

Honduran Ex-President Manuel Zelaya Calls for Referendum on Fraud Commission



Tegucigalpa, July 16 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Ousted former Honduran President and head of the opposition Libre Party Manuel Zelaya has called for a popular referendum on the question of whether to establish the anti-impunity commission known as CICIH in Honduras during a parliamentary session on Wednesday. The creation of the independent body, proposed to promote accountability and investigate the massive corruption scandal embroiling the government, has been a central demand of the popular “outraged” movement taking to the streets in weekly torch-lit anti-corruption marches for the past two months.

The proposed organization, referred to as CICIH, would be modeled after the U.N. anti-impunity commission CICIG that has led recent fraud investigations in neighboring Guatemala.

Calls for the independent government fraud probe, beginning with President Juan Orlando Hernandez, have been sparked by a massive government corruption and impunity impeding investigations. Hernandez and his ruling National Party are accused of funneling at least \$90 million of more than \$200 million embezzled from the public coffers of the country's Social Security Institute into the party's 2013 election campaign.

Hernandez has admitted he accepted part of the accused amount, but has shirked responsibility saying he was not aware of the source of the cash.

Zelaya proposed that the country's Supreme Electoral Tribunal call and oversee a national referendum to create a formal channel for Honduran people to directly say "yes" or "no" to the creation of CICIH in Honduras.

While the body would be set up by the United Nations, President Juan Orlando Hernandez would first have to make a request for it to be established. Honduras would also sign on to an international U.N. convention, to be ratified by a two-thirds vote in Honduran Congress where the ruling National Party holds 48 of 128 seats, or more than one third.

Zelaya and his Libre Party's call for the creation of CICIH is also backed by the traditional bipartisan opposition Liberal Party and the newly formed Anti-corruption Party, who together as an opposition coalition have formed an alliance with the popular outraged movement to strengthen common demands for an independent probe into government fraud.

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