

Paraguay Grassroots Movements Mobilize to Change Constitution



Asuncion, June 24 (RHC)-- Various grassroots movements in Paraguay have submitted over 37,000 signatures to electoral authorities in that South American country as part of process meant to launch a referendum over a constitutional reform to improve the country's justice system.

The movements say that judicial bodies like the Judicial Council of Magistracy and the Jury for the Prosecution of Magistrates are often manipulated by the political elites, and they want Supreme Court's judges to be given permanent positions in order to preserve their independence.

The delivery of the signatures, which took place on the 24th anniversary of the current Constitution, included the participation of judges, attorneys, students and other members of civil society eager to implement structural changes to the country's judicial system.

Electoral authorities will now begin verifying the signatures, before determining whether a referendum can be convoked over the matter.

In Paraguay, the number of irregularities in judicial procedures has sparked international scrutiny, as well as the launch of a citizen campaign called "We Are Observers," which focuses on the trial of 11 campesinos over the death of 17 people during a violent police eviction of campesinos in the land occupation, known as the Curuguaty massacre.

However, international observers have pointed to many irregularities in the trial, which critics believe is meant to sentence the campesinos at any cost over the death of six policemen, while no policeman has been probed over the death of 11 campesinos.

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