

# *Colombian President Names Interim Mayor of Bogota*

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Bogota, April 22 (RHC-Xinhua) -- Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos on Monday appointed Maria Mercedes Maldonado as interim mayor of the capital Bogota, replacing former mayor Gustavo Petro who was removed from his post.

Santos said he chose Maldonado, who served as Housing Secretary under Petro, "because she knows the policies of the city very well. "

Speaking to reporters at the capital's military airport, as he prepared to board a flight, Santos said Maldonado will take over the city government until elections are held in less than two months.

Maldonado belongs to the same left-leaning party as Petro whose controversial ouster was ordered by a high court, which charged him of overstepping his authority when he decided in December 2012 that the city should take over garbage collection and canceled contracts with private sanitation companies.

Santos signed the papers removing Petro from office on March 19, despite the objections of various sectors and a letter from the Inter-American Human Rights Commission warning the elected official should not be separated from his post until further examination of the court's ruling.

The court's decision bans Petro, a former guerrilla leader- turned-politician, from holding public office for a period of 15 years.

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