

Mexico Political Chatter

May 21, 2026

Ahead of the 2027 elections, President Sheinbaum has submitted her proposal to Congress to amend the judicial election process and postpone part of it until 2028, in what is seen as a significant departure from the model inherited from the previous administration. The proposal aims to reduce the number of candidates, simplify ballot papers, tighten technical screening criteria and establish an evaluation committee following criticism of operational chaos, low turnout and doubts regarding the preparedness of several elected officials. As Luis Carlos Ugalde points out, the initiative serves to correct some of the excesses of the original reform, but does not fundamentally address its limitations, let alone guarantee a better administration of justice.

On security, Secretary García Harfuch has reactivated “Operation Swarm” with the arrest of two mayors in Morelos and part of the municipal government structure in Cuautla, in a new blow against corruption networks and alleged links between local authorities and organised crime – an operation that has now resulted in the arrest of more than 70 officials since 2024. The crackdown targets a structure of extortion and protection rackets against traders, transport operators and families, with alleged links to the Sinaloa Cartel.

The clash between the National Palace and the Chihuahua government escalated this week with demonstrations and accusations between the state and federal governments, with no signs of a truce in sight. The demonstration organised by Morena in the state capital, which drew a few hundred protesters despite the state government’s attempts to derail the event, highlighted some of Morena’s limitations when it comes to mobilisation, as Viri Ríos points out. On the other hand, Governor Maru Campos embarked on a media “carousel” to defend the activities of foreign agents in her state, whilst she is beginning to emerge as one of the main opposition figures ahead of 2027, with the PAN already preparing a march in her support.

In Sinaloa, the freezing of Rubén Rocha’s accounts by the UIF highlighted the political pressure on the government, particularly in the face of accusations that it was protecting the governor on leave. Mayor Sheinbaum confirmed the measure, but insisted it was a “preventive” procedure. Meanwhile, investigations are progressing in Washington, with the hearing of Sinaloa’s former Security Secretary, Gerardo Mérida Sánchez, in New York scheduled for 1 June, Raymundo Riva Palacio warns that the Department of Justice already has new cases ready against governors and prominent figures in Morena, including the governors of Durango, Jalisco, San Luis Potosí and Tamaulipas, and figures such as Luisa María Alcalde and Mario Delgado.

As some had anticipated, Moody’s downgraded Mexico’s sovereign rating to “Baa3” with a Stable outlook, leaving it on the lowest rung of investment grade. Although the market absorbed the news without any major reaction, the assessment does not allow for a complacent interpretation, as Enrique Quintana points out: projected debt of 55% of GDP by 2028, support for Pemex identified as a drag on fiscal consolidation, and expected growth of less than 1% in 2026. On another front, Semarnat denied environmental authorisation for Royal Caribbean’s Perfect Day tourism megaproject in Mahahual, Quintana Roo, citing risks to coastal ecosystems, reefs and mangroves.

Finally, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the President of the European Council, António Costa, arrived in Mexico for the signing of the Modernised Comprehensive

With the 2027 electoral process in view, President Sheinbaum sent Congress her proposal to modify the judicial election and postpone part of the process to 2028, seen as a notable adjustment to the model inherited from the previous administration. The proposal seeks to reduce candidacies, simplify ballots, tighten technical filters, and create an evaluation commission following criticism over operational disorder, low turnout, and doubts about the preparation of several elected profiles. As Luis Carlos Ugalde notes, the initiative serves to correct some excesses of the original reform, but does not address its fundamental limitations, let alone guarantee better administration of justice.

On security, Secretary García Harfuch reactivated "Operation Swarm" with the detention of two mayors in Morelos and part of the Cuautla municipal government structure, in a new blow against corruption networks and alleged ties between local authorities and organized crime — an operation that has now resulted in more than 70 officials detained since 2024. The strike targets an extortion and protection racket against merchants, transporters, and families, with alleged links to the Sinaloa Cartel.

