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by María Josefina Arce

Next April, Ecuadorians will go to the polls again, after none of the 16 candidates for the presidency of the country obtained the necessary votes to win in the first round of the general elections, held this Sunday in a context marked by high insecurity and violence in the country.

The candidates with the most votes and who started as favorites were the current president and candidate for re-election, Daniel Noboa, of the National Democratic Action Party, and Luisa Gonzalez, of the Citizens' Revolution Movement, who were the protagonists of a close race.

Therefore, Noboa and Gonzalez will be measured again in the elections. Let's remember that both went to the runoff in October 2023, after the call for early elections by the then President Guillermo Lasso, who resorted to the cross-death mechanism and dissolved the National Assembly.

More than four thousand polling stations were set up in Ecuador's 24 provinces, where prisoners had already voted without being convicted.

According to the National Electoral Council, more than 83% of the population participated in Sunday's elections, which also elected members of the National Assembly and representatives to the Andean Parliament.

The electoral process has been marked by the questioning of several presidential candidates about Noboa's refusal to apply for a license to proselytize during the campaign, as required by the electoral law.

The Andean country entered these elections in the midst of a wave of violence that claimed the lives of more than 700 citizens last January, making it one of the most violent months in the country's history.

Likewise, reports of extortion increased by 17% and the perception of insecurity among citizens, according to polls, barely decreased by 4% compared to the period of Lasso, which will be completed by Noboa.

Many believe that the so-called Phoenix Plan, the president's strategy to combat violence, has not achieved the expected results and has paved the way for human rights violations.

The country also faces a complex economic situation, having suffered a recession last year due in part to an energy crisis that caused blackouts throughout the country.

Whoever wins April elections will have a difficult task, given the high level of insecurity, unemployment, precariousness of the formal labor market, and growing poverty.

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