

The result of last Sunday’s election produced one clear winner and two other winners who, despite losing, still emerged victorious. All the others are losers or defeated.

As expected, from the 18th of January election no candidate attained the required 50% of the share of votes plus one and the country will have to go on a second round that will take place on February the 8th.

As the polls were pointing to in the last week of the electoral campaign, this second round will take place between António José Seguro (former leader of the Socialist party) and André Ventura (the leader of the far-right party Chega).

The electoral results

This result allowed António José Seguro, with 31.1% of the share of vote (and 1.7M votes), to emerge as the victorious candidate across the board: not only did he manage to make it to the second round – something that had seemed a very difficult task from the outset of this electoral cycle – but he was also the most voted candidate, finishing a considerable distance ahead of the second-placed candidate, André Ventura (23.5% and 1.3M votes). Failing to achieve the goal he had set for this election (to be the best voted candidate) and unable to broaden his electoral support base (having even lost votes compared to the 2025 legislative election results¹), André Ventura – as always – claimed (his) victory on Sunday evening. In an election race with four strong candidates on the right, and in which the ruling party’s candidate suffered a resounding defeat, this result allowed him to claim the position of ‘undisputed leader’ of the Portuguese right.

Outside the second round, João Cotrim de Figueiredo achieved a good electoral score, more than tripling the vote for his party, Iniciativa Liberal, in 2025 (16.0% and 0.90 million votes versus 5.4% and 0.34 million in the national election). For Cotrim de Figueiredo, this is somehow a bitter victory, given that the candidate, buoyed by a strong campaign and the results in some polls, had set his sights on reaching the second round. On the election night, Cotrim even accused the main party supporting the government (PSD) and its leader (prime minister Luís Montenegro) of being responsible for the ‘candidate of socialism’ reaching the second round, given the refusal in supporting him in what Cotrim considered ‘a tactical manoeuvre that put the party’s interests above the interests of the country’ – and supporting Marques Mendes instead, the big loser last Sunday.

The result achieved by Marques Mendes, prominent figure of the ruling party and who ranked 5th, were a veritable disaster (11.3% and 0.64 million versus 31.2% and 1.9 million in national election of 2025) – the worst result ever for a candidate supported by PSD. If such a weak result can be explained due to a lacklustre election campaign, surely that the government’s support during the campaign (with the involvement of ministers and the Prime) didn’t help. In a political context where the government is under fire, with a labour reform proposal highly contested by a large part of society (as strongly signalled by the general strike on 11 December) and with real chaos in the National Health Service

(pregnant women giving birth in ambulances and on the streets, people dying due to a lack of emergency medical care), Marques Mendes paid high the price for the governmental support. Marques Mendes' catastrophic result was also acknowledged by the prime minister Montenegro who refused to draw any further conclusion.

Also, as loser of the electoral evening comes the Admiral Gouveia e Melo. His non-partisan stance in a candidacy that positioned itself at the centre of the centre (supposedly equidistant between the PSD and the PS, and with the support of some prominent figures from both parties) did not prevail against a frankly weak candidate in the electoral debates. Perhaps what will go down in history is the truculent way in which he attacked Marques Mendes in one of the debates held during the campaign – which proved fatal for both candidates.

For left-wing candidates, last Sunday's results proved frustrating.

In the absence of a unifying candidate on the left, and in a political scenario in which António José Seguro presented himself, from the outset, as the candidate of 'moderation' (his own words) and refused to present himself as a candidate of the left (gaining support from the centre-right and right), the presence of candidates from left-wing parties in this election campaign/election was inevitable.

As election day approached, the space to the left of António José Seguro began to shrink, with opinion polls consistently showing the possibility of Seguro reaching a second round and the inevitable appeal for tactical voting growing stronger.

Neither left wing candidate was able to resist this pressure.

Catarina Martins maintained the Bloco's (poor) result in the 2025 legislative elections, improving slightly in percentage – 2.1% versus 2.0% – but losing slightly in votes – ~116,000 versus ~125,000. Bloco remains unable to break out of a cycle of eight consecutive elections, each one a loss, which started with the last presidential election in 2021, when Marisa Matias obtained 4.95% and more than 165,000 votes.

António Filipe had the worst ever result for the Communist Party in a national election: 1.64% and just over 92,500 votes.

Jorge Pinto, supported by Livre, was from the outset a candidate lacking in conviction even calling, during the electoral campaign, Catarina Martins, and António Filipe to withdraw in favour of Seguro. The refusal of both to withdraw forced Pinto to go to the ballot with an attitude of 'I'm here, but don't vote for me'. Pinto obtained a meagre 0.68% and approximately 38,000 votes (in 2025, Livre obtained 4.1% and more than 250,000 votes), even falling behind the satirical candidate Manuel João Vieira (1.1% and 60 thousand votes). Whether the poor performance of its candidate in the presidential election will impact on Livre electoral support remains to be seen.

The second round: how will the democratic field resist the offensive of the far right?

On election night, all left-wing candidates were quick to issue statements conceding defeat and calling for the vote on António José Seguro in the second round, in defence of democracy and constitutional values. On the right, Marques Mendes and Cotrim de

Figueiredo refused to endorse any of the candidates and the same did the Prime minister Montenegro. Gouveia e Melo left a decision on any possible support for any of the candidates to a later date.

This lack of support from the right wing for Seguro is unlikely to mean that Seguro will not win the election on 8 February – which, if happened, would be a veritable political tsunami. Firstly, it should be noted that André Ventura is the Portuguese politician with the highest rejection rate in Portuguese society (with levels above 70%). Secondly, Seguro is heading into the second round with a lead of more than 400,000 votes over André Ventura and will also collect the votes of the left-wing candidates (another 250,000). Finally, although the leaders of the right-wing parties (PSD and IL) have refused to support any of the candidates, since last Sunday evening, prominent figures from the Portuguese right, the PSD, the IL and beyond, both more moderate and more reactionary voices, have been adding their support for António José Seguro – more will surely emerge; to date, no one has stated support for Ventura.

But the lack of support for Seguro from the right wing has a clear and fundamental political reading: it constitutes one more step forward in the normalisation of the far right within Portuguese politics (and society). Faced with a contest in which the Portuguese far right leader participates, the leaders of the right remain ‘on the fence’ – acknowledging that, for them, the far right represents no threat.

Although it is unlikely that André Ventura is convinced he will become the next president, over the next three weeks, he will try to tackle as much as possible the 2.2 million votes cast for right-wing candidates in the first round. Already having a consolidated electoral base, made up of those disenfranchised by Portuguese fascism and the disillusioned with the political centre, Ventura must now move on to the next stage of his journey with a view to seizing power. To this end, he will tend to temper his truculent and divisive rhetoric with that of a statesman and a certain degree of “moderation” (something he already began to test during the first round of the presidential election campaign). André Ventura came to this presidential election to prepare for his election as prime minister, which, in his estimations, will happen sooner rather than later.

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1. ((In the 2025 National election Chega had 22.7% of the share of votes, collecting 1.4M votes. To this loss has certainly contributed the low number of emigrants being able to vote in the Presidential election (only voting in-person is permitted), opposed to what happened in the 2025 National election (where emigrant voters can vote via post). Even with the emigrants’ votes, André Ventura would not have surpassed Chega’s result in 2025.[←]