

Trump and “Regime Change”: ‘We Will Do Whatever is Necessary’ to ‘Fix’ Venezuela

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US President Donald Trump said Thursday he would work with Colombia to “fix” Venezuela, as he slapped Caracas with new sanctions.

The sanctions targeted Venezuela’s chief judge and seven other members of Venezuela’s Supreme Court (TSJ). The sanctions were in retaliation to [a controversial TSJ ruling](#) that effectively granted the court with the power to pass legislation without parliamentary approval. The ruling [was quickly reversed](#), but kicked off a wave of opposition violence that has so far [left 54 people dead](#).

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the judges

“are responsible for a number of judicial rulings in the past year that have usurped the authority of Venezuela’s democratically-elected legislature, the National Assembly”.

“By imposing these targeted sanctions, the United States is supporting the Venezuelan people in their efforts to protect and advance democratic governance in their country,” the treasury head and former Goldman Sachs banker said.

The sanctions on the judges responsible for the ruling include travel bans and the freezing of their alleged assets in the US.

Venezuela has responded by condemning the sanctions.

“It’s unheard of and unacceptable for the US to impose sanctions on a sovereign and independent public ... [institution], violating international and Venezuelan laws,” Venezuelan Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez stated on Thursday.

Then on Friday, she said Venezuela will take action against the sanctions, describing the judges as “victims of imperial aggression”.

“The United States power structure never misses an opportunity to violate international law,” she said.

President Nicolas Maduro also weighed in, accusing the US of “leading” the “destabilisation

of Venezuela”.

The announcement of the new sanctions came after Trump held a joint press conference with Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos. During the conference, the US leader claimed the world hasn't seen any political crisis as bad as Venezuela's in “decades”.

“People don't have enough to eat. There's great violence. We will do whatever is necessary ... to help with fixing that,” he said.

Trump didn't elaborate on what his administration plans on doing to resolve Venezuela's crisis, though he said he would work with countries like Colombia.

“As you know, our nations have had for a long time a strategic alliance, an extraordinary friendship,” he said.

Colombia and Venezuela have long had [a fickle relationship](#), occasionally dipping into tension. Former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe has repeatedly called for the overthrow of Venezuela's government by force, including proposing an international armed intervention. During his time in office, Uribe's administration sparked a tense diplomatic stand-off with its neighbours, after bombing a FARC guerilla camp in Ecuador. The incident led to both Ecuador and its ally Venezuela mobilising troops on their borders with Colombia, while similar military preparations were made by Uribe's government.

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