The clash between the National Palace and the Chihuahua state government escalated this week with mobilizations and accusations between the state and federal governments, with no signs of a truce in sight. The march organized by Morena in the state capital drew only a few hundred protesters despite the state government's attempts to derail the turnout, exposing some of the limits of the ruling party's mobilization capacity, as Viri Ríos notes. On the other side, Governor Maru Campos embarked on a media tour to defend the presence of foreign agents in her state, while beginning to position herself as one of the leading opposition figures ahead of 2027, with the PAN already preparing a rally in her support.

In Sinaloa, the freezing of Rubén Rocha's accounts by the Financial Intelligence Unit put political pressure on the government, particularly amid accusations of protecting the governor on leave. President Sheinbaum confirmed the measure but insisted it was a "preventive" procedure. While investigations advance in Washington — with the hearing of former Sinaloa Security Secretary Gerardo Mérida Sánchez in New York set for June 1 — Raymundo Riva Palacio warns that the Department of Justice already has new files ready against governors and prominent Morena figures, including the governors of Durango, Jalisco, San Luis Potosí, and Tamaulipas, as well as profiles such as Luisa María Alcalde and Mario Delgado.

As some had anticipated, Moody's cut Mexico's sovereign rating to "Baa3" with a Stable outlook, leaving it at the last rung of investment grade. Although the market absorbed the news without disruption, the diagnosis does not allow for a complacent reading, as Enrique Quintana notes: debt projected toward 55% of GDP by 2028, support for Pemex identified as the anchor preventing fiscal consolidation, and expected growth of less than 1% in 2026. On another front, Semarnat denied environmental authorization for Royal Caribbean's Perfect Day tourism megaproject in Mahahual, Quintana Roo, citing risks to coastal ecosystems, reefs, and mangroves.

Finally, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President António Costa arrived in Mexico for the signing of the Modernized Global Agreement between Mexico and the European Union, scheduled for Friday at the National Palace.

Morena tries to correct on the fly the judicial election disaster

President Claudia Sheinbaum has already sent Congress her proposal to modify the judicial election and postpone part of the process to 2028, in what is already seen even by specialists as the first major adjustment to the model inherited from the López Obrador administration. The initiative seeks to reduce candidacies, simplify ballots, tighten technical filters, and create an evaluation commission following criticism over operational disorder, low turnout, and doubts about the preparation of several elected profiles. Although Morena insists it is merely "perfecting" the system, the change has ended up feeding the narrative that the ruling party is trying to correct a reform that was born with structural flaws stemming from the rush with which it was carried out.

The criticism has not let up. Analyst Javier Martín Reyes warned that postponing the election does not resolve the underlying problem and accused the model of continuing to open the door to greater politicization of the judiciary and campaigns dominated by partisan interests. Meanwhile, within the INE itself, alerts persist over the logistical and budgetary risk of holding the judicial election alongside the midterm elections. With Morena determined to push the reform through an extraordinary legislative period, the debate is no longer whether the model needs changes, but how deep the acknowledgment runs that the first judicial election ended up far more troubled than the government had expected.

 [El País: Sheinbaum delivers her judicial election reform proposal to Congress](#)

"Operation Swarm" revived with blow to Morelos mayors

Security Secretary Omar García Harfuch reactivated the so-called "Operation Swarm" with the detention of two mayors in Morelos and part of the Cuautla municipal government structure, in a new blow against corruption networks and alleged ties between local authorities and organized crime. The operation has now resulted in more than 70 officials detained since 2024 and is beginning to consolidate as one of the main security bets of the Sheinbaum government, now focused on exposing political collusion with criminal groups even in opposition-run municipal governments.

 [El País: Harfuch reactivates Operation Swarm with the capture of two mayors in Morelos and the Cuautla government structure](#)

Chihuahua becomes a political battleground ahead of 2027

The clash between President Claudia Sheinbaum and Governor Maru Campos continues to grow over the case of the alleged CIA agents in Chihuahua. Although Morena tried to turn the issue into a political banner with protests and calls for a political trial, the mobilization fell well short of expectations and ended up revealing the increasingly electoral tone of the dispute. Even so, Sheinbaum maintained public pressure and again pointed directly at Campos, accusing her government of trying to suppress the protests and downplay the case.

On the other side, the PAN governor responded nearly a month after the scandal with a media tour on national outlets including Grupo Fórmula, Latinus, Imagen, and TV Azteca, where she denied having refused to speak with the president — "she has my cell number," she said — and accused the government of failing to respect her presumption of innocence amid the controversy, adding that she was never aware of the CIA agents' presence. She also began positioning herself as one of the leading opposition figures against Morena and the 4T ahead of 2027. The PAN is already preparing a rally in her support, in an attempt to close ranks against what they see as a political offensive from the National Palace.

 [El Financiero: Maru Campos denies avoiding Sheinbaum over CIA agents operation](#)

The Sinaloa case continues to leave fallout

The freezing of Rubén Rocha's accounts by the Financial Intelligence Unit raised the political pressure on Morena and forced the federal government into damage control. President Claudia Sheinbaum confirmed the measure did occur, but insisted it was a "preventive" procedure stemming from the arrest warrants issued in the United States against officials linked to the former Sinaloa governor's inner circle. The problem for the National Palace is that the case has ceased to be merely judicial: it now strikes directly at the anti-crime narrative and the relationship between politics and drug trafficking.

While investigations and proceedings against former Sinaloa security officials advance in Washington — including former Security Secretary Gerardo Mérida Sánchez, whose New York hearing is set for June 1 — a quiet retreat around Rocha Moya has begun within Morena. Sheinbaum rejected the notion that the case implicates the party, but the fear within the 4T is that the U.S. investigations will continue to escalate toward other political figures ahead of the 2027 elections. The Sinaloa case has already opened a new vulnerability for Morena on security and alleged criminal ties.

 [El Universal: Sheinbaum confirms freezing of Rocha Moya's accounts; explains it was done preventively](#)

Brakes put on Mahahual tourism megaproject

Semarnat denied environmental authorization for Royal Caribbean's Perfect Day tourism megaproject in Mahahual, Quintana Roo, determining that it posed risks to coastal ecosystems, reefs,

and mangroves in one of the most environmentally sensitive areas of the Mexican Caribbean. The decision comes amid growing environmental pressure on the southern part of the state, where civil organizations and specialists have warned about the cumulative impacts of accelerated real estate and tourism development in the region. The case also reflects a selective toughening of federal environmental policy following criticism of flagship projects pushed by the 4T itself, such as the Tren Maya.

 [Reforma: Semarnat denies authorization for Mahahual project](#)

Major blow to García Luna's inner circle

A Miami court sentenced the alleged frontmen of Genaro García Luna to pay 578.5 million dollars to the Mexican state, as part of the corruption and resource diversion scheme linked to the former Calderón-era official. The ruling involves the Weinberg family and related companies, accused of laundering resources obtained through irregular public contracts.

The resolution is part of the legal offensive launched by the Financial Intelligence Unit in the United States to recover assets linked to García Luna's financial network. Although the total amount actually recoverable may be lower in practice, the Mexican government is already touting accumulated sentences of more than 3 billion dollars related to the case.

 [Reforma: García Luna's frontmen sentenced to pay 578 million dollars](#)

Moody's cuts Mexico's sovereign rating to the lowest rung of investment grade

Moody's cut Mexico's sovereign rating to "Baa3" with a Stable outlook, leaving it at the last rung of investment grade. The agency argued that weak economic growth reduces the government's capacity to generate revenue in an increasingly rigid budget environment, where continued support for Pemex will keep limiting fiscal consolidation. The action came 18 months after the agency placed the outlook on negative in November 2024, and represents the third downgrade of Mexico by Moody's since 2019, when the country held an "A3" rating. With this cut, Mexico now has two ratings at the lower limit of investment grade: Fitch has maintained the note at that same level since April 2020, while S&P placed the sovereign outlook on negative as recently as May 12, signaling a possible additional downgrade.

 [El Economista: Moody's cuts Mexico's rating to the lowest level of investment grade](#)

Opinion express

- **Second judicial reform — Luis Carlos Ugalde** Ugalde argues that Claudia Sheinbaum's proposal to postpone and redesign the judicial election amounts, in practice, to acknowledging that the original reform was poorly designed from the start. The former IFE president warns that Morena is trying to correct on the fly a model that generated operational disorder, risks of partisan capture, and doubts about judicial independence. While he considers adjustments inevitable to avoid a "chaotic" process, he warns that the underlying problem remains intact: the growing political subordination of the judiciary to the ruling party.

