

Guatemalan rights defenders challenge ban from presidential ballot

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Guatemala City, February 15 (RHC)-- In Guatemala, Indigenous human rights defender and presidential hopeful Thelma Cabrera has vowed to fight the decision by Guatemala's Supreme Electoral Tribunal to block her and her running mate, former human rights ombudsman Jordán Rodas, from the ballot in this

year's presidential elections.

Cabrera and Rodas, who are members of the leftist political party the Movement for the Liberation of the Peoples, were in Washington, D.C., to meet with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights following their ban from the elections. They also traveled to New York, where Democracy Now! spoke with them Sunday. I asked them why they believe they're being targeted.

Thelma Cabrera told reporters: "The response, as Indigenous people, is that this ratifies what we've always denounced, that Guatemala is a corrupt state that's been coopted by criminals. This is now reflected in violating our right to participate in this presidential election. ... The problem the state has is the people who support us, because there is this push for real structural change in Guatemala."

Jordán Rodas, who was forced into exile last year before the end of his term as Guatemala's human rights ombudsman, faced attacks from the right-wing government over his involvement in anti-corruption efforts. Rodas said: "The corrupt pact is terrified of us. They're a pact that spans the Guatemalan political and economic sectors and that has looted our country for decades or centuries. It benefits them to maintain the status quo of inequality, racism and corruption."

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