
Venezuela Supreme Court Blocks National Assembly Attempt to Shorten Maduro Term

26/04/2016



CARACAS -- Venezuela's Supreme Court on Monday took the unprecedented step of declaring unconstitutional a motion, that was not yet even a law, by the opposition-dominated National Assembly that seeks to alter the Constitution in order to cut short the period of President Nicolas Maduro.

"Any amendment pretended upon the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will not have retroactive effect or be applied immediately, as admitting that supposition would constitute an unquestionable breach of the exercise of sovereignty foreseen in the 5th article of the Magna Carta, given that it would ignore the people's will," wrote justice Arcadio Delgado Rosales.

The Assembly last week approved, in first discussion, an amendment to the Venezuelan Constitution that would seek to shorten Maduro's present term. That "pretension to amend" the constitution would suffer from "unconstitutional retroactive effects," Justice Delgado wrote in the decision for the court.

It is the first time in recorded history that Venezuela's Supreme Court has declared a proposed bill unconstitutional even before it became law. Justice Delgado even went so far as to cite the 22nd U.S. Constitutional amendment that put a limitation of 2 terms on the President as precedent, quoting "This article shall not apply to any person holding the office of President when said Article was proposed by Congress, and would not prevent the person who is holding the position of President, or made President, during the period when this article comes into force, from holding the office of President or acting as President for the remainder of the period."

OPPOSITION REACTS

"That was to be expected," National Assembly President Henry Ramos Allup told the **Latin American Herald Tribune**. "The regime wants neither a constitutional nor an electoral exit, because it would lose."

Meanwhile, the Opposition points out that CNE electoral authority continues to drag its feet regarding a petition to

recall Nicolas Maduro via a referendum. Despite repeated requests from the Opposition, the CNE has not provided the opposition parties requesting the vote with a valid form to collect the signatures needed to initiate the recall process.

With Maduro's approval rate hovering around 15%, analyst Luis Vicente Leon points out that Maduro would surely lose any popular vote.

In March, the opposition announced a three-pronged strategy to remove Maduro from power: a constitutional amendment to shorten his period, a referendum vote to recall him, and street protests. So far, the Supreme Court that was packed with Maduro supporters days before the Opposition came into power has blocked two of those three exits.

Maduro's term in office is scheduled to end in January of 2019.
