

# Promise of peaceful resistance fizzles

## Leftist-candidate supporters confronted conservative candidate Felipe Calderón with fists and insults after promising a peaceful campaign.

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**MEXICO CITY** - Facing weeks of indecision in Mexico's disputed presidential race, followers of leftist presidential hopeful Andrés Manuel López Obrador launched what they promised would be a peaceful civil resistance campaign.

But despite pledges to avoid confrontation, a knot of leftist supporters waited for conservative candidate Felipe Calderón outside a meeting with trade unions in downtown Mexico City, screaming insults at him and slamming their fists against his car as he left.

López Obrador refused to condemn the incident, saying ``people are reacting to an offense."

The confrontation came as his supporters kicked off the resistance campaign with a protest by dancers, musicians and a clown backing López Obrador's claims that vote fraud cost him the July 2 race.

Calderón's National Action Party said Tuesday that it planned to counter the civil resistance campaign by blanketing the press with information on how the vote was clean and fair.

An official tally gave Calderón a 244,000-vote advantage, a margin of less than 0.6 percentage point, but López Obrador has challenged the lead in Mexico's top electoral court. Law dictates a decision by Sept. 6.

López Obrador claims a combination of ballot-stuffing, campaign overspending and support from government and business groups tipped the race to Calderón. He has filed a legal challenge demanding a ballot-by-ballot recount.

National Action Secretary General Cesura Nava criticized López Obrador for saying he will refuse to recognize a Calderón win.

"He is asking that we not follow the law and threatening that if he doesn't get what he wants he will pursue another course of action," he said. ``That's blackmail."

Jesús Ortega, his campaign coordinator, predicted the country would be plunged into instability if there is no recount.

Many had worried the leftist candidate's supporters might turn to violence, adding to the problems of a country already tarnished by tumultuous strikes and gruesome drug killings, but organizers say they are determined to avoid that.

"Our struggle is not to block streets, because that doesn't help us in the media," said Jorge Marinero, 33, a campaign image consultant who was helping man one of the tiny protest camps set up by supporters in front of hundreds of electoral offices nationwide.