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**Venezuelan Opposition Refuses Maduro Invitation to Take Part in Constituent Assembly**

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President Maduro called for a National Constituent Assembly with the goal of easing political tensions and supporting dialogue with the opposition.

The Venezuelan opposition said on Sunday it would not participate in the National Constituent Assembly convened by President Nicolas Maduro to rewrite the constitution.

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The leader of the opposition MUD coalition Henrique Capriles called the process a "fraud," and warned that Venezuela would be "ungovernable" if the process continued "because there would be two constitutions."

"(The process) is not a Constituent, we could hardly go to an absolutely fraudulent process, we Venezuelans will not be part of a fraud," Capriles said.

President Maduro called for a National Constituent Assembly with the goal of easing the ongoing political tensions and supporting dialogue with the opposition. Maduro invoked article 347 of the Bolivarian Constitution, which allows for the convening of a national constituent assembly with the purpose of "transforming the state," and Venezuela's electoral authority approved the initiation of the process this

Despite previously calling for a constituent assembly, the opposition has rejected the call and set off a fresh wave of protests which have led to the deaths of some three dozen people in just

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over a month.

Right-wing leaders say that the intention of the constitutional process called by Maduro is to delay regional and municipal elections slated for this year.

The president of the committee created by Maduro for the activation of the Constituent Assembly, Elías Jaua, said on Sunday that they invited different sectors of Venezuelan civil society including the opposition, to explain the scope of the proposal.

On Saturday, the mediators from the Union of South American Nations, or Unasur, met in Santo Domingo in the hopes of restarting dialogue to easing tensions and resolving Venezuela's political and economic woes.

Former president Leonel Fernández (Dominican Republic), Martín Torrijos (Panama), and Ernesto Samper (Colombia) along with former head of the Spanish government José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, are attempting to relaunch talks between the government and the opposition, after the latter the withdrew from the talks in October, accusing the Government of breaking the agreements reached.

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The Maduro government has also accused the opposition of not wanting to engage in talks, instead looking to achieve his ouster by any means necessary.

The talks have been supported by a number of Latin American nations as well as the Vatican, who has sent an envoy to accompany the meetings.

Pope Francis has also repeatedly urged dialogue between sectors in Venezuela, while also calling for rival political groups to reject any forms of violence.

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