

# *Venezuela Calls Colombia's Offer of Protection to Former Attorney General Cynical*

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Caracas, August 22 (RHC)-- Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza has denounced the Colombian government for offering protection to Venezuela's suspended attorney general, Luisa Ortega Diaz. In a series of tweets, he said that the decision by Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos to offer asylum to Ortega and her husband if she requested it, amounted to a cynical protection of corruption and crime.

"Bogota has become the center of the conspiracy against democracy and peace in Venezuela," Arreaza wrote. He added, "What can be expected of the government that has welcomed the head of the 2002 coup" against Hugo Chavez?

Ortega was temporarily removed from office by Venezuela's Supreme Court on August 5, while it investigates her over accusations of "grave breaches of the law." Claiming that she was the victim of "political persecution," Ortega fled Venezuela last Friday. She reportedly travelled by boat to Aruba and then took a private flight to Colombia, accompanied by her husband, German Ferrer, and at least one of her aides.

Following President Santos' confirmation that Ortega Diaz is currently "under the protection of the

Colombian government,” the president of the Colombian Senate, Efraim Cepeda, also expressed support for any political asylum claim Ortega Diaz may present.

Last week, Venezuela's acting attorney general, Tarek William Saab, opened a parallel investigation into a alleged network of extortion at the public prosecution service, which he said involved Ortega's husband, who is a ruling party member of parliament, and a number of prosecutors, as well as one of Ortega's top aides.

Speaking to reporters during a news conference at the Public Ministry headquarters in Caracas, Saab said “We've authorized two district attorneys to investigate these grave crimes and they are working on the case immediately.”

Once viewed as a staunch supporter of the Bolivarian Revolution and former President Hugo Chavez, Ortega Diaz began to distance herself from the government earlier this year. She criticized the call for the National Constituent Assembly and unsuccessfully filed several petitions to have it blocked.

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