

# *Bolivia opens criminal proceeding after disrespect to the Whipala*

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**The Whipala is representative of the native peoples and is recognized by the Bolivian Constitution as a national symbol. | Photo: RT**

La Paz, September 26 (RHC)-- The Minister of Justice and Institutional Transparency of Bolivia, Ivan Lima, has announced that criminal proceedings will be initiated for the crimes of racism and discrimination after the outrage to the Whipala flag and other vexatious acts carried out by authorities of the department

of Santa Cruz (east) in the official act for the 211th anniversary of that territorial entity.

During a press conference, the official explained that the Prosecutor's Office and the Police will investigate to identify the perpetrators of the events, and accused the president of the Civic Committee for Santa Cruz, Rómulo Calvo, of leading the participants of the events and having triggered them with his attitude.

He recalled that the Whipala is recognized by the Bolivian Constitution as a national symbol. He affirmed that "the outrage to the national symbols (...) constitutes a crime of public order."

He affirmed that, due to this, "the national government is going to take action. It is going to become a plaintiff in this crime and the corresponding investigations have been initiated with respect to Article 129 of the Penal Code."

Lima linked the facts with a law recently approved by the legislature of Santa Cruz, which gives it the power to appoint authorities that should be approved by the Plurinational Legislative Assembly of the country, according to the CPE.

In this regard, he described this law as "an indication of a crime of separatism" and the act committed by the Santa Cruz Assembly as "a serious affront to the unity of the country," which "cannot be allowed."

He also urged the governor of the department, opposition leader Luis Fernando Camacho, not to promulgate such law, which would place the territorial legislature in contempt before the national administrative, judicial and electoral bodies.

During the act, Rómulo Calvo refused to greet national legislators elected by Santa Cruz who belong to the Movimiento al Socialismo party and disinfected with alcohol the place where they stayed.

Supporters of the Creemos alliance, founded by Camacho, protested against the hoisting of the Whipala and finally removed it from the flagpole.

Vice President David Choquehuanca, present at the event, was supposed to hoist the Bolivian flag, but the Santa Cruz authorities did not respect his investiture or the protocol. According to local media, Camacho himself aggravated him by ending the act when he concluded his speech.

Later, Creemos' followers whipped with a rope and expelled compesino leader Iver Valenzuela from the Plaza 24 de Septiembre, where the activity took place. In addition, a floral offering of the National Council of Ayllus and Markas del Qullasuyu was destroyed, and members of this indigenous peoples' organization were attacked.

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