

Colombia High Court Judge Refuses to Cede Despite Bribe Scandal



Bogota, March 24 (teleSUR-RHC) The Accusation Commission of the Colombian House of Representatives decided last week to open a formal investigation against Jorge Ignacio Pretelt, a justice on one of Colombia's highest courts, for allegedly soliciting a bribe.

In light of the investigation against Pretelt, the Constitutional Court of Colombia, which deals with the country's constitutional questions, requested the resignation of their colleague, who outright refused calls to step down from his post.

"I will not resign from the Constitutional Court," Pretelt told local media Friday and accused the attorney general of Colombia, Luis Eduardo Montealegre of engineering a plot to "take over" the court.

Pretelt is accused of soliciting a \$200,000 bribe from the lawyer working for Fidupetrol oil company. Fidupetrol was seeking to have a \$9 million fine overturned. The lawyer for Fidupetrol at the center of the scandal filed a complaint and subsequently stated he was willing to testify under oath that Pretelt indeed asked for a bribe.

Pretelt denies the accusations. According to El Tiempo newspaper, Pretelt has not been to his office in over 10 days and has not had any contact with the other eight justices of the Constitutional Court. Justices of the Constitutional Court, with the exception of Pretelt, met Monday to decide their next steps. After a four-hour meeting, justices announced that they will hold a special public accountability session on Thursday to discuss the work of the court since 2009 and respond to the current scandal.

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