

A sigh of relief

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In her first statement Xiomara Castro said she'd leave "out war, hatred and death squads, corruption and drug trafficking".

Photo: El Periódico

By Guillermo Alvarado

With a practically unassailable lead, the election of Xiomara Castro to the presidency of Honduras means a new lease of life for that country, the most impoverished in Central America and affected by corruption, as well as organized crime and gang violence.

An important factor in this victory was the high voter turnout, with the participation of 3.2 million voters out of the 5.1 million that make up the electoral roll, which speaks of the hopes of a large part of the population for a change that will bring peace and development.

The first seven months of 2021 were particularly violent in the Central American Northern Triangle nation, with 2,188 murders, which is 13 percent more than the same period of the previous year.

In addition to violence driven by organized crime and gangs, the so-called "maras," the nation also suffers from high rates of corruption at almost all levels of public administration.

To give you an idea, the two candidates trailing Xiomara Castro in the election results, Nasry Asfura and Yani Rosenthal, have been embroiled in several such scandals.

Asfura, of the National Party, the same party of outgoing President Juan Orlando Hernández, was accused in 2020 of embezzling public funds and was accused of influence peddling. In addition, his name appears in the Pandora's Papers on the diversion of money to tax havens.

Rosenthal, proposed to the first magistracy by the Liberal Party, served three years in prison in the United States for the crime of money laundering.

Precisely one of Xiomara Castro's campaign promises was to put an end to these evils and in her first declaration when the vote count gave her a wide advantage she pronounced to leave "out war, hatred and death squads, corruption and drug trafficking".

It will take a lot of effort to achieve these goals in a country with almost 60 percent of its inhabitants living below the poverty line, which was already a scourge before and deepened with the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The composition of the new Congress of the Republic, which until now has been dominated by the National Party and which, if it remains so, will hinder the management of the executive, has yet to be determined.

In any case, there is a sigh of relief among many Hondurans, for whom for now the only way out is migration, almost forced, to the United States, an adventure with very little chance of success.

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