
Anti-Government Protests in Venezuela Fail to Bring Big Numbers

16/09/2016



Hard-line opponents have been calling for "civil disobedience" if the CNE doesn't allow them to conduct the referendum before the end of 2016.

Venezuelan anti-government protesters have hit the streets of Caracas, but in smaller numbers than before, suggesting waning momentum for the right-wing opposition. At the same time, supporters of the democratically elected government of President Nicolas Maduro also rallied in the capital and other cities across the country to reject the U.S.-backed right-wing campaign that aims to destabilize the country.

OPINION: [Despite Its Crises, Venezuela Assumes Another Key International Role](#)

The anti-government side is demanding the National Electoral Council, or CNE, speed up a recall referendum against President Maduro before the end of 2016. A recall referendum is the use of a popular vote to remove a public official before the end of his or her term.

The electoral body, however, ruled that a vote won't be possible [until 2017](#), prompting threats from hard-line opposition figures like Maria Corina Machado, who has been calling for "civil disobedience" if the CNE doesn't allow them to conduct the referendum before the end of 2016. The last time the opposition organized "civil disobedience" was during the violent 2014 right-wing "guarimbas," which left 43 dead and over 870 injured.

Opponents must collect 4 million signatures in three days to trigger a referendum, they tried to do so in May when they collected signatures from 1 percent of registered voters to satisfy the first step in the process. However, the CNE found that 605,727 of the submitted signatures were invalid due to widespread irregularities, including signatures from deceased and non-existent persons and minors.

RELATED: [Not the First Time, Venezuela's 2004 Recall Vote Explained](#)

The CNE was going to set on Friday another date to conduct the collection of signatures, however they were forced

to delay the announcement because their workers, including the body's president Tibusay Lucena, were threatened by opponents.

Under the Venezuelan Constitution, a recall referendum must be held this year for new presidential elections to be triggered. However, the right-wing opposition has not yet submitted the necessary requirements, and based on previous experiences, the process takes several months from beginning to end.
