

Venezuelan Opposition Calls for Street Violence



Caracas, August 26 (RHC)-- A director of the opposition political party "Vente Venezuela," Williams Caballero, said that people "will punish on the streets" the judges of the Supreme Court and the officials of the National Electoral Council, or CNE, if they do not allow the opposition to conduct a recall referendum against President Nicolas Maduro before the end of 2016.

Some lawmakers from the ruling Socialist Party, or PSUV, have taken the opposition's statements as a threat and a call for violent protests, like those of 2014 known as the Guarimbas, which left 43 dead, over 870 injured and led to the arrests of around 2,500 people.

Earlier this month, the CNE announced a roadmap for a possible recall referendum against President Maduro, outlining a timeline that must be followed by government opponents. The electoral body however, ruled that a vote won't be possible until 2017, a decision that has trigger the anger of opposition.

The initial petition was submitted on May 2 when proponents of the recall referendum collected signatures from one percent of registered voters to satisfy the first step in the process. However, the CNE found that 605,727 of the submitted signatures were invalid due to widespread irregularities, including signatures from deceased and non-existent persons and minors.

Caballero's political party "Vente Venezuela" is led by the far-right leader Maria Corina Machado, who is a close ally of various U.S. leaders including ex-President George W. Bush.

In 2002, Machado, together with jailed opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez, was among the masterminds of a U.S.-backed coup that temporarily ousted President Hugo Chavez. In recent days, she has called people for "civil disobedience and civic rebellion," if a referendum does not happen before the end of 2016.

Under the Venezuelan constitution, a recall referendum must be held this year for new presidential elections to be triggered. However, the right-wing opposition did not begin gathering signatures from citizens in support of the recall referendum on time and based on previous experiences, the process takes several months from beginning to end.

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