

Mexico Political Chatter

August 20, 2026

The cancellation of Andrés Manuel López Beltrán's U.S. visa once again put the Mexican government on the defensive, with President Claudia Sheinbaum alleging U.S. interference and political motives behind the measure. While "Andy" denounced, in a letter addressed to President Donald Trump, the "dirty trick" of some U.S. government officials, the president denied that there is an FGR investigation against him over his alleged involvement in fuel-tax fraud cases. For Morena as a whole, the challenge goes beyond protecting the party's former Secretary of Organization: it is about maintaining the protective ring around the movement's leader, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, whom the accusations against his son touch directly.

The case gained momentum with the release of new audios involving businessman Amílcar Olán, allegedly close to the López Beltrán brothers, and began to generate distance within the coalition itself: the PVEM and PT coordinators in San Lázaro distanced themselves from López Beltrán. As Riva Palacio warns, the government faces a dilemma between maintaining the political shielding of figures close to the former president or accepting the "sacrifice" of one of them to regain room to maneuver vis-à-vis Washington.

In Michoacán, an Army operation in Tanhuato and Ecuandureo once again set the state ablaze. The operation sought to capture Heraclio Guerrero, "El Tío Lako," regional leader of the CJNG in the "Ciénega region" shared by Michoacán and Jalisco, but the kingpin escaped once again; nine members of his group fell, including his daughter and his partner, and the organization reacted by blocking two dozen roads. The case is part of the Security Cabinet's offensive following the murder of Uruapan Mayor Carlos Manzo and the operation to capture "El Mencho" last February.

On the institutional front, Congress came under scrutiny for its functioning. The Permanent Commission met with an incomplete plenary in 15 of its 17 sessions, despite the alternate scheme designed precisely to prevent this, with the PAN as the most absent bench and MC the only one with perfect attendance. In parallel, the Permanent Commission approved the resignation of Justice Mónica Soto from the TEPJF's Superior Chamber, leaving the Tribunal with just five of its seven members heading into 2027; the opposition questioned that "closing a cycle" does not constitute the grave cause required by the Constitution and denounced a weakening of the checks and balances.

The cost of electoral democracy returned to the discussion. The INE's preliminary draft for 2027 casts doubt on the promise to make elections 25% cheaper: organizing the federal deputy elections, adding party prerogatives and campaign spending, will cost close to 24 billion pesos, of which more than half of party financing would be concentrated in Morena, PT, and PVEM.

Finally, the fuel-tax fraud case added a new chapter with the transfer of Rear Admiral Fernando Farías Laguna from Argentina to Mexico to face proceedings over the fuel smuggling network linked to members of the Navy, while Reforma documented that Mexico wasted at least four years of opportunity to develop its lithium industry, with the state project LitoMx "disconnected from reality"

and without relevant progress in the exploration, extraction, or processing of a mineral key to the energy transition.

Andy López, the new front for the National Palace

The cancellation of Andrés Manuel López Beltrán's U.S. visa opened a new political front for Morena, now surrounding the accusations linking him to the fuel-tax fraud scheme. Claudia Sheinbaum came to his defense and denied that there is an FGR investigation against him, while calling the issue political. The controversy intensified after the United States revoked his visa on August 14 and various opposition actors demanded to know the reasons for the decision; so far, Washington has not publicly explained the specific motives.

The case gained further momentum with the release of new audios related to Amílcar Olán, a businessman identified as close to Andy and Gonzalo López Beltrán, in which alleged ties to a cell dedicated to illegal fuel trafficking are raised. At the same time, the issue began to generate distance within the ruling coalition itself: the PVEM and PT coordinators in San Lázaro distanced themselves from López Beltrán and stated that they cannot "vouch" for him, though the PT later nuanced its position and asked that he not be accused without evidence. The episode places Morena before a double challenge: defending one of former President López Obrador's sons without turning the case into a bigger crisis and, at the same time, preventing the fuel-tax fraud accusations from ending up contaminating the security relationship with the United States.

 [El Universal: Sheinbaum denies Andy López Beltrán's involvement in fuel-tax fraud case; it's a political matter, she says](#)

 [El País: Mexico and the United States get their security relationship back on track despite the rift over Andy López Beltrán's visa](#)

Operation against "Tío Lako" sets Michoacán ablaze and shows the power of regional strongmen

Army special forces deployed an operation in the communities of Tinaja de Vargas and Colesio, in the Michoacán municipalities of Tanhuato and Ecuandureo, with the aim of capturing Heraclio Guerrero, alias "El Tío Lako," regional leader of the CJNG in the "Ciénega region" shared by Michoacán and Jalisco. The criminal leader escaped, as has happened other times, but nine members of his group, known as Los Guerreros, fell, among them his current partner and his daughter; the organization reacted by blocking two dozen roads in its area of influence. El País argues that the case exemplifies the power of regional crime strongmen: not so much their firepower as their ability to slip away and provoke chaos, taking advantage of their knowledge of the local environment in which they grew up, and compares him with Nicolás Sierra Santana, leader of Los Viagra, or Celso Ortega, "El Ardillo," and the Hurtado Olascoaga brothers, of La Familia Michoacana. In February, "El Tío Lako's" forces gunned down 25 national guards in Jalisco and Michoacán in revenge for the death of his son Rubén, alias

