

International lawyers, prosecutors express concern over Ecuador's case against Rafael Correa



Quito, September 25 (RHC)-- Six international lawyers and prosecutors have raised concerns about Ecuador's case against former president Rafael Correa. The group expressed concerns over Correa's right to have due process under Ecuadorean law while visiting the prison where the country's jailed vice president Jorge Glas is currently being held.

Former vice president Jorge Glas was sentenced to six years in jail late last year after he was found guilty of receiving bribes from Brazilian construction company Odebrecht in return for state contracts, crimes Glas maintains he didn't commit.

In July, an Ecuadorean judge ordered that the ex-President be jailed as part of a case involving the kidnapping of a lawmaker, setting up a showdown with the Belgium-based Correa, who has vowed to appeal and fight the order.

Supporters of Glas and Correa have accused President Lenin Moreno of seeking to smear his predecessors for political gain. International lawyers have expressed concerns over the case against both Correa and Glas. According to the lawyers, they were denied a personal audience with Glas.

"I think that here there is an imminent risk of violating the guarantees of due process. I believe that this is taking place against former vice president Jorge Glas. And I can only conclude that they (authorities) will, unfortunately, do so against the former president of the republic Rafael Correa," Chilean Congress Member, Hugo Gutierrez, said.

His concerns were echoed by former Italian Prosecutor, Antonio Ingroia, who said: "I think it's very strange, an anomaly, the decision from the Interior Minister (Mauro Toscanini) (to not allow a personal visit for Glas). We just asked to see Jorge Glas and to see how he is doing in jail."

He added: "I have seen many indicators for concern. I am concerned about the state of rule of law in the country here. I saw the preparatory hearing against Rafael Correa. I have seen a lack of evidence, a lack of jurisdiction, a mood and a pressure that does not allow for sound judgment."

The comments by the group follow similar concerns raised by a bloc of European legislators from the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (Eurolat), who issued a joint statement from Vienna rejecting the imperialist interventionism against some actors and politicians in different countries of the American continent.

In a 25 point statement, the legislators denounced the "judicial, political, and media persecution; and the criminalization campaigns that several progressive leaders are suffering —like our partners Lula da Silva, Rafael Correa and Cristina Kirchner — with the objective of preventing them from running in presidential elections."

These concerns take place against the backdrop of Interpol suspending Ecuador's extradition request against Correa after examining the arguments by his defense last week.

In an interview with Ecuadorean press, Correa's lawyer Christophe Marchand explained that there are indications that the legal process in Ecuador violated the former president's fundamental rights and aren't in accordance with international law. "There is an institutional problem," Marchand said in reference to the transitory Participation Council which is "placing pressure on the judges overseeing the case."

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