

Chávez foe now facing trial

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CARACAS - (AP) -- A judge has reopened the trial of opposition leader Henrique Capriles for failing to control protests at the Cuban Embassy during a short-lived 2002 coup against President Hugo Chávez.

Caracas Judge María Pérez Carreno announced late Monday that Capriles, mayor of the Baruta district of Caracas, would stand trial for his role in the protests. She dropped charges of holding diplomatic officials against their will and ordered Capriles to appear in court on June 30.

Capriles has denied wrongdoing, saying he went to the embassy on April 12, 2002, to try to calm hundreds of rowdy demonstrators who cut electricity to the embassy compound and broke car windows.

Protesters believed Chávez allies were hiding inside the embassy during the coup.

In October, an appeals court had declared the case closed, but the ruling was overturned by the Supreme Court.

Capriles, who accuses Chávez of becoming increasingly authoritarian, argues the president holds sway over prosecutors who have brought trumped-up criminal charges against him.

Government officials insist the charges against Capriles are legitimate and that Venezuela's justice system is completely independent.