

Venezuelan government releases politicians serving time or facing trial for acts of violence



Caracas, June 2 (RHC)-- The Venezuelan government has begun releasing a number of opposition activists and politicians, who were facing trial due to their participation in or inciting a series of violent actions that left nearly 200 people dead between 2014 and 2017.

The move comes after Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro met with four opposition governors and was announced by the country's communications minister, Jorge Rodríguez. The measure is part of Maduro's post-electoral promise to advance dialogue and peace-building measures between the Government and opposition groups.

Attorney General Tarek William Saab, who is charged with overseeing the Venezuelan Truth Commission -- the organization in charge of reviewing the list of persons released -- met with representatives of the various opposition groups on Friday.

Saab said he understood the decision would produce mixed emotions given that some of those released were responsible for the deaths of other citizens; however, he said the move is meant to put the country on a path to peace.

President of the Venezuelan Constituent Assembly, Delcy Rodríguez, who also participated in the press conference, said: "Let them know that the path is not of hatred nor intolerance."

A total of 39 Venezuelans who were processed and sentenced for crimes under Venezuelan law have received judicial benefits according to a public statement released by the Supreme Court. The benefits include pardons, protective measures, prohibitions to leave the country, and alternative ways to fulfill their sentence, such as house arrests.

Among those benefited is Daniel Ceballos, former mayor of San Cristobal, who was among those released Friday. He was elected in 2013 and imprisoned in 2014 after refusing to carry out an order by Venezuela's Supreme Court to guarantee peace and public order in the face of violent protests.

In 2015, he was granted house arrest but was later returned to prison after the interior ministry uncovered escape plans. Ceballos is accused of leading a riot in Caracas detention center ran by the Venezuelan intelligence agency known as Helicoide.

Ceballos will be released but will have to report to the police every 30 days, and will not be able to leave the country or give declarations through social media.

Delcy Rodríguez said the measures were supported by the families of the victims of the violent "Guarimbas," and announced more people would be released in time.

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