

Ongoing Protests in Guatemala to Oust President Perez Molina



Guatemala City, June 15 (teleSUR-RHC)-- A wave of protests born out of the revelations of corruption scandals led in May to the resignation of Vice-president Roxana Baldetti.

However, Guatemalans are continuing to protest, and are putting increasing pressure on the government, which culminated Friday with the congress appointing five lawmakers to decide whether Perez Molina should be stripped off his presidential immunity.

Facing corruption allegations, Perez Molina is yet to be implicated in any wrongdoings but protesters are blaming him for previous scandals and it is now up to the opposition-led congress to decide whether there is enough evidence for him to be prosecuted.

National elections are scheduled for September 2015 and Perez Molina, who has refused to step down, will not be able to seek reelection.

Corruption scandals, including the revelation of customs fraud network *La Linea*, have shaken the government over the past few months, with Perez Molina accepting the resignation of many of his cabinet members and firing others.

Perez Molina will be investigated for his alleged participation in corruption since he came to power in 2012. He is suspected to be an accomplice in *La Linea*, comprised of border agents, mid-ranking officials and trade authority executives who lowered taxes on imported goods in exchange for financial kickbacks.

In April, two high-level current and former government officials as well as 18 other suspects were arrested in the customs fraud investigation. Nonetheless, widespread corruption and a culture of impunity means the accused may get off lightly - and many other accomplices could escape prosecution altogether.

Deputies in Congress are now tasked with deciding on Perez Molina's immunity: 105 out of the total 158 need to vote in consensus for the Guatemalan president to be stricken of his immunity and stand trial.

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