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A Mexican bishop announced his intentions to run as a candidate in the country's upcoming elections, then backtracked — a decision creating confusion and reviving debate in Mexico over the role of priests and pastors in the country's politics.

Bishop Onésimo Cepeda Silva, 84, revealed plans April 5 to run as a candidate for the legislature of Mexico state — the state surrounding Mexico City — with a new political party known as Fuerza por México. But the bishop backtracked the same day after both the Mexican bishops' conference and Diocese of Ecatepec — which Cepeda previously led — disavowed his candidacy.

"The (conference) disavows all political acts that Bishop Cepeda is carrying out in a personal capacity. (He) is not exercising them, not in his words or action, as an official representative of the Catholic Church," the bishops' conference said in an April 5 statement.

The conference also quoted canon law, which does not allow prelates to participate in politics.

"There is no evidence that Bishop Cepeda has requested or received the permission prescribed by canon law," the statement said.

It also stated Cepeda "is subject to Mexican law, and it is up to state institutions to provide validity and approval to his candidacy." Mexican law requires bishops to have been removed from their positions for at least five years prior to seeking public office.

Cepeda's brief foray into electoral politics captured enormous attention, especially after he said at a news conference, "I'm tired of the idiots governing us. ... All politicians are scoundrels, and all of them steal something. I expect to rob nothing."

He later withdrew his candidacy for the June 6 election, telling news channel Milenio that the Vatican Embassy in Mexico told him could lose his title of bishop.

The bishop once told the newspaper Reforma, "I'm a rich bishop among the poor," referring to his Diocese of Ecatepec on the gritty outskirts of Mexico City, which he led from 1995 until his retirement in 2012.

He cut a controversial course in Mexico, appearing often in society pages and openly sharing friendships with politicians accused of corruption. Cepeda also was involved in a legal scandal over ownership of an art collection worth more than $100 million. Nothing legally wrong was found in the case.

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