

Paraguay's Ousted Progressive President Lugo to Run Again



Asunción, October 13 (RHC)-- Former president and current Senator Fernando Lugo says that only a formal ruling could prevent him from running in the upcoming presidential elections in Paraguay, as many attempt to deter the electoral ambitions of the only progressive president the country has had.

"I will just wait -- and not listen to 'opinologists' or lawyers -- for the decision of the Supreme Court if anyone wishes to impede my candidacy," said Lugo, who was ousted as president by a parliamentary coup in 2012. Since he announced his candidacy in June, right-wing sectors have argued that it would be unconstitutional for an ousted president to run again for the same office.

However, the senator affirmed the constitution "did not mention whether a former president could be vetoed or prohibited (to run in the election); I am currently senator, I was elected, because it was allowed. I am not senator for life and I believe that the Constitution guarantees equal opportunities to all Paraguayan citizens."

Fernando Lugo pointed out that the constitution's Article 229 only forbids the candidacy for the current president and vice-president.

Lugo's election in 2008 broke the six-decade rule of the right-wing Colorado Party and was seen as part of the progressive wave of leaders elected throughout Latin America. An adherent of liberation theology,

the former Catholic bishop campaigned for reforms in favor of the long-neglected poor in the country, which propelled him to the presidency.

Lugo faced opposition from the powerful political establishment in Paraguay, which impeded his efforts at nearly every turn and conspired to secure his ouster from the beginning of his presidency. His opponents succeeded when they mounted a political show trial in the country's congress, using the Curuguaty massacre as a pretext.

Much like what was recently done in Brazil against President Dilma Rousseff, the political elite rushed to convene a political trial against the president. On June 21, 2012, the two establishment political parties, the Colorado Party of the Stroessner dictatorship and the right-wing Liberal Party launched impeachment proceedings against Lugo.

Lugo opted not to fight his ouster and was quickly replaced by his vice president, Federico Franco, a member of the Colorado Party who had earlier broken with the president.

Franco quickly restored things to the establishment status quo, reversing many of Lugo's progressive policies. Horacio Cartes, also of the Colorado Party, was subsequently elected president in elections held in April 2013, but has been facing growing opposition, with social protests regularly demanding his resignation.

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