
Venezuela Begins Validating Recall Referendum Signatures

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A total of 128 regional electoral offices will be open over five days to confirm the identity of voters who signed the petition.

Venezuela's National Electoral Council, or CNE, began the process on Monday of confirming the identities of 1.3 million people who allegedly signed a petition for a recall referendum against President Nicolas Maduro.

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The opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable, or MUD, claims it has the signatures of 1.85 million voters backing a recall referendum. However, the CNE said they delivered 1.97 million signatures and it has already invalidated 600,000.

Since the electoral body found what it called "a widespread fraud in the process," voters who signed the petition will need to have their identities checked from today until Friday, June 24.

The recall referendum is a constitutional right for Venezuelans and only 197,000 signatures are needed to begin the process, but in an effort to oust President Maduro, the right-wing opposition are alleged to have prisoners, minors and even dead people on their list.

A total of 128 regional electoral offices will be open over five days to confirm the identity of voters who have allegedly signed the petition. After completion of the phase, the CNE will begin a review that will last 20 days and end on July 26.

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Maduro has said that the recall referendum will definitely take place in 2017 against the wishes of the opposition, who want to see the vote held this year.

The difference is important as a vote held in 2016 would force snap elections, whereas if it takes place after Maduro passes the four-year mark of his term in office on Jan. 10, 2017, then Vice President Aristobulo Isturiz will take over as president until the next scheduled election.
