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Mexico

# Is AMLO's latest reform a poisoned chalice?

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**On 15 September, a Mexican bank holiday, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador gave a 'farewell' speech in front of 300,000 enthusiastic people gathered on the Zocalo, Mexico City's main square. Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador is stepping down from office on 1 October, giving way to the new president, Claudia Sheinbaum, who was triumphantly elected in June.**

He congratulated himself on his six years in office. The economy in general terms is showing largely positive figures: measures to increase minimum wages, pensions and grants for young people have not been offset by inflation, which remains well below that of most Latin American countries.

For Mexico's workers, indigenous communities and poor people, the promises of the 'Fifth Transformation' made at the start of the six-year term are still far short of the hopes raised, but the difference with all the previous governments for decades is such that Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) is 'retiring' to his property in Chiapas with a popularity rating at an all-time high in Mexico (over 70%).

## **The judiciary: a bastion of the right**

He is leaving it up to the woman he has endorsed and the members of his party, MORENA, who have an absolute majority in parliament, to enforce the latest major constitutional law that he pushed through, to the great displeasure of the opposition and large sectors of the bourgeoisie. This is the reform of the judiciary.

In Mexico, until this law, judges, from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy, were selected by complex and often opaque procedures. This left room for influence peddling, nepotism and widespread corruption. The Supreme Court of Justice also functioned as a cover for the interests of the privileged classes and had on several occasions blocked social or anti-neoliberal laws that AMLO had wanted to promulgate. Although as president he had the power to appoint some of its members, of the 11 current members of this court, only three were in his favour. Generally speaking, the judiciary in Mexico is clearly a bastion of the right and of the wealthy. And AMLO or even the new president could fear 'institutional coups d'état' like those carried out in Brazil against Lula or Dilma Rousseff.

## **The people support the constitutional law**

The law that has just been passed provides for all judges in Mexico to be elected by the people. It was approved by qualified majorities in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate (after some undemocratic manoeuvring). But it came up against head-on opposition not only from the coalition of right-wing parties (PAN, PRI, PRD, etc.) but also from the vast majority of civil servants and justice workers.

55,000 justice workers went on strike for over a month and demonstrated by the tens of thousands in the streets against this law. Of course, they were loudly supported by the parties of the old regime and by the mainstream media. On the other hand, the vast majority of the population supports this law, because they have no confidence in the current judiciary and because it is AMLO who is proposing it and the right who is opposing it.

# A law imposed without consultation

However, this law poses numerous social, political and democratic problems. If a large proportion of justice workers, many of whom are AMLO voters, are opposed to it, it is because it was imposed on them without any consultation and because it will put an end to many opportunities for internal promotion.

It is clear that, in the current situation, López Obrador's party will have control of the three branches of government - executive, legislative and judicial - thanks in particular to the procedure for selecting candidates for judgeships, which remains highly opaque and is unlikely to prevent manoeuvring or corruption at many levels.

At the end of the day, this reform is characteristic of the nature of the government under AMLO: there is no real desire to transform the system, but it is applied from above and is largely imperfect, relying solely on the prestige of the Supreme Guide and in no way on popular mobilisation and control.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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