lasting if the migration deal he authorized becomes a defining feature of the next administration.

Meanwhile, for many Guatemalans, corruption scandals, which led to the arrest of former President Otto Perez in 2015 and then threatened to unseat his successor, incumbent President Jimmy Morales, a former TV comedian, were key decision-makers.

Both candidates had vowed to fight corruption without "foreign interference," an apparent allusion to the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), the United Nations mission that charged Perez and investigated Morales.

The 63-year old Giammattei focused his campaign on building a "wall of investment" along Guatemala's border with Mexico, in order to promote jobs and reduce migration. He ran the country's prison system from 2005 to 2007 and in 2010 was arrested and accused of abuse of power and involvement in extrajudicial executions.

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