

# *UNASUR Says Dialogue Prevents Outbreaks of Violence in Venezuela*

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Caracas, March 6 (RHC-Xinhua) -- "National dialogue between Venezuela's ruling socialist party and the right-wing opposition has served to prevent outbreaks of deadly violence," according to a leading Latin American statesman.

Former Colombian president Ernesto Samper said that thanks to the talks, Venezuela has not seen the waves of violence that killed scores of people in the recent past.

"Since the talks began as a way to resolve political differences, we have at least not seen a return to the episodes of violence and street clashes that occurred a year or two years ago," Samper told the daily Panorama in a phone interview.

National dialogue between the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), a coalition of conservative parties, began in 2016, with the backing of several prominent figures, including Pope Francis and Samper, then Unasur head, and former presidents from Spain, Panama and the Dominican Republic.

The Democratic Unity Roundtable, which wants the ouster of constitutional President Nicolas Maduro, entered into the negotiations reluctantly, after the Vatican endorsed President Maduro's call for dialogue.

Talks are currently on hold, with the Democratic Unity Roundtable demanding the government to release jailed right-wing activist Leopoldo Lopez as a precondition to continue. Lopez is serving a 13-year sentence for fomenting the violence that left more than 40 dead and hundreds injured during anti-government protests.

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