

UN rights chief urges calm as Peru still waits for vote results

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International community demands respect for Peruvian elections

Geneva, June 16 (RHC)-- The United Nations human rights chief has urged Peruvians to “remain calm” as the official results of a deeply polarised presidential runoff have yet to be released, more than a week after the vote was held across the Andean nation.

In a statement in Geneva, Michelle Bachelet said she was “concerned that what should be a celebration of democracy is becoming a source of division, which is in turn widening the fracture in Peruvian society with negative human rights implications”.

Bachelet also expressed concern that election officials were being harassed. “If the rules of democracy are not accepted before, during and after the elections, social cohesion can dangerously crack,” said Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Millions of Peruvians headed to the polls on June 6 to choose between leftist teachers’ union leader Pedro Castillo and right-wing Keiko Fujimori, the daughter of jailed ex-President Alberto Fujimori. The election came amid deep political divisions in Peru, which is struggling to cope with surging COVID-19 infections and deaths, as well as a pandemic-related economic downturn.

Castillo is widely expected to be declared the winner; with nearly all the ballots counted, he had 50.14 percent support and a narrow lead of fewer than 50,000 votes over Fujimori. She has alleged fraud, without providing any evidence to back up her claims, and has been seeking to annul many of the votes.

International observers have said the election was carried out without any serious irregularities. It is still unclear when the country’s electoral body will formally announce the winner, though Castillo has called for the count to be wrapped up quickly to end the uncertainty.

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