Venezuelan National Assembly Expels Opposition Deputy

Caracas, March 25 (RHC) -- Venezuela's National Assembly has stripped a hardline opposition member of her seat, after she accepted Panama's invitation to discuss her country's political crisis at a meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS).

Deputy Maria Machado was dismissed for violating the Venezuelan Constitution by serving as a Panamanian envoy, National Assembly President Diosdado Cabello told reporters at a press conference Monday.

Cabello cited Articles 149 and 191 which state that "no public officer can accept jobs, honors or rewards from a foreign government without the prior authorization of the National Assembly," and "no representative can accept a public post without first resigning as a deputy."

Machado agreed to be a public officer of a hostile government against Venezuela and thus she is dismissed as a representative," said Cabello.

After she accepted Panama's invitation to take its ambassador's seat at the OAS, Deputy Maria Machado was in Washington D.C., Friday to detail the opposition's claims of Venezuelan government repression against violent protests. However, the OAS debate didn't take place, as 22 of the bloc's member nations overturned the measure.

Meanwhile, the death toll of more than two months of political unrest in Venezuela climbed to 36 after two more people have died from gunshot wounds during violent actions staged by opposition groups.

According to the state prosecutor's office, the latest victims were a 28-year-old pregnant woman and a soldier who died after being shot in the neck during clashes in the western state of Merida.

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