

Guatemalans protest President Jimmy Morales after murder of social leader



Guatemala City, May 15 (RHC)-- Guatemalans are coming out to protest President Jimmy Morales, demanding his resignation and justice for social leaders that have been murdered or arrested in the past several months. Luis Arturo Marroquin, one of the leaders of Guatemala's Campesino Development Committee (CODECA), was shot dead in a bookshop in San Luis Jilotepeque, east of Guatemala City, by two men covering their faces.

Marroquin was a social leader and human rights defender, and his involvement with the CODECA, is raising suspicions that his murder might have been politically motivated. In a public statement, CODECA called his murder "cowardly," as he was found "with several bullet wounds in the back."

Before his murder, CODECA accused Jimmy Morales of "strengthening hatred and resentment" against the organization, instead of seeking the unity among the people. "Although these attacks against fellow defenders hurt, they don't intimidate us. We will fight harder to achieve our dreams and that of many murdered comrades."

Demonstrators made Morales responsible for Marroquin's murder and demanded a trial for what they called a "state crime." They also demanded the president to backtrack on the decision to expel the Swedish and Venezuelan ambassadors. Guatemala's Foreign Ministry demanded the Swedish and Venezuelan diplomatic missions change their ambassadors.

"Because Ambassadors Anders Kompass and Elena Alicia Salcedo Poleo have, in the course of their work, assumed attitudes that result in interference in the internal affairs of Guatemala, the governments of Sweden and Venezuela have been asked to withdraw them," Guatemala's foreign ministry said in a statement, without giving further details.

Sandra Jovel, Guatemala's foreign minister, accused the Swedish Ambassador Anders Kompass of calling the Central American country "a corrupt society," and government sources say Elene Salcedo, the Venezuelan ambassador to Guatemala, was expelled for her alleged links with CONDECA.

Jimmy Morales has long time criticized CODECA and has even accused them for deaths that have occurred during their political activities. For their part, CONDECA is just one of many organizations asking for Morales' resignation, as every time more evidence and testimonies emerge regarding illegal financing of his 2015 campaign.

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