

Guatemalan Fraud Probe Opens Door for President to Face Trial



Guatemala City, July 04 (teleSUR-RHC) The Guatemalan congressional investigation into President Otto Perez Molina has decided to open the door to a presidential impeachment process by stripping Perez Molina of his legal immunity to allow him to face trial for corruption, Guatemala's *Prensa Libre* reported on Friday.

Four of five legislators making up the congressional commission voted in favor of removing Perez Molina's immunity privileges after hearing arguments from both sides.

Among those who voted in favor was newly-appointed head of the commission, Congressman Salvador Balizon, selected on Thursday to replace Baudilio Hichos, who resigned from leading the commission over charges of conspiracy and fraud.

The congressional committee relaunched the investigation this week after being put on hold by Guatemala's Constitutional Court granting temporary protections to the president.

Perez Molina's request for extended legal protections was denied on Tuesday, putting the immunity-stripping investigation back on track. The Supreme Court ordered the investigation after it was requested last month by opposition Congressman Amilcar Pop, who accuses Perez Molina of being part of a customs agency corruption scandal known as "*La Linea*."

The tax fraud scheme is one of several corruption scandals swirling around the government, over which several high-level officials and close presidential allies have resigned, including former Vice President Roxana Baldetti.

The decision to move forward with putting Perez Molina on trial for fraud charges, in line with popular outrage over corruption and shattered confidence in the government, comes just months before Guatemala's general elections this September. Popular movements continue to demand the resignation of Perez Molina.

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