

# *Venezuela Expels Top Canadian and Brazilian Diplomats*

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Caracas, December 26 (RHC)-- Canadian Charge d'Affaires Craib Kowalik and Brazilian Ambassador to Caracas Ruy Pereira have been expelled from Venezuela, National Constituent Assembly (ANC) President Delcy Rodriguez has announced. Rodriguez accused Ottawa of meddling in domestic politics, saying that Kowalik showed no restraint in his "permanent and insistent, rude and vulgar interference in the internal affairs of Venezuela."

Canadian officials, in step with U.S. President Donald Trump, have imposed sanctions on senior Venezuelan officials following the ANC election, warning they will continue to put pressure on what they call "the anti-democratic Maduro regime."

Brazil, meanwhile, stands accused of violating the rule of law: "We have decided to declare persona non grata the Brazilian ambassador until such time as constitutional order is restored in the neighboring country," Rodriguez told journalists. Her remarks were a direct rebuke of Brazil's Senate-imposed President Michel Temer, who last week said that Venezuela would be welcomed back into regional trading bloc MERCOSUR if the country – in his words – "returned to democracy."

"Pluralism is the very essence of democracy," Temer said, explaining that the MERCOSUR promise existed to foster "concreteness to this pledge, during times when fundamental rights are put in question." Back in May, just as Brazil's political crisis seemed like it couldn't get any worse, Temer was caught on

tape giving his blessing to bribes paid to judges, prosecutors, a police task-force member, and Eduardo Cunha, the former president of Brazil's lower house of representatives and a powerful witness in the government's corruption investigation.

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