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## FEATURED Q&A

# Where Has Sunday's Legislative Election Left Venezuela?



In an election marked by low turnout and widespread claims of fraud, allies of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, pictured voting on Sunday, won control of the National Assembly. // Photo: Venezuelan Government.

**Q Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro claimed a sweeping victory as his party won control of the National Assembly on Sunday in a vote that the opposition has alleged was rigged in favor of Maduro and his allies and in which the Juan Guaidó-led faction of the opposition refused to participate. How will the election affect Maduro's hold on power and Venezuela's opposition? Will the international community maintain its support for Guaidó? How divided is the opposition, and what implications does the split have for its efforts to oust Maduro?**

**A Vanessa Neumann, former Juan Guaidó-appointed Venezuelan ambassador to the United Kingdom:** "The parliamentary elections that Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro held on Sunday were not just a fraud, but a farce. The Maduro regime is illegitimate because of its previous electoral fraud in 2018. Since the regime is illegitimate, everything it does is illegitimate. Besides being illegitimate de jure, it was illegitimate de facto. Despite a plethora of threats and inducements, the turnout was a risible 15 percent to 30 percent of the electorate, 30 percent being the dubious number alleged by the regime. The only international observers were acolytes of the Maduro dictatorship, and, notably, one of the key actors in that mission was a former KGB special projects officer, Vladimir Churov. Last but not least, the very exercise committed crimes against humanity by using food as a weapon: Diosdado Cabello and others stated that those who did not participate would not eat. This is a crime against humanity, listed in the report by the U.N. fact-finding mission, the OAS and the International Criminal Court

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## TODAY'S NEWS

### ECONOMIC

## Mexico's President Names Clouthier Economy Minister

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has named Tatiana Clouthier, his former campaign manager, as his new economy minister. A former legislator, Clouthier replaces Graciela Márquez.

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### BUSINESS

## Brazil's GOL Returning Boeing 737 Max to Service

Brazilian airline GOL said it will return the Boeing 737 Max to service on Wednesday. GOL becomes the first airline in the world to return the aircraft to service after it was grounded nearly two years ago.

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### POLITICAL

## U.S. Extends TPS Designation for Hondurans

The United States has extended Temporary Protected Status for Hondurans, the Central American nation's president, Juan Orlando Hernández, announced.

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Hernández // File Photo: @DFCgov via Twitter.

## POLITICAL NEWS

## U.S. Extends TPS Designation for Honduran Migrants

The United States has extended Temporary Protected Status for Hondurans in the wake of powerful hurricanes that hit Central America in recent weeks, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández said Monday, CNN reported. Hernández requested during his trip to Washington last week that TPS, which allows migrants to remain in the United States for a period of time, be extended following the disasters. "During our meeting with acting-Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security [Chad Wolf], they told us that the TPS, which was due to end in January, will be extended," said Hernández. A posting on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website says TPS will be extended until Oct. 4, 2021 for people from Honduras, as well as from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, Nepal and Sudan. The status applies to people already in the United States who would face extreme hardship if they were forced to return to their home countries. The United States first granted TPS to Hondurans and Nicaraguans after Hurricane Mitch struck Central America in 1998. Hurricanes Eta and Iota struck parts of Central America last month, leaving more than 200 people dead and more than 100 missing. The storms caused flooding and landslides and also destroyed crops and infrastructure. "The economic damage caused by both storms, and the blow from the pandemic, has caused the Honduran economy to be greatly affected," Honduran Foreign Minister Lisandro Rosales said Friday in a statement announcing that the country's government had requested that the United States extend TPS for Hondurans. "Reconstruction comes from a sustainable social and economic rebuilding, and our compatriots here in the United States can [help] achieve that by supporting their families in Honduras." More than 44,000 Hondurans currently residing in the United States are protected by TPS, the statement said. Guatemala's government has also

requested that TPS be granted for its citizens in the United States, Reuters reported. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Dec. 1 issue of the Advisor.]

## ECONOMIC NEWS

## Mexico's President Taps Clouthier as Economy Minister

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on Monday nominated Tatiana Clouthier, his former campaign manager, as the country's new economy minister, the Associated Press reported. Clouthier, a former politician of the opposition National Action Party, replaces Graciela Márquez, who is taking a position on the board of Mexico's National Statistics



Clouthier // File Photo: Mexican Government.

Institute, the AP reported. Clouthier's nomination is seen as an attempt by López Obrador to maintain relations with the country's business community following the resignation last week of the president's chief of staff, Alfonso Romo. An entrepreneur, Romo will continue as López Obrador's liaison to business groups, the president said. Clouthier also has connections to northern Mexico and business groups there. Clouthier, the daughter of a late leader of the National Action Party, left the party in 2005 and won a seat in Mexico's Congress in 2018 as a member of López Obrador's Morena party. Clouthier is also an advocate of renewable energy, a policy area that López Obrador's critics say he has neglected, Reuters reported. López Obrador has struggled to deliver on the 4 percent economic growth that he has sought

## NEWS BRIEFS

## Thousands Pay Tribute to Uruguay's Vázquez

Thousands of people lined the streets in Montevideo to pay tribute to former Uruguayan President Tabaré Vázquez, who died Sunday at age 80 of lung cancer, BBC News reported. Mourners clapped, waved flags and cried as a hearse topped with flowers and carrying Vázquez's remains drove through the streets. Vázquez's Broad Front coalition turned off all the lights in its headquarters, except the ones in Vázquez's office. Current President Luis Lacalle Pou announced three days of mourning for Vázquez, who was president from 2005 to 2010, and again from 2015 to last March.

