

Juan Guaidó Creates a Parallel Consulate in Brazil

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A “parallel” Venezuelan Consulate in Brazil was condemned in a recent statement by Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza. In late September, supporters of the Venezuelan opposition leader, the self-proclaimed “interim president” Juan Guaidó, announced that they would form a new consulate in Brazil. Basically, the objective is to create a parallel Venezuelan diplomatic representation, which meets the interests of the opposition – which is supported by the Brazilian government. The decision has received strong criticism from the Venezuelan government, which considers it illegal. However, despite the criticism, the consulate is starting its operations this week in the Brazilian state of Roraima – a region strategically chosen because it borders Venezuela.

Jorge Arreaza, head of the Bolivarian government’s foreign relations, reinforced his criticism and published an official [statement](#) warning the international community against the activities of the opposition, which he classified as fraudulent. According to Arreaza, there is an attempt to usurp the legitimate consular power of the Venezuelan government – which, in legal terms, is correct, considering that Guaidó is not actually the president of Venezuela.

Guaidó’s initiative in Brazil continues a series of clashes between the government of Jair Bolsonaro and representatives of Nicolás Maduro. Last month, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared Venezuelan diplomats as “persona non grata” after setting a deadline in April for them to leave the country – which did not happen due to a later decision by the Supreme Court. Now, with the appointment of new “diplomats” by Juan Guaidó, the situation between both countries is even more tense, since the Brazilian government will publicly recognize the role of the opposition’s parallel diplomatic service, while denying maintaining relations with the Venezuelan official diplomacy.

No specific date has been set for the opening of the parallel consulate, and it has just been announced that from this week on the agency would be fully operational. In fact, Guaidó’s “diplomats” are already acting freely in Brazil and even distributing documents to Venezuelan citizens in Brazilian territory. The Maduro government has already stated that such documents have no validity, but the Brazilian government recognizes the actions and cooperates with the oppositionist Consulate. It is also important to emphasize that the employees of the parallel consulate have no diplomatic training, being political militants chosen by Guaidó to represent his interests in Brazil.

Brazil is making a serious mistake in accepting the formation of an illegal consulate in its territory. This represents a total violation of good customs in international relations. Although Brazil is directly opposed to the Venezuelan government, recognizing the legitimacy of an illegal “consulate” and allowing parallel diplomats to act in its territory sets an undesirable precedent in bilateral relations between these states. According to the Montevideo Convention, a State is constituted by the presence of territory, government and

diplomatic relations. Therefore, when recognizing a new diplomacy, Brazil is, in practice, recognizing the existence of a Venezuelan State parallel to the Bolivarian Republic. The Venezuelan case, moreover, illustrates an absolutely inappropriate international behavior among the nations that oppose Maduro. To recognize a deputy as president for the simple fact that there was political opposition to the legitimate government had already been a serious violation of international customs. Now, with the creation of parallel consulates, the situation is likely to get even worse, mainly due to the fact that Brazil may not be the only country to receive the “Guaidó’s diplomats”.

Interestingly, the inauguration of the parallel Consulate in Brazil takes place a few weeks after the visit of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to four countries in South America. The head of American diplomacy met with Brazilians including Brazil’s minister of foreign affairs Ernesto Araújo and Venezuelan immigrants precisely in the state of Roraima. The secret talks between Pompeo and Araújo still remain obscure. When called by the Senate to clarify the content of the meeting, Araújo gave no details and mentioned only generic aspects of the conversations he had with Pompeo. The other countries visited by Pompeo were Colombia, Guyana and Suriname – countries strategically chosen to form a siege against Venezuela. Considering that Pompeo’s visit to Brazil was most likely decisive for the Brazilian government to agree to cooperate with Guaidó’s parallel diplomacy, it is possible to foresee that anytime soon some of the other countries visited by Pompeo will also announce a similar decision, receiving “diplomatic missions” coming from the self-proclaimed and illegitimate government of Juan Guaidó.

It remains to be seen what consequences of these acts will be from now on. The parallel consulate is already acting freely in Brazil, consolidating a historic act of violation of Venezuelan state sovereignty perpetrated by the Brazilian government. However, the US – the world power that promotes the crusade against Maduro – has not yet made such a bold decision and does not publicly have “diplomats” in the service of Guaidó. In fact, Brazil is being the laboratory of a great experiment, where the limits of the violation of Venezuelan sovereignty are being tested. Depending on the reaction of Caracas and its allies, other countries will receive – or not – such “diplomats”.

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