

Alleged Assassin of Socialist Lawmaker Serra to Be Extradicted to Venezuela



Bogota, May 1 (RHC)-- Colombian courts have approved the extradition of Leiver Padilla Mendoza, the alleged murderer of Venezuelan socialist lawmaker Robert Serra, to Venezuela.

The Supreme Court of Colombia upheld the extradition from Padilla Mendoza, also known as 'El Colombia,' who has been accused of having organized the Serra's assassination on October 1st.

According to the Venezuelan state channel Venezolana de Television, the extradition will now be sent to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos for approval.

The 27-year-old Serra, the youngest member of Venezuela's National Assembly, was killed in his house along with his partner, Maria Herrera Sequera.

An investigation revealed that up to 10 men were involved in the fatal home entry, including Serra's bodyguard, with those arrested following the murdering saying they had been recruited and paid in U.S. dollars by Padilla Mendoza.

Video surveillance images showed Serra's head of security letting the group of assailants enter the house. Padilla Mendoza, who was captured on the streets of Cartagena de Indias in early November, argued to the courts that he would not get a fair trial in Venezuela, an argument the Colombian court rejected.

Authorities in Venezuela began the extradition request shortly after Padilla Mendoza's capture.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said the popular United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) leader had been murdered by Colombian paramilitaries, as part of a multi pronged plan to destabilize the country that includes targeted assassination of left-wing activists.

The Secretary General of the Union of South American Nations and former Colombian president Ernesto Samper said the assassination of Serra was a "worrying sign" of the "infiltration of Colombian paramilitaries" in Venezuela.

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