"R1," who fell in the operation to capture Nemesio Oseguera, "El Mencho"; in Sedena intelligence documents released by the Guacamaya group, Heraclio Guerrero appears as leader of the CJNG in that region alongside his nephews Adrián and Javier Guerrero Covarrubias, godsons of "El Mencho," and the Army also links him to Ricardo Ruiz Velasco, alias "El Doble R." The operation is part of the Security Cabinet's strategy in Michoacán, a state placed among the government's priorities alongside Sinaloa and Jalisco following the murder of Uruapan Mayor Carlos Manzo and lime-grower leader Bernardo Bravo, and comes after the July 30 capture of Ramón Álvarez Ayala, accused of Manzo's murder.

 [El País: The elusive "Tío Lako" shows the power of Mexico's regional crime strongmen](#)

The Permanent Commission, with empty seats

The Permanent Commission of the Congress of the Union has met with an incomplete plenary in 15 of its 17 meetings, equivalent to 88.2% of the sessions. Although the body is made up of 37 legislators —18 senators and 19 deputies— and has another 37 active legislators who can serve as alternates, no session began with all of its members. The problem has even caused delays of more than an hour in the start of proceedings. The most extreme case occurred on May 21, when only 21 legislators were present at the start, while the only days on which all 37 were present were July 1 and 8.

Absenteeism data by bench:

- PAN: incomplete in 12 of 17 sessions.
- Morena: incomplete in 4 of 17 sessions.
- PRI: incomplete in 3 of 17 sessions.
- PT: incomplete in 3 of 17 sessions.
- PVEM: incomplete in 2 of 17 sessions.
- MC: 0 absences; it was the only bench with perfect attendance.

The figure is especially striking because the alternate scheme was designed precisely to prevent absences from affecting the plenary's composition. The Permanent Commission establishes that each of its 37 members has an alternate, though these can cover different holders; despite this, the mechanism has failed to guarantee full attendance.

 [Excélsior: Absenteeism in the Permanent Commission: the plenary operates incomplete in 88% of sessions](#)

INE puts a price on the election: 24 billion pesos

The INE's preliminary draft for 2027 casts doubt on the promise to make elections 25% cheaper: organizing the federal deputy election, adding the parties' prerogatives and campaign spending, will cost close to 24 billion pesos. Of that amount, 10.842 billion pesos would correspond to the financing

of political parties. The general project contemplates 31.431 billion pesos for the INE's operation and electoral organization, in addition to the pool destined for parties and independent candidacies. The proposal must still advance in the INE's General Council and subsequently be considered within the Expenditure Budget that the Chamber of Deputies will approve.

Together, Morena, PT, and PVEM would receive more than half of the public financing destined for the parties. Proposed distribution for parties in 2027:

- Morena: 3,604.8 million pesos
- PAN: 1,803.7 million pesos
- PRI: 1,372.6 million pesos
- MC: 1,354.6 million pesos
- PVEM: approx. 1,036.1 million pesos
- PT: approx. 754.0 million pesos
- Somos México: 246.6 million pesos
- PAZ: 246.6 million pesos

 [Reforma: Make elections cheaper? It will cost 24 billion pesos](#)

Mónica Soto leaves through the back door

The Permanent Commission approved the resignation of Mónica Soto as justice of the TEPJF's Superior Chamber, effective August 31, bringing an early end to a three-decade career in electoral justice. The departure was approved with 26 votes in favor, five against, and five abstentions, but opened a new political dispute: Morena and its allies defended the decision, while the PAN, PRI, and MC questioned that the argument of "closing a cycle" and attending to personal and family commitments does not constitute a grave cause, as the Constitution establishes for an electoral justice to be able to resign.

Soto's departure, who presided over the Tribunal between 2024 and 2025, leaves the TEPJF with just five of its seven justiceships, as it adds to the vacancy left by Janine Otálora, just as the body heads toward the 2027 electoral process. The opposition charges that the resignation weakens the checks and balances and fuels doubts about the Tribunal's independence. In addition, the legislation establishes that Soto may not hold positions in the Federal Public Administration, Congress, party leaderships, or run for elected office for two years, due to her participation in the certification of the 2018 and 2024 elections.

 [El Universal: Permanent Commission approves Justice Mónica Soto's resignation; opposition questions that there is no "grave cause" for her departure](#)

Organized crime is diversifying its operations and is no longer limited to drug trafficking, extortion, or protection rackets. According to an El Universal investigation, criminal groups have managed to infiltrate or take over legal businesses in at least nine states: Baja California, Chihuahua, Mexico City, State of Mexico, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán, and Sinaloa. The investigation identifies around 50 business sectors used to expand their sources of income and launder resources, taking advantage of the economic characteristics of each region.

