

Five Former Latin American Presidents Declared Personas Non-Grata in Venezuela



Caracas, July 18 (RHC)-- Former Mexican President Vicente Fox and four other former Latin American presidents have been officially declared personas non-grata by the Venezuelan government in announcements made by the foreign minister after Fox's openly hostile comments directed at the Bolivarian government during his brief visit to Caracas.

Invited by the right-wing opposition, Fox traveled to Caracas as an "observer" of its symbolic, non-binding plebiscite held Sunday, along with Andres Pastrana of Colombia; Jorge Quiroga from Bolivia; and Laura Chinchilla and Miguel Angel Rodriguez from Costa Rica — all seeking to lend prestige and legitimacy to the mock plebiscite.

Fox was the first to be declared unwelcome with his antagonistic comments on Sunday, but Foreign Minister Samuel Moncada said all had abused the generosity of the Venezuelan people.

"This fight has already been won, step by step, vote by vote, the dictator (referring to Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro) will leave. Now it's up to Venezuela to lead this great country, restore the economy, restore jobs, restore food, that's coming," said Fox. He was speaking at a public event in

Chacaito, a stronghold of the right-wing government opposition just east of Caracas.

Moncada posted on his Twitter account that Fox had traveled to Venezuela to “promote violence and the intervention of foreign powers.” In doing so, he concluded that Fox had “abused the hospitality of the Venezuelan people by insulting their kindness.”

Congruent with Fox and the other former Latin American presidents' attempt to lend weight to the anti-government plebiscite was the mainstream international media's lack of coverage of the dry run vote ahead of the National Constituent Assembly to be held on July 30. Polling booths remained open late into the night due to unexpectedly high turn out, something never before seen in the 18 years of the revolution for a polling station test run.

Tibisay Lucena, president of the National Election Council, confirmed that the dry run was undertaken peacefully and with overwhelming, popular support.

Hector Rodriguez, director of the Zamora 200 Campaign Command emphasized that the Venezuelan people sent a message of peace to those who intend to impose a scenario of violence in the country, while President Nicolas Maduro called on the opposition to dialogue.

Meanwhile, the latest Hinterlaces poll shows that 75 percent of Venezuelans favor a socialist economic model to develop their country. The model would include a mixed economy of state-run enterprises and social and private entities.

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