

# *Venezuelan Official Says Parliament Acting Unconstitutionally*

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Caracas, August 2 (RHC)-- An official from the Venezuelan Attorney General's Office stated unequivocally that the opposition-controlled National Assembly was acting outside the bounds of the Constitution when it reinstated three lawmakers who were suspended over fraud accusations in the December parliamentary vote.

Attorney Reinaldo Muñoz, speaking on behalf of the Attorney General's Office, said that the three suspended lawmakers were “citizens not validly elected as parliamentarians from the state of Amazonas” due to the ongoing investigations into vote-buying in that state.

In December of last year, allegations of vote-buying and electoral irregularities led the electoral chamber of the Supreme Court to accept a challenge to the results and declare a temporary suspension of the inauguration of four lawmakers from the state of Amazonas, three belonging to the opposition and one from the ruling Socialist party.

Muñoz warned that the move by the right-wing leadership of the assembly created a “dangerous precedent against the institutions in our country and the preservation of the rule of law” and chastised

them for disrespecting the Supreme Court.

“Never in the republican history of Venezuela, even during the dictatorship, (has) an organ of public power – in clear violation of the law – has so blatantly obstructed the free development of justice in our country, purporting to include citizens not validly elected as active members of parliament,” said Muñoz.

This is the second time that the leadership of the assembly has flouted the Supreme Court. In January the court ordered that three suspended lawmakers be removed from the assembly.

The right-wing leadership of the assembly at first refused to abide by the court's ruling, until the Supreme Court said that further defiance would mean any decisions made by the National Assembly would be void. Muñoz called on the Supreme Court to once again rule that any decisions taken by the parliament be null as long as the three suspended lawmakers are seated.

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