The diversification reaches activities such as commerce, agriculture, production, and other businesses that allow criminal organizations to enter the formal economy and generate seemingly licit profits. The phenomenon implies an evolution of territorial control: it is no longer just about dominating an area through violence, but about controlling production chains, businesses, and entire markets. The expansion in states as different as Baja California, Chihuahua, and Sinaloa in the north; Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, and the State of Mexico in the center-west; and Guerrero and Mexico City shows the territorial reach of the phenomenon and the groups' ability to adapt their businesses to each region's economy.

 [El Universal: Crime diversifies; takes over 50 legal businesses in 9 states](#)

Mexico let four years pass with lithium

Mexico wasted at least four years of opportunity to develop its lithium industry, while the international market advanced and other countries accelerated investments and projects to take advantage of this strategic mineral. According to Reforma, the state project Litio para México (LitioMx) remains "disconnected from reality," with resources allocated mainly to payroll and operations, but without sufficient progress in exploration, extraction, or processing; meanwhile, neither the private sector nor the State itself has managed to secure relevant investments. The delay is especially significant because lithium is considered a key input for batteries and the energy transition, so Mexico could lose an opportunity to join a strategic value chain in North America.

 [Reforma: Mexico loses 4 years with lithium](#)

Farías Laguna returns to Mexico over the fuel-tax fraud case

Rear Admiral Fernando Farías Laguna, identified as one of the key pieces of the fuel smuggling network linked to members of the Navy, will be transferred from Argentina to Mexico to face the judicial process against him. Farías had been a fugitive for months and was detained in Buenos Aires in April, after entering with false documentation; the Argentine authorities ultimately opted for his expulsion, after the asylum route sought by his defense failed to prosper. The naval officer faces charges of organized crime and hydrocarbon-related offenses, in an investigation that also involves his brother, Vice Admiral Manuel Roberto Farías Laguna, businessmen, and other officials.

 [El País: Rear Admiral Fernando Farías Laguna will be transferred from Argentina to Mexico to face justice for fuel smuggling](#)

Opinion express

- **The sovereignty that matters — Luis Carlos Ugalde**
Ugalde argues that the true discussion about sovereignty does not consist of rejecting any accusation or pressure coming from abroad, but of Mexico having a State capable of enforcing the law within its own territory. Drawing on the controversy over Andy's visa and the tensions with the United States, he maintains that the best defense against interventionism is to have solid institutions, security, and a justice system that investigates and sanctions those with ties to organized crime, regardless of their political affiliation. For the former IFE councilor, sovereignty is built from within and loses strength when the State cannot guarantee the rule of law.

 [Reforma: The sovereignty that matters](#)

- **How much is Andy worth? — Raymundo Riva Palacio**
Riva Palacio argues that Andy López Beltrán has little relevance on his own, but acquires enormous political weight for being López Obrador's son and for representing, in his view, a message from Washington to the former president and his circle. The columnist interprets the visa cancellation as a signal that the United States is keeping Morena figures allegedly linked to organized crime under pressure and suggests that the way out to reduce bilateral tension could involve the Mexican government investigating and, eventually, prosecuting Morena politicians accused of those ties. His strongest argument is that the Sheinbaum administration faces a dilemma: maintaining the political shielding of figures close to López Obrador or accepting the "sacrifice" of one of them to regain room to maneuver vis-à-vis Washington.

 [El Financiero: How much is Andy worth?](#)

- **New recording: Andy's Clan and its pact with the Jalisco Cartel — Carlos Loret de Mola**
Loret de Mola revisits the newly released recordings about Amílcar Olán, a businessman close to Andy and Bobby López Beltrán, and argues that they point to an alleged alliance between the López brothers' network and a CJNG cell in Veracruz. According to the columnist, Luis Alberto Olán allegedly used his contacts with the criminal group to protect ballast mines linked to contracts for the Maya Train and the Interoceanic Train. Loret highlights that López Obrador himself confirmed at the time the friendship between Amílcar Olán and his sons and that he was a contractor for his government, so he considers that the new recordings once again put Andy under pressure just after the cancellation of his U.S. visa.

 [El Universal: New recording: Andy's Clan and its pact with the Jalisco Cartel](#)

- **The cause — Roberto Zamarripa**
Zamarripa questions Morena's reaction to the cancellation of Andy López Beltrán's visa and points to the contradiction between denouncing alleged U.S. interference and, at the same time, centering the defense of the former president's son on the political nature of the measure. The columnist also contrasts the reaction of the Morena leadership with that of José Ramón López Beltrán, who, despite also being under U.S. immigration measures, has not generated a similar public defense. For Zamarripa, the episode exposes Morena's discomfort in the face of a Washington decision that once again places the López Obrador family at the center of the bilateral relationship.

 [Reforma: The cause](#)

Agenda in brief

August 24 and 25 | More than one million basic-education teachers will be consulted on the use of cellphones in public schools, during the intensive phase of the School Technical Councils. The consultation will be carried out in more than 200,000 schools and seeks to gather teachers' opinions before advancing toward national regulation, after 16 states already have some type of restriction.

August 20 | More than 500 migrants plan to leave in a caravan from Bicentenario Park in Tapachula, Chiapas, toward the center and north of the country, to continue their regularization procedures and seek employment. It will be the fourth migrant caravan organized from southern Mexico this year.