

Corrupt Coup-Leader Eduardo Cunha Fights Removal From Brazil Congress



Brasilia, June 22 (RHC)-- Brazil's suspended house speaker Eduardo Cunha, who spearheaded the scheme to oust suspended President Dilma Rousseff, presented a request for habeas corpus to the Supreme Court Monday as he looks to guard himself against being booted from his post over massive corruption charges.

Cunha's lawyers are looking to ensure that the suspended lawmaker is able to "fully exercise his right to legal defense," the Brazilian daily O Globo reported Monday. Cunha's fellow lawmaker, also from installed President Michel Temer's right-wing PMDB party, Carlos Marun, called on the suspended house speaker to resign from his post in Congress, according to O Globo, but Cunha has refused to step down.

Cunha, a key architect in painting the impeachment process as a campaign to root out government corruption despite himself facing multi-million dollar bribery and fraud charges, was suspended from his position as chief of the lower house by the Supreme Court last month over accusations of intimidating lawmakers and hampering investigations.

He now faces likely expulsion from Congress for allegedly lying about hiding over US\$5 million in laundered money in secret Swiss bank accounts. The punishment could also ban him from elected office for eight years.

A congressional ethics committee has already voted in favor of impeaching the lawmaker, and the vote will now pass to the lower house. The timeline of the process is uncertain as Cunha, a controversial figure and staunch rival of Rousseff, has exercised a series of stall tactics in the past to delay his suspension in the first place.

Meanwhile, Rousseff's defense's request to use a recent series of wiretaps as evidence in her case have been rejected for the second time by the Senate committee overseeing the impeachment trial, the Brazilian daily Folha de Sao Paulo reported Monday.

Rousseff's attorney Jose Eduardo Cardozo had argued that the recordings, featuring high-level opposition figures, leaked by former state oil executive Sergio Machado in a deal for leniency from prosecutors, offered a "clear" indication of a "strong coordinated component" in the plan to remove Rousseff from office.

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