

OAS to Swear in “Parallel” Venezuelan Supreme Court in Washington

The Organization of American States (OAS) is preparing to swear in a “parallel” Venezuelan Supreme Court on October 13, members of the de facto judicial body have reported.

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Featured image: Venezuela’s opposition-controlled National Assembly swore in a “parallel” Supreme Court on July 21, 2017. (Source: asambleanacional.gov.ve)

The Organization of American States (OAS) is preparing to swear in a “parallel” Venezuelan Supreme Court on October 13, members of the de facto judicial body have reported.

“We will be able to issue pronouncements addressed to government and authorities so they open investigations against (Venezuelan) officials who may have committed crimes against humanity, drug trafficking, or money laundering,” declared prospective judge Pedro Troconis, who will be sworn in as part of the de facto court’s penal appeal tribunal.

The move comes months after the opposition-held National Assembly (AN) swore in 33 new Supreme Court justices on July 21, claiming that the sitting judges are “illegitimate”.

Institutional standoff

The Supreme Court and the AN have been locked in a tense standoff since July 2016 when the latter [defied](#) a court order and swore in three legislators under investigation for voter fraud. The parliament has refused to heed the high court ruling and has consequently had all its actions declared “null and void” since that date.

The AN has repeatedly attempted to [unseat](#) the justices on the grounds that they were allegedly appointed illegally in [December 2015](#) by the outgoing Chavista-controlled parliament. However, the motions were [blocked](#) by the then ombudsman and current attorney general, Tarek William Saab, who found no legal justification for the judges’ dismissal.

The institutional crisis escalated in the context of violent anti-government protests demanding early presidential elections, which erupted following a controversial Supreme Court [ruling](#) authorizing the judiciary to exercise certain legislative functions.

In the midst of nearly four months of street mobilizations that led to the deaths of at least [126 people](#), the AN went ahead and unilaterally swore in its own Supreme Court justices as part of a bid to form an internationally recognized “parallel government” in opposition to the elected Maduro administration.

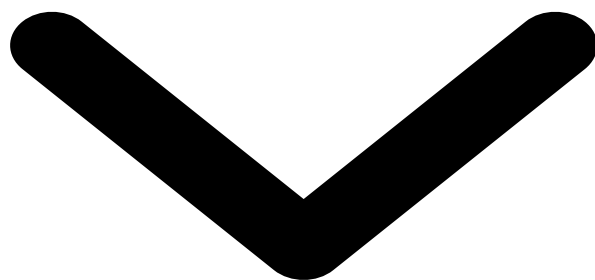
The de facto justices were declared “usurpers” by the national government and were immediately subject to arrest, while others fled the country.

OAS backing

In August, OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro invited the 33 de facto justices to the organization’s headquarters in Washington where he recognized them as “legitimate” and pledged his support.

Recibí a Magistrados del TSJ designados x [@AsambleaVE](#) a quienes expresé mi reconocimiento x trabajo en defensa de Estado de Derecho [#Vzlapic.twitter.com/NVxGAXKvYv](#)

— Luis Almagro (@Almagro_OEA2015) [August 24, 2017](#)

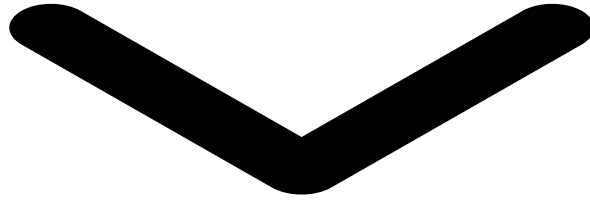


Tweet reads: “I received TSJ judges designated by the Venezuelan National Assembly to whom I expressed my recognition for their work in defense of the rule of law”.

Meanwhile this past week, one of the judges, Antonio Marval, appeared in photos with Almagro and far right Florida Senator Marco Rubio, claiming that the “parallel” Supreme Court would soon be set up in the OAS.

“Preparations are already underway at the OAS for the establishment of the legitimate TSJ (Supreme Court),” he said, as reported by Miami-based El Venezolano Tv.

Magistrado Antonio Marval “Estamos viviendo un momento inédito para la historia contemporánea de Venezuela”. [#27Septiembrepic.twitter.com/RIm5IjgtQd](#)



Tweet reads: Judge Antonio Marval “We are living an unprecedented moment in the contemporary history of Venezuela”.

“Our measures will be of an international character and compliance will be obligatory for the Venezuelan state,” he continued.

According to Troconis, the de facto justices chose the OAS as the site for their “parallel” court because they consider it an “impartial organization with a considerable number of states (represented)”.

The OAS has, however, yet to confirm that it will swear in the judges next week. It remains unclear if OAS Secretary General Almagro possesses the authority to go forward with such a move without the approval of the body’s Permanent Council, which contains numerous Venezuelan allies.

Caracas has likewise yet to respond to the announced swearing in. Nonetheless, the Venezuelan government has long been at odds with the OAS chief, whom it has accused of pushing US-led intervention in the South American country.

Last month, Almagro issued a fourth [report](#) on Venezuela, calling for “increasingly severe sanctions” and demanding Caracas be slapped with the OAS Democratic Charter.

Earlier this year, Venezuela [initiated](#) the two-year withdrawal process from the OAS, alleging pro-US bias on the part of Almagro and the Washington-based regional body.

Uncertain US position

While the Trump administration has not yet taken a public position regarding the de facto Supreme Court at the OAS, in August the State Department issued a [statement](#) rejecting the establishment of a “parallel” opposition government.

“We don’t necessarily recognize parallel or separate governments. We respect

the official government of Venezuela and President Maduro at this moment," said the US State Department deputy assistant secretary for South America, Michael Fitzpatrick, during an August 1 interview.

At the time, the declaration was interpreted as a vindication of more moderate sections of the Venezuelan opposition committed to participating in regional elections.

Nonetheless, Fitzpatrick's statement has been followed by escalating US actions targeting Caracas, including [financial sanctions](#), a [travel ban](#) against Venezuelan officials, and threats of [military intervention](#).

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