

Venezuelans to Rally Against Paramilitary Violence

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"We're calling a massive rally ... all of Caracas and Venezuela will march tomorrow, Friday at 11 am," he said Thursday.

Rodríguez said marches will begin at various points in the city of Caracas, all heading toward the Miraflores presidential palace.

He also called on supporters of the Socialist party, known as the PSUV, to rally online around the #VenezuelaExigeRespeto (Venezuela demands respect) hashtag, and to call on the Colombian government to back Venezuelan efforts to tackle paramilitary activity.

Rodríguez, who is also the Mayor of the Libertador municipality in Caracas, said the march aimed to "defend the rights of 28 million Venezuelans, and the five million Colombians that live in our country."

In August, Venezuelan authorities launched Operation of Liberation and Protection of the People, which looks to crack down on smuggling of goods and paramilitaries, particularly along Venezuela's border with Colombia. President Nicolas Maduro has warned as many as 30 paramilitary groups are operating in Venezuela, and has vowed to take a hard line on armed groups.

"We will capture all paramilitary groups who want to hurt Venezuela," he has stated.

In further efforts to curb paramilitary activity along with smuggling, last week Maduro announced a state of exception for several municipalities in Tachira state, which borders Colombia.

Venezuelans are set to hold a massive demonstration in support of government efforts to crack down on paramilitaries.

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