
Venezuelan Lawmakers Barred by Supreme Court Asks to be Unseated

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The country's parliament, known as the National Assembly, or AN, had fallen into "contempt of court" for administering the oath of office to the three legislators banned by the court.

AN president Henry Ramos Allup told U.S. news broadcaster CNN, "today we received a letter signed by Julio Ygarza, Nirma Guarulla and Romel Guzamana asking to be dropped from the House, so they can defend themselves legally."

The decision is an attempt to prevent the "TSJ from rendering AN actions invalid," he added.

The three legislators from the state of Amazonas had their proclamation suspended by the country's highest court days before they were sworn-in after their election was challenged by the ruling party, alleging electoral fraud in the state.

The opposition-dominated AN chose to overlook the ruling and administered them the oath of office, triggering a second TSJ ruling holding the newly-constituted legislature in contempt of court and declaring all its actions null and void.

Meanwhile, Ramos Allup said the lawmakers' letter, asking to be unseated, as well as the court ruling, will be disclosed at Thursday's plenary session.

The session will put their request to vote, which, if accepted, will come into immediate effect, thus freeing the AN from contempt of court.

The parliament president claimed the AN has been harassed by the government and the TSJ, which, he says, is biased in favor of the ruling party.

On Jan. 7, Chavista lawmakers had called on the TSJ to declare any decision taken by the AN to be invalid while the three barred members continued in office.

The three are among the 112 opposition legislators elected to the national congress in the Dec. 6 elections which, for the first time in 15 years, gave the Venezuelan opposition a qualified majority of two-thirds in the parliament.
