

# Costa Rican Ambassador Fired for Defending Venezuelan Government Amid Escalating Media War

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Federico Picado, a Costa Rican diplomat, was fired from his post as ambassador to Venezuela after praising Venezuelan democratic practices in an interview. (archives/Ultimas Noticias)

Caracas - The Costa Rican government fired its recently appointed ambassador to Venezuela yesterday after the latter expressed support for the Bolivarian government in an interview with a prominent rightwing Venezuelan newspaper.

Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solis stated that his government did not share the opinions of ex-ambassador Federico Picado, which have generated an uproar in the small Central American country with rightwing politicians demanding the ambassador's immediate dismissal.

In his interview with La Nacion conducted via email, the 69 year-old ex-ambassador ridiculed suggestions of a lack of press freedom in Venezuela and attributed scarcities of essential goods to sabotage by "political factors" and "big business" seeking "internal destabilization". Picado also contrasted the image of the country presented by international media externally and the reality that he experienced on the ground.

Picado praised the example of Venezuela in the area of citizens' referenda and advocated that Costa Rica institute the option of midterm plebiscites for unseating inefficient leaders from their elected posts.

However, not all Costa Rican political leaders sanctioned the firing of Picado.

Patricia Mora of the leftwing Broad Front party stood up for the ex-ambassador, informing La Nacion, "It seems that they were objective declarations, he is experiencing what is happening [in Venezuela]."

## Kidnapping False Claim

The dismissal of the Costa Rican ambassador for voicing support for the Bolivarian government comes in midst of an intensifying misinformation campaign directed against Venezuela in the international media.

Over the past few days, news headlines and social media feeds have been dominated by the story of an alleged kidnapping of a child in Venezuela.

Nevertheless, Chief Prosecutor Luisa Ortega Diaz announced today that there was no

kidnapping and that the child's mother was paid \$18,000 of a total of \$1 million Bolivars in order to issue the false claim.

Carmen Yanet Briones, who is of Ecuadorian nationality, was detained yesterday, along with those accused of paying her, after the child's father dismissed the claim as false.

President Nicolas Maduro denounced the false kidnapping as an instance of "psychological war" waged against Venezuela and called for those responsible to be brought to justice, mentioning the name of rightwing Venezuelan media consultant and fugitive J.J. Rondón.

The Venezuelan leader compared the plot to previous misinformation campaigns against Venezuela and other revolutionary governments, invoking the example of "Operation Peter Pan" in the 1960s, in which the CIA circulated the lie that the Cuban government intended to take custody of the island's children, while transporting thousands of Cuban children to the United States and placing them under foster care.

Venezuelan authorities have stated that they will release further information on the case as it becomes available.

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