

# Treasury Sanctions Ten Venezuelan Government Officials

November 9, 2017

**Washington** – Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated ten current or former Venezuelan government officials pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13692. These individuals are associated with undermining electoral processes, media censorship, or corruption in government-administered food programs in Venezuela. This designation follows October 15, 2017 state elections in Venezuela, which were marked by numerous irregularities that strongly suggest fraud helped the ruling party unexpectedly win a majority of governorships.

Despite calls for an independent audit of the election results, the Venezuelan government proceeded to swear in the winning candidates through an oath of office before the illegitimate Constituent Assembly (Asamblea Constituyente or AC), further illustrating the authoritarian nature of the Maduro regime. In addition, the environment in which these elections were held – including censorship, the abuse of state media, and rampant corruption extending even to the distribution of food to Venezuela's starving population – raises questions concerning the freedom and fairness of the electoral process.

"As the Venezuelan government continues to disregard the will of its people, our message remains clear: the United States will not stand aside while the Maduro regime continues to destroy democratic order and prosperity in Venezuela," said Secretary of the Treasury Steven T. Mnuchin. "We will maintain our vigorous efforts to sanction Venezuelan government officials who are complicit in Maduro's attempts to undermine democracy, violate human rights, inhibit the freedom of expression or peaceful assembly, or engage in public corruption, unless they break from Maduro's dictatorial regime."

Today's designations consist of the following ten current or former officials of the Government of Venezuela. As a result of today's actions, all assets of these individuals subject to U.S. jurisdiction are frozen, and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from dealing with them.

- **Sandra Oblitas Ruzza** is the Vice President and a Rector of Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE) and the President of the Civil and Electoral Registry Commission maintained by the CNE. Oblitas Ruzza announced the relocation of polling stations only four days

before the election. This activity disrupted the elections, as voters arrived and found that their polling stations had been moved.

- **Socorro Elizabeth Hernandez De Hernandez** is a CNE Rector and a member of Venezuela's National Electoral Board. Hernandez de Hernandez was involved in the changes that were made to polling station locations in the days prior to the elections.
- **Carlos Enrique Quintero Cuevas** is an Alternate Rector of the CNE, and a member of Venezuela's National Electoral Board.
- **Elvis Eduardo Hidrobo Amoroso** is the Second Vice President of Venezuela's AC and was previously the First Vice President of the AC. Prior to joining the AC, Hidrobo Amoroso was the Director General of Legal Consulting of the Ministry of the Office of the Presidency, and he is also a former National Assembly deputy for Aragua state. Hidrobo Amoroso has publicly condemned an opposition governor-elect who refused to take the oath of office before the illegitimate AC.
- **Julian Isaias Rodriguez Diaz** is the Venezuelan Ambassador to Italy and was previously the Second Vice President of the AC. Rodriguez Diaz, along with Hidrobo Amoroso, signed the decree requiring the oath of office before the illegitimate AC for governors elected on October 15.
- **Ernesto Emilio Villegas Poljak** is Venezuela's newly appointed Minister of Culture and the former Minister of Communication and Information, and he has also held the position of President of Venezolana De Television (VTV), a state-run television channel. Under Villegas Poljak, VTV has curtailed freedom of the press and used state control of the media to restrict the democratic electoral process.
- **Jorge Elieser Marquez Monsalve** is Venezuela's newly appointed Minister of the Office of the Presidency and the former Director General of the National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL), a Venezuelan public institution. In August 2017, CONATEL removed two Colombian television channels from the air in Venezuela due to their coverage of former Venezuelan Attorney General Luisa Ortega Diaz, who fled Venezuela. In February 2017, CONATEL announced the suspension of CNN en Español from Venezuela after the network

issued various reports detailing allegations against the government.

- **Manuel Angel Fernandez Melendez** is the President of Venezuela's National Telephone Company (CANTV), and the President of Movilnet, C.A., a subsidiary of CANTV. CANTV has drastically increased censorship and blocked multiple websites from the Venezuelan public, including social media websites.
- **Carlos Alberto Osorio Zambrano** is President of Venezuela's Superior Organ of the Transport Mission. He was previously the Minister of the Office of the Presidency, the Vice President of Security and Food Sovereignty, and the Minister of Food. In 2016, Venezuela's National Assembly audit commission alleged that Osorio Zambrano was complicit in swindling the state out of up to \$573 million through corruption in Venezuela's food program.
- **Freddy Alirio Bernal Rosales** is Venezuela's Minister of Urban Agriculture and heads the National Command and Control Center for Local Committees of Supply and Production (CLAP), Venezuela's government-run food distribution program. Bernal Rosales was previously designated by OFAC as a Specially Designated Narcotics Trafficker pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act on September 8, 2011 for acting for or on behalf of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

[Identifying information on the individuals designated today.](#)

[Information about Executive Order 13692.](#)

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