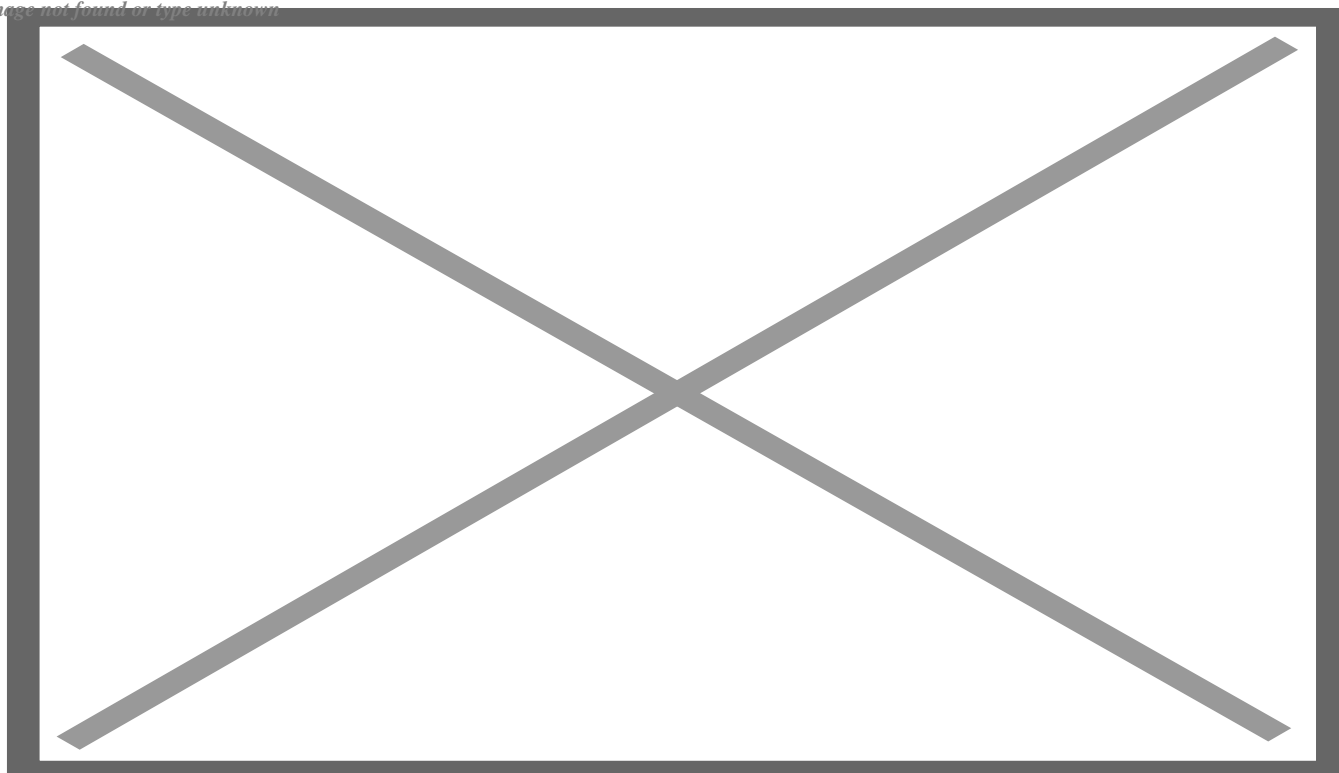


# *Panama prepares for general elections*

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By María Josefina Arce

The electoral campaigns are closing in Panama in view of the appointment at the polls next Sunday, in which more than three million citizens are called to participate to elect, among other positions, the new president of the country, in a process where there has been no the controversy was missing.

On May 5, Panamanians will also appoint the vice president of the Isthmus nation, 71 deputies of the National Assembly and 20 legislators of the Central American Parliament, in addition to 81 mayors and 700 local authorities.

All positions are defined by a simple majority, therefore there is no second round of elections, an issue that has been on the table again in recent times.

According to the polls, José Raúl Mulino is leading the electorate's preference for the Realizing Goals and Alianza parties, and whose nomination, however, has generated controversy.

Mulino was initially the running mate of former president Ricardo Martinelli, who aspired to a new mandate, but was disqualified after a sentence of more than 10 years for corruption cases.

A claim of unconstitutionality has been filed against Mulino's candidacy for not having been elected in primaries by his party, on which the Supreme Court of Justice must rule.

Another 7 candidates aspire to the presidency, among whom is the former head of state Martín Torrijos, for the Popular Party and who led the country from 2004 to 2009.

The polls place Torrijos in second position, along with Ricardo Lombana, of the Otro Camino Movement. The official candidate and current vice president José Gabriel Carrizo is in fifth place.

Other polls reveal that 68% of Panamanians want a radical change in the leadership of the country, and 25% remain undecided about their vote, since, according to experts, the candidates have not managed to reach those voters in their campaigns. .

Environmental issues, corruption and the growing number of people crossing the Darién jungle, one of the busiest and most dangerous migratory crossings on the planet, have been at the center of the electoral campaigns.

Panama arrives at the elections next Sunday with marked popular discontent, which, experts recall, manifested itself in the streets in July 2022 and more recently in November of last year due to the high cost of living, due to access to water. drinking water, against corruption and open pit mining.

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