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Venezuela's Supreme Court dismisses challenge by TV station set to lose license

By Associated Press
Friday, May 18, 2007 - Updated: 01:18 PM EST

CARACAS, Venezuela - Venezuela's Supreme Court has dismissed a challenge by an opposition-aligned television station seeking to remain on the air despite the government's decision not to renew its license.

The Supreme Court of Justice, in a decision announced late Thursday, declared inadmissible the challenge by Radio Caracas Television and its top executive Marcel Granier. The ruling is a setback for RCTV, a channel critical of President [Hugo Chavez](#) that is due to go off the air at midnight May 27 when the government says its license expires.

The channel and its supporters argue Chavez is trying to silence criticism, while the government says it will be replaced by a public-service station and that freedom of expression is being respected.



Supreme Court president Luisa Estella Morales said in a statement that it is up to the National Telecommunications Commission to decide on the issuing, renewal and revocation of broadcast licenses. The court left open the possibility that the channel could seek redress through other legal means, and other challenges are pending before the court.

"It's clear that the RCTV case is still in dispute. We are going to continue the fight before, during and after May 27," Oswaldo Quintana, a lawyer for RCTV, said in a statement.

Chavez announced in December that the government would not renew the station's license, accusing it of supporting a failed 2002 coup against him. The government also accuses RCTV of violating broadcast laws, and Chavez says

it produces "grotesque shows" that promote consumerism and violence.

The government is creating a state-funded foundation to launch a new public service channel in place of RCTV.

Chavez opponents, who plan a march in favor of RCTV on Saturday, argue that the public service channel will simply turn out pro-government propaganda. Government officials deny it.

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