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Quito, February 14 (RHC)-- Ecuador's top electoral body has said it will conduct a partial recount of February 7 presidential polls after a request from two candidates still fighting for second place.

Indigenous activist Yaku Perez and right-wing former banker Guillermo Lasso filed a request for the recount on Friday, as the race to join economist Andres Arauz in an April presidential runoff remains too close to call.

Diana Atamaint, president of the National Electoral Council (CNE), said there would be “a recount of 100 percent of the votes in the Guayas province”, the most populous province in the country. She said 50 percent of the votes in 16 other provinces would also be recounted.

“Once the review process is finished, the final announcement of the results will be made,” Atamaint said in a statement. “We are firmly going to defend the electoral process that we prepared with great affection, responsibility but above all with transparency.” The statement did not say how long the recount process would take.

With 99.99 percent of the votes counted by Friday, Perez had 19.38 percent of the vote, just behind Lasso, who got 19.74 percent. “We are convinced that now, with transparency, we will recover many votes,” said Perez, after the meeting at the electoral council. “It was worth the fight.”

Arauz, a protege of former President Rafael Correa, secured 32.44 percent of the votes and will take part in the runoff. As many as 16 candidates took part in the presidential contest, which took place amid widespread discontent over the country’s handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and coronavirus-related economic downturn.

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