## Trump Administration Restores DACA Program

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump said Monday that it has fully restored the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program, which protects hundreds of thousands of young people from deportation, in accordance with a federal judge's order, the Associated Press reported. However, the Department of Homeland Security said it "may seek relief from the order." People until now have not been able to apply for protection under the Obama-era program since Trump ended the initiative in September 2017.

## Mexican Challenger Bank albo Raises \$45 Million for Expansion in Mexico

Mexican challenger bank albo recently raised \$45 million as it seeks to expand its network in the North American country, TechCrunch reported today. The bank has almost half a million customers across Mexico and a network of 30,000 retail locations, and it is seeking to become "the premiere Internet-based financial services provider for Mexico's large and growing middle class," said albo founder Ángel Sahagún.

to achieve. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, Mexico fell into a recession last year. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Nov. 9 issue of the Advisor.]

## BUSINESS NEWS

# Brazil's GOL Airlines Returning Boeing 737 Max to Service

Brazilian airline GOL will be the first airline in the world to resume passenger flights on the Boeing 737 Max after nearly two years, the carrier announced Monday. GOL will restart domestic commercial flights, to its hub in São Paulo, on the aircraft starting Wednesday. "All seven Boeing 737 Max aircraft in GOL's current fleet should be cleared to return fully to oper-

**GOL will restart flights to São Paulo on the 737 Max on Wednesday.**

ation and will be gradually reincorporated into the company's flight schedules in alignment with its operational needs," GOL said in the statement. GOL also said passengers will be informed that they are flying on the Boeing 737 Max, and they will be able to exchange their tickets for other flights if they do not want to fly on it. The Boeing 737 Max was grounded in March of last year following two deadly crashes that killed 346 people, CNN reported. The jet was redesigned during the 20-month safety ban, and the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration last month cleared the plane to carry passengers again, Reuters reported. Brazil is the only other country whose aviation regulator has also approved resumption of flights on the Boeing 737 Max, CNN reported. GOL only flies Boeing aircraft, making it a major customer of the aircraft maker.

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in The Hague. The international community must not be fooled by Sunday's farce, but it does bode badly: Maduro could be viewed as stronger than ever, prompting some in the opposition to either go to the side of the dictatorship or try to replace Guaidó as leader of the legitimate National Assembly of 2015, whence his constitutional authority as interim president derives, come Jan. 5. With coronavirus and economic downturns around the world, Venezuela's fighters for democracy risk its allies becoming weary and distracted, while the suffering of Venezuelans deepens and prolongs."

**A Carlos Vecchio, Juan Guaidó-appointed Venezuelan ambassador to the United States:** "When there is no qualified electoral arbiter, democratic leaders are stripped of their political rights, 350 political prisoners are locked up, parties are hijacked, no qualified international observers are allowed into the country—and when the population, a third of which is undernourished, is threatened with 'no vote, no food!' by PSUV Vice President Diosdado Cabello—it's a misnomer to call this an election. By forcing a fraud, Maduro removed the prospects for a peaceful negotiation. Instead, he jeopardizes Venezuelans' future and confirms that any solution to the complex humanitarian emergency must address the political situation. He is the root cause of Venezuela's tragedy and clings to power by perpetrating crimes against humanity, as evidenced by the U.N. Human Rights Council's Independent Fact-Finding Mission. The international community knows there were no conditions for an election. Indeed, the European Union, the OAS and countries, such as Japan, rejected this farce. In the United States, Venezuela remains a solid bipartisan cause. President Juan Guaidó is president by virtue of article 233 of the constitution, not the result of capricious desire. In the absence of a valid presidential election, the elected president of the National Assembly became the inter-

im president of Venezuela and will remain in that position until free and fair presidential elections are held. The opposition remains united around the objective to secure free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections. As expected in a broad coalition of democratic forces, there are different views on how to attain these objectives, but none of these views jeopardizes our collective responsibility."

**A Marco Rubio, U.S. senator (R-Fla.):** "The recent fraudulent electoral process held by the Maduro regime is nothing more than an attempt to silence the voice of interim President Juan Guaidó and the members of Venezuela's National Assembly. While the Venezuelan people vastly abstained from voting, once more the narco-regime has manipulated the results through an undemocratic and illegitimate process. After years of tyranny and oppression, the Venezuelan people have made their voices heard: it's time for the dictator to go."

**A Gabriel B. Hetland, assistant professor of Latin American, Caribbean and U.S. Latino Studies at the State University of New York at Albany:** "Per official results, nearly 70 percent of Venezuelan voters abstained from the elections. This marks a full reversal from the 2015 parliamentary vote, which saw a record turnout of more than 70 percent. Far from marking a victory for the hardline opposition pushing a boycott, the high abstention rate points to Venezuelans' disgust with the political options they face: continuation of the monstrous status quo or an incoherent, increasingly divided opposition lacking a positive program. As was widely expected, the results have consolidated Nicolás Maduro's grip on Venezