

# *Venezuela Expels Panamanian Ambassador After Severing Ties*

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Caracas, March 7 (RHC) -- Venezuela asked the Panamanian ambassador to leave the country within 48 hours Thursday after it severed ties with Panama for attempting to interfere in Venezuela's internal affairs.

Ambassador Pedro Pereira and the three embassy staff members were declared "persona non gratae" and given 48 hours to leave Venezuela, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

President Nicolas Maduro announced Wednesday that Venezuela was breaking off diplomatic ties with Panama after Panamanian President Ricardo Martinelli called for an urgent meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) over the political turmoil in Venezuela.

Two people were killed in a Caracas neighborhood Thursday, bringing the death toll to 20 in the month-long violence organized by right-wing groups in a bid to destabilize the country.

It was the second time that foreign diplomats were expelled from the country since violent protests erupted on February 12th. Last month, Venezuela expelled three U.S. diplomats accused of conspiring with the opposition.



**Radio Habana Cuba**