
Argentine Presidential Elections: Massa Wins First Round, but Onto Runoff With Milei

By: Arnaldo Musa / Special for CubaSi

25/10/2023



Against most predictions, Peronist Sergio Massa won in the first round of Argentine presidential elections last Sunday, although he will have to face in the second round the far-right Javier Milei (La Libertad Avanza), who will seek the support of the broad spectrum from the right, led by Macri followers, whose candidate, Patricia Bullrich (Juntos por el Cambio), came in third place.

In general, in these elections held calmly and with an attendance of 74% of voters, the vote was distributed like this:

Sergio Massa 36.65% (9,594,828 votes); Javier Milei 30.01% (7,856,659); Patricia Bullrich 23.83% (6,240,151); Juan Schiaretti 6.8% (1,780,276) and Myriam Bregman 2.69% (706,691).

The winner had to obtain 45% of votes or 40% within 10 points of the second to be elected president. Since this was not the case, he will compete against the second most voted in the second round on November 19.

The situation did not look good for Massa, Minister of Economy, due to the devaluation of the peso in parallel markets and the increase in inflation.

Massa was at a disadvantage in this campaign, due to his dual role as minister and presidential candidate. That is, his economic proposals for the future collide with the demand that they be applied during his current administration at the head of the Treasury Palace.

After the primaries, the minister-candidate took a series of measures to alleviate the effects of the devaluation of August 14, seeking to contain the deterioration of salaries. He managed, at his initiative, for Congress to eliminate the fourth category of income tax, which favors the sectors that are at the top of the salary pyramid, but he also made announcements aimed at retirees and informal workers, among others.

During the debate, Massa promoted a new laundering in search of dollars, promising punishment for evaders and

the creation of a digital currency, without giving further details on the matter.

During the first part of the campaign, Massa has maintained that “the best solution for Argentina is to sell what they have to the world and get the dollars to get the (International Monetary) Fund off their backs.” The concept of getting dollars, paying the IMF and getting it out of Argentina is a recurring issue in Massa's campaign.

He assures that the economic measures he has taken so far are “transitory, but they have to do with the reality of the moment,” which suggests that his decisions in the future may be different. “Our lithium, our gas, our oil, what the countryside produces, what the industries produce is going to be sold more and more to the world, and that is going to give us the dollars to be free, to be sovereign,” he adds.

Milei, a deputy since 2021, has been the protagonist of this electoral campaign. The harsh message of this ultraliberal economist against the political body—which he calls thieves, parasites and useless—allowed him to attract the vote of millions of people fed up with years of economic and social deterioration and become the candidate with the most votes in the primaries. on August 13.

He won in 16 of the country's 24 provinces. Since then, Milei has remained in the lead in voting intentions, although the failure on the polls in the previous elections left room for surprise, as demonstrated by Massa's victory in this first stage.

The anti-establishment candidate grew through social media, outside the media radar and the territorial network available to traditional parties. “There was never a Milei sign here, we didn't see it coming, it came in through the window,” pointed out days ago a representative of Villa 21-24, the largest popular neighborhood in Argentina.

Milei obtained great support from the most vulnerable sectors, traditionally related to Peronism, but also from middle and upper class voters. His promise to chainsaw public spending does not scare citizens tired of living with an inflation that devours salaries.

Milei toured provinces he won in primaries without having set a foot. This is the case of Salta, in the northwest of Argentina, where he won 50% of votes. The economist closed his federal campaign there – which he has named the “freedom tour” – last Thursday before concentrating this last week in the province of Buenos Aires, the largest electoral district, which holds almost 40% of the votes. Now his approach to Macriism or vice versa is yet to be seen.

Legislative elections will also be held in some provinces, highlighting the triumph of Kirchnerism in Buenos Aires.

REMINDER

As many people know, Macrismo has been the main and most recent creator of so many evils that Argentina has been suffering and that were inherited by the Peronist government of Alberto Fernández.

The previous president, Mauricio Macri, indebted Argentina with a loan of 57 billion dollars from the IMF, something that the directors of the Fund did not accept at first, estimating that that nation could not pay back, but they did so due to pressure exerted by the North American president, Donald Trump. It's not known for sure what Macri did with most of the money, but, foreseeing his defeat, he left the government that replaced him seized.

Just as he did with the Vulture Funds that bought Argentine debt during his government, the previous one at that time, Cristina Fernández, refused to pay the speculators, which Macri did when he was in office.

Now in relation to the debt with the IMF, Cristina and the parliamentarians loyal to Kirchnerism wanted the 45 billion dollars still owed to the IMF to be paid by Argentines who have assets and money hidden abroad.

The senators who respond to vice president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, presented a bill that creates a so-called National Fund for the cancellation of the debt with the IMF that will be financed with black money, a product of evasion. A parallel rule accelerates and facilitates requests to banks and financial entities to lift the tax secrecy with which they protect their clients.

But the reaction prevailed and the project was unapproved.

Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff
