

# What happened in El Salvador?

Via [Rebelión](#)

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The landslide victory achieved by Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele in last Sunday's elections means that he will control an absolute majority in the Legislative Assembly and most of the country's municipalities. Although he entered politics and governed the capital representing the former guerrilla Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, in his presidential rule he has become a standard bearer of recharged neoliberalism, honeymooning with Trump, a political maverick fed up with personal ambitions and overt authoritarian pretensions, an unethical man like the New York tycoon. Yet he has a spectacular 71% popularity rating and had already swept the 2019 presidential election, in which he won 53% of the vote. In those elections, the candidate of ARENA, the traditional right-wing party, won 31.72% of the vote. But it was much worse for the FMLN standard-bearer, who, after two consecutive periods of FMLN rule, did not even get 15% of the vote. This fact showed the voters' enormous dissatisfaction with the governmental management of the FMLN, an organization that since the armed struggle and after the peace accords, when it became a political party, has worthily defended the flags of the left in the country and has gained important recognition among its counterparts in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its prestigious and enlightened leader, Schafik Handal, who died in 2006, became one of the most prominent leftist leaders in our region.

But if the result obtained by the former guerrilla in the 2019 presidential elections was famously good, in last Sunday's

election it almost disappeared as an electoral option and that means it can no longer postpone a deep and painful examination of conscience, fraternally accompanied by its peers in the region. With all due respect, many things must have been done wrong and many inadequacies must have existed in the work of the FMLN, especially in the 10 years it was in government, to arrive at a situation where not a few of its militants and sympathizers voted for Bukele's parties, the most representative option of the interests of US imperialism and neoliberalism in the Central American country, now that ARENA is disappearing. Bukele is an ephemeral product of the abysmal crisis of the political party system associated with the perpetuation of neoliberalism that we observe today in the world and particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean. Democracy is increasingly incompatible with neoliberalism.

With the correlation of forces that 66% of the vote will give him in the legislature, Bukele can pass, without negotiating with other parties, any legislation of his interest, appoint one-third of the Supreme Court judges, the Attorney General, the members of the Court of Auditors, and even amend the Constitution, including extending presidential terms to more than one. More than one observer has said in recent days that Sunday's vote is tantamount to electing a dictatorship by popular vote. Even without the extraordinary powers he will now have and without parliamentary representation, the chief executive has refused to make transparent how he spent an IMF loan requested to deal with the pandemic, failed to hand over funds to municipal governments without knowing how they were spent, and stormed into the Legislative Assembly, escorted by soldiers and police, to demand approval of an additional budget for his security plans.

It is alleged that some of the pandemic funds were illegally distributed during the election campaign to his supporters in the form of food packages and bonuses by Nuevas Ideas and Gana, the president's parties. He has instigated a hate

campaign against the opposition, especially the FMLN, two of whose supporters were killed in the middle of the capital a few days ago by security forces. Bukele has over-indebted the country and will face a very difficult economic and social situation. Meanwhile, the IMF will demand cuts in social investment when the country needs it most. It will not be easy if the FMLN does deep self-criticism and goes out to develop a radical opposition program with the grassroots organizations. Neoliberalism is already unsustainable and has a very limited life today, as Argentina and Bolivia show. Although Bukele is very adept, as we have seen, at crafting a la carte messages for different sectors and adept at advertising and networking, harsh reality will sooner or later point people in the right direction, provided he has a dedicated leadership committed to his interests.