

Paraguayan president-elect arrives in Brussels for an “informal” tour

PRESS RELEASE

First, the long score on human rights

MEP's believe there are no grounds to resume normal EU-Paraguay relations,

A year after the massacre of Curuguaty, Paraguay's president elect begins his international tour with a trip to Europe. The massacre of June 15, 2012, that left 17 people dead, was used to organize a political trial against then democratically elected president, Fernando Lugo, and impeach him. A procedure highly criticized by regional and international organizations who called it a parliamentary coup.

*“The UN has criticized both the impeachment of president Lugo as well as the totally biased investigation of the Curuguaty killings. The murder of 11 peasants and later of a key witness hasn't been looked into, nor the extra-judicial executions, the illegal detentions, torture, or the presence of snipers at the crime scene. It's astonishing, not even the ownership of the land has been clarified. It's clear there is a lack of political will in this regard, and this we've stressed in an open letter to High Commissioner Catherine Ashton”, asserted **Jurgen Klute**, German MEP for the GUE/NGL.*

*“President-elect Cartes has chosen this trip to Europe to thank certain governments and the EU Commission for their failure to oppose the parliamentary coup last June,” declared **Raul Romeva**, Catalan MEP for the GREENS/EFA. «The coup allowed the Colorado Party, the group of former dictator Alfredo Stroessner, to return to power.” Horacio Cartes is also a member of the Colorado Party. According to Wikileaks, the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) has surveyed Cartes in the past for alleged links to drug traffickers and money laundering.*

Helmut Scholz, MEP from Germany and GUE/NGL coordinator for international trade policy, expressed concerns regarding Cartes's role in Latin American regional integration. *“With the Mercosur Summit in a couple weeks, the President-elect's continual refusal to recognize Venezuela's membership in Mercosur is not helpful. Furthermore, his move in making Paraguay an observing member of the new Pacific Alliance could ultimately push the country into leaving its established customs union with its neighbours.”*

Raul Romeva recalled that Paraguay suffers from a severe problem of land concentration. Under Stroessner, about 10 000 farmers and natives were brutally displaced in Paraguay to make way for the soy agribusiness. *“The country is losing 400 000 hectares of forest per year. These are irreversible damages and will lead to an overall desertification of the country.”*

MEP's feel that any cooperation and talks with Paraguayan authorities must have the pending score on human rights, social and environmental issues as a main focus. They were baffled by a working dinner to be held in the European Parliament with Cartes. *“We can't get ahead of ourselves,” said **Ana Miranda**, Galician MEP for the Greens/EFA, who was part of the mission to Paraguay following the coup against President Lugo. “First we need reliable evidence of responses to the mayor infringements to the rule of law in the country once the president-elect has assumed his post in mid-august 2013. When we talk about legal certainty, she concluded, we refer to that of the citizens of Paraguay, not that of foreign companies.”*