

Colombia Presidential Runoff

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Colombia's National Electoral Council (CNE) has finalized the 2026 presidential election count, confirming a runoff between Abelerdo de la Espriella (Defenders of the Homeland) and Iván Cepeda (Historic Pact).

The certified results confirm the preliminary figures released on May 31. De la Espriella secured first place with 10,366,143 votes (43.74%), followed by Cepeda with 9,703,921 votes (40.90%). Paloma Valencia received 1,640,989 votes, while Sergio Fajardo obtained 1,009,346.

Electoral authorities completed the nationwide count on June 4 in under 24 hours. Objections affected fewer than 0.7% of polling stations and did not alter the outcome. Both domestic and international observers have validated the results, clearing the way for the June 21 runoff.

The National Civil Registry reported that discrepancies between the preliminary and official counts remained below 1%, reinforcing confidence in the election's transparency and integrity.

Electoral administration also improved: preliminary results were 37 minutes faster than in 2022, turnout rose by 2.6 million voters, and invalid ballots dropped to their lowest level since 2014. Out of 23,685,329 votes cast across all 122,000 polling stations, blank ballots accounted for 406,970 (1.71%) and 245,389 were declared invalid. Despite the certified results, political tensions remain high.

The Petro-Cepeda campaign¹ has yet to publicly recognize the certified election results. While Cepeda hasn't echoed Petro's fraud allegations, he only accepted the first-round results *five* days after the vote.

The campaign² has been defined by recurring attacks on opposition figures, journalists, and women. President Petro has undermined constitutional safeguards, encroached on electoral authorities' mandates, and mobilized state resources to back Cepeda's parallel campaign.

President's Pacto Histórico legislators, both current and incoming, were present at-and in some cases reportedly involved in- violent actions targeting the campaign headquarters of Abelerdo de la Espriella and Paloma Valencia.

The Petro-Cepeda campaign has further mobilized demonstrations near properties associated with former President Uribe in opposition to Valencia's presidential bid. Authorities reported knives and baseball bats among participants in such incident.

The movement has also been linked to disruptive, violent protests at public universities, led by masked participants claiming the first round was a fraud.

Meanwhile, criminal groups linked to Petro's "Total Peace" deal have escalated violence, committing massacres in regions under their control to instill fear-drawing parallels to the urban disruptions attributed to the Historic Pact.

Preliminary international observers commended the election's administration but flagged government interference and the use of state resources favoring Cepeda's campaign. The Ombudsperson's Office likewise reported concerns over voter freedom in multiple municipalities.

They also increasingly frame Colombia's presidential runoff as a referendum on the country's political trajectory after no candidate secured an outright majority in the first round.

The contest between a security-focused conservative challenger and a government-aligned hard left-wing candidate has deepened political polarization, transforming the runoff into a debate over security, health, drug trafficking, and the future of the country's Total Peace.

Opposition parties and civil society groups allege that public resources were used to support a year-long campaign run by President Petro during the electoral cycle. Whether this amounted to electoral or constitutional violations would require judicial determination.

Some estimates place spending on the allegedly unconstitutional campaign at over 100 billion Colombian pesos, *excluding* the official campaign expenditures reported by Cepeda³.

International observers have also raised concerns that state-funded media outlets disproportionately promoted government-aligned candidates during both the legislative and presidential campaigns.

Financial markets and political commentators increasingly view the runoff as a period of heightened uncertainty regarding Colombia's future policy direction. The vote is widely seen as a choice between a tougher security and market-oriented agenda on one hand, and the continuation of Petro's governing approach-including the Total Peace strategy-on the other.

Assessment

Abelerdo de la Espriella remains an enigmatic political outsider, who succeeded in building a viable national campaign in under six months-a rare feat in Colombian politics.

President Petro and his "Total Peace" associates have openly flouted constitutional and electoral rules by actively campaigning for both his political movement and Cepeda.

The runoff will decide more than Colombia's next president-it will be a verdict on the Petro era and on rival visions for security, governance, and economic management.

Far from abiding by the institutional validation of the elections, the Petro-Cepeda ticket is instrumentalizing the result to suffocate institutional freedoms and further fracture the Colombian citizenry.

Cepeda has tried to project independence, but he remains subordinate to Petro, who still calls all the shots.

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¹ See: Petro Presidential Reelection: www.360geopolitica.org

² To learn more about Colombia elections (2025-2026): www.360geopolitica.org

³ The CNE already open an investigation in Cepeda's campaign expenditures.