 [Reforma: Second judicial reform](#)

- **Morena's failure in Chihuahua — Viri Ríos** Ríos argues that the mobilization organized by Morena in Chihuahua to pressure Governor Maru Campos ended up exposing the ruling party's weaknesses ahead of 2027. She contends that the party overestimated its mobilization capacity and bet on a narrative — the "defense of sovereignty" against alleged CIA actions — that does not connect with citizens' everyday concerns. She also criticizes Morena for ignoring the internal damage caused by figures such as Andy López Beltrán and warns that the Sinaloa case carries more political weight than the Chihuahua conflict. For Ríos, the episode reflected that the López Obrador movement is beginning to face real limits in terms of turnout and political cohesion.

 [Milenio: Morena's failure in Chihuahua](#)

- **The escalation will continue — Raymundo Riva Palacio** Riva Palacio warns that the U.S. Department of Justice's investigations against Mexican politicians are only beginning, and that Washington already has new files ready against a governor and a prominent Morena or cabinet figure. The columnist mentions that U.S. agencies have open investigations against the governors of Durango, Jalisco, San Luis Potosí, and Tamaulipas, and puts on the table investigations into profiles such as Luisa María Alcalde and Mario Delgado, in the wake of the crisis triggered by the Rubén Rocha Moya case. For the journalist, the issue already represents a direct political threat to Morena ahead of 2027 and reflects that Washington has shifted from a diplomatic logic to one of national security.

 [El Financiero: The escalation will continue](#)

- **Entrenching on the first floor or opening up to the second — Jorge Zepeda Patterson** Zepeda Patterson argues that Claudia Sheinbaum faces a key political definition: whether to remain fully aligned with López Obrador's legacy or begin building a "second floor" with her own decisions and greater pragmatism. The adjustment to the judicial reform appears as one of the first signs that the new government understands that several inherited projects require technical and political corrections. The piece warns that the president is beginning to navigate between the pressure of hard-line Lopezobradorism and the need to give institutional and economic viability to her administration.

 [El País: Entrenching on the first floor or opening up to the second](#)

- **Moody's: an announced adjustment, and no turbulence... for now** — Enrique Quintana, *El Financiero* Quintana frames the Moody's downgrade as the anticipated conclusion of a script the market had been reading for months. The best evidence was the currency market's reaction — the dollar held at 17.30 pesos with minimal variation — and the government bond curve showed no significant movement either. Mexico retains investment grade with all eight agencies that assess its sovereign debt, and the stable outlook closes the review window for at least 18 months. However, Quintana warns that Moody's diagnosis does not allow for a complacent reading: gross debt at 49.3% of GDP in 2025, projected toward 55% by 2028; a deficit near 5% of GDP; support for Pemex of 35 billion dollars in 2025 identified as the anchor preventing deeper fiscal consolidation; and expected growth of less than 1% in 2026. The question, he concludes, is not whether the macroeconomic fundamentals hold — they do — but whether fiscal consolidation will reach what Moody's considers necessary to stabilize the debt.

 [El Financiero: Moody's: an announced adjustment, and no turbulence... for now](#) **Agenda in brief**

- Sheinbaum confirmed a series of visits by U.S. officials to Mexico: National Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin will arrive between May 21 and 22; Sara Carter, the U.S. drug policy chief, had been expected on May 25 but her visit appears to have been canceled; and USTR representative Jamieson Greer will arrive on May 27 for USMCA discussions.
- The legislative timeline for the judicial reform already has tentative dates: according to the calendar presented by Ricardo Monreal, the initiative to postpone the judicial election to 2028 would be received by the Permanent Commission on May 21; the committee ruling would be approved on May 26; and it would go to the full Chamber of Deputies on May 27.
- Today marks the start of the official visit of European Union representatives, which will culminate this Friday with the signing of the Modernized Global Agreement between Mexico and the European Union, expected to facilitate trade — particularly in agricultural products — with the European bloc.