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**Heidy Villuendas' case and the Cuban reality in social networks**

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A group of people distant to the interests of most Cuban citizens orchestrated a futile campaign. This time, the target was Heidy Villuendas, a Cuban diplomat who works at the Cuban embassy in Belgium.

After her recent statements at the European Parliament, a smearing campaign against her was staged in few hours, which included fierce attacks in social networks. But, what is the truth behind this case of media smear campaign? Which are the tactics used by those who have betted on ruining her reputation?

Firstly, let's take a look to the context. In the past few weeks, some members of the European Parliament such as José Ramón Bauzá have promoted events and meetings with certain individuals who have been introduced as members of the civil society in Cuba. While assuming the political stance of those people against the current government, the truth is that they were not chosen by any social sector in Cuba as their representatives before this European body.

To explain those Cuban representatives were not legit, Heidy Villuendas addressed the European Parliament on February 18<sup>th</sup>, in her capacity of Cuba's foreign official. In less than four minutes, she explained meticulously controversial issues like the U.S. blockade, human

rights, legal system, migration policy, and women rights in Cuba, subjects that in this instance, had been subjected to a biased, inaccurate analysis in recent times.

Few hours later, a flood of verbal attacks and lies fell upon her. All had a common goal: to undermine the credibility of her statements and discredit her as a human being. Certain *youtuber* who spends his free time spreading lies about Cuba has said that she is not a professional, hiding the fact that she graduated from the Higher Institute of International Relations “Raul Roa García.”

The social network Twitter also became the arena where the Cuban diplomat was attacked. This platform metrics showed that, once again, the use of automated accounts plus indiscriminate message reply were applied with this purpose.

Messages were mostly irrelevant regarding content. All in all, the Tweets against Heidy Villuendas consisted mainly on two aspects:

-aggressive attacks against state institutions related to the Cuban government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

-usage of insulting phrases (basically in (#) hashtags) against the diplomat

While the attempt to revile the diplomat's work took advantages of the unethical usage of Twitter, hundreds of Cubans — being the President Miguel Díaz Canel one of them —, supported Heidy Villuendas in the same platform.

In short, despite the efforts carried out by them, their own ineptitude and fraud prove us right: those who rave against Cuba end up isolated.

**Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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