

Venezuela Expels Euro Deputies Amid Reports of Talks with Washington

By [Paul Dobson](#)

Global Research, February 20, 2019

Venezuelanalysis.com 18 February 2019

Region: [Europe](#), [Latin America & Caribbean](#)

Theme: [History](#)

Foreign Minister Arreaza has confirmed meeting twice with US Special Envoy Abrams despite denials by the latter of any dialogue with Caracas.

Venezuelan authorities have expelled six deputies of the [European Parliament](#) (EP) this Sunday after denying them entrance to the country.

The European politicians, who travelled in a personal capacity, had previously been warned through diplomatic channels that they would not be allowed in the country, but the group opted to proceed with the trip.

The delegation was made up of MEP **Esteban Gonzalez Pons**, MEP **Jose Ignacio Salafranca**, and MEP **Gabriel Mato**, all from Spain's hard-right Popular Party. Also present were MEP **Juan Salafranca** from Spain's European People's Party; MEP **Esther de Lange** of the Dutch Christian Democratic party, and MEP **Paulo Rangel** from Portugal's Social Democratic Party.

Amongst other planned activities, they were to meet with self-proclaimed "Interim President" **Juan Guaido** while in Caracas. The EP and a number of European countries have followed the US in recognising Guaido as the legitimate president of the country.

Following their denied entry, the deputies accepted an invitation from Colombia's Foreign Ministry to travel to the Venezuelan-Colombian border city of Cucuta to attend a concert sponsored by Virgin CEO **Richard Branson** on Saturday, when Guaido plans to see US-supplied "humanitarian aid" cross the border, despite orders from Maduro to block it.

Venezuela's Foreign Office justified the MEPs' expulsion, claiming the right-leaning politicians were looking to "conspire" while in the country.

"The group of Euro deputies which looked to visit the country with conspiring objectives had been informed some days ago that they would not be allowed in, and we insisted that they desist [from travelling] so as to avoid another provocation," Venezuelan **Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza** stated Monday.

"[The Venezuelan government] will not allow the European extreme right from breaking the peace and stability of the country with another grotesque act of intervention. Venezuela must be respected!" he continued.

EP President **Antonio Tajani** reacted angrily to the move, calling on the European Council to take reciprocal measures against what he called “the latest outrage.”

“Maduro’s regime stops MEPs from doing their job by expelling them. More proof that he is a dictator. I hope that the European Council will respond with measures in line with this latest outrage,” he stated.

The diplomatic incident comes as reports emerged of dialogue between the Trump administration and senior Maduro government officials.

Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza confirmed reports that he had held two meetings with US Special Envoy to Venezuela, **Elliott Abrams**, both in US territory. He also stated that there is to be another encounter next week.

Unnamed sources told the Associated Press that the meetings took place on January 26 and February 11, both at the request of US authorities.

“[Abrams] was accompanied by Under-Secretary of State Kimberly Breier (...) there were moments of tension, there are deep differences, but at the same time there are shared concerns,” Arreaza told teleSUR.

“If we have to meet with the Devil himself, if we have to go to the center of the Earth (...) to defend the sovereignty of Venezuela and demand respect (...) we will, and we are,” he continued.

While few details of the meetings have been made public, it has been reported that Abrams was invited to visit Venezuela “privately, publically, or secretly,” yet it is unclear if the US Special Envoy will take Caracas up on the offer.

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