

## Venezuela: Leadership of National Assembly Split Between Competing Opposition Groups

By [Nino Pagliccia](#)

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*Last January 5 the members of the National Assembly of Venezuela elected its new leadership as mandated by the constitution. The new president of the National Assembly, **Luis Parra**, elected by a majority vote, will replace **Juan Guaidó**. He is not a Chavista nor a member of the governing party PSUV. But that didn't seem to be anyone's concern as it should not be in a democratic process. Except of course for Guaidó who has a lot to lose. By losing the post he will lose his self-appointment to the presidency of the country. So, what to do? Simple. Secure your domestic and foreign supporters, create a parallel body, call it National Assembly and...self-proclaim president of the unconstitutional body! After all, that strategy worked a year ago in holding the whole country hostage, and that's easy when your directive comes from the US imperial government.*

That seems to be precisely what Guaidó did.

It is important to remember that when in 2015 the governing party, PSUV, lost the majority in the National Assembly, there was no cry of fraud. Instead, the rightwing dominated Assembly botched its opportunity to push their political agenda by fraudulently attempting to swear in deputies. Because of that it was declared in contempt by the Supreme Court. Back in 2015 the NA had a single declared mandate to give an unconstitutional parliamentary coup to the government of Nicolas Maduro. The new board of the NA appears to promise to follow its legislative mandate within the Venezuelan constitution.

Juan Guaidó has claimed that he and his party colleagues were forcefully prevented to enter the NA building in order to vote. The dominant media has propagated this lie despite [video](#) evidence to the contrary. Only one person was stopped for not having the appropriate clearance. Others, including Guaidó, could proceed. However, Guaidó chose a misguided or calculated decision of "solidarity" not to proceed. He is heard saying, "No, no, no one else will proceed until they let him [person without clearance] in." Some of Guaidó's deputies had entered the NA precinct.

Image on the right: Luis Parra (Source: Wikimedia Commons)



In a dramatic and surprising development on January 7, there have been [reports](#) that Guaidó and his deputies have [taken over](#) the NA building ousting the newly elected legislature board and its deputies. This could be seen as a coup. But it is not clear against whom the coup is directed. The elected president of the NA, Luis Parra, is not a member of the governing PSUV, so by all effects, this is not a take over of a government controlled legislature. Further, Parra was recently expelled by the opposition party Primero Justicia

following [mutual accusations of corruption](#) with Guaidó. With this background, what we are seeing looks more like an internal struggle for power within opposition groups. The Venezuelan rightwing opposition has a long history of divisions and conflicts so this behaviour is not unusual, it's only much more public.

In his first [public declaration](#) **Luis Parra promised to depolarise the country and the parliament by seeking non-confrontational positions in order to achieve reconciliation.** He called on the president of the country Nicolás Maduro to return to the headquarters of that power and he asked the armed forces not to take sides. He also rejected any external interference and to only be accountable to Venezuelans. This puts him fully in a head-on collision course with Guaidó who will not consider any other option except the total ousting of Maduro and his government. This determination is fully supported by the [US](#), the [EU](#) and the so-called [Lima Group](#) who have declared their support for Guaidó.

At the time of writing it is not clear what will follow. The fact remains that the political confrontation in Venezuela has escalated with the addition of a NA composed of deputies mostly representing a narrow ideological range and a board presided by unelected Juan Guaidó, and a NA composed of deputies representing several parties whose board was elected by all deputies present. "Both" national assemblies are dominated by members opposed to the Maduro government that would favor a regime change.

Venezuelans who have been yearning for peace and normalcy in their country, have a reason to consider themselves still held hostage by the intolerance of irreconcilable opposition groups, and not by a legitimate government that tries to overcome precisely the social and economic crisis that those groups are causing to the country aided by foreign interventions.

Ultimately, Venezuela can still count on the Constituent National Assembly, established after the 2015-2020 NA was declared in contempt, that is still the legislative body until elections for the 2020-2025 NA will take place later this year.

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