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AMERICA/GUATEMALA - A retired general president of Guatemala

Guatemala City (Agenzia Fides) - The retired general Otto Perez Molina, who had promised an implacable struggle against the violence generated by drug trafficking, was declared winner of presidential elections on November 6. He is the first military to take power since democracy was restored in 1986. According to the Electoral Tribunal of Guatemala, Perez Molina obtained 54.5% of the votes, against 45.5% of his rival, the wealthy businessman Manuel Baldizon. Pérez Molina, 60 years old, won after promising to apply a "steady hand" and even to deploy army troops in the streets and to increase the power of the police.
The Catholic Church insisted on a broad and active participation in these elections, in which the decisive issue for the choice of the country's President was that of poverty and violence. Moreover, the Archdiocese of Santiago de Guatemala, on October 30, had asked to consider as priority, the situation of poverty and violence that the country lives to express a responsible vote. The various demonstrations against violence and for peace (see Fides 24/10/2011 and Fides 17/10/2011) are elements to consider in this final result of the vote in Guatemala. The murder rate in Guatemala is eight times that of the United States and most of its 14.7 million citizens have expressed a desire for a tougher stance in the fight against crime. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 08/11/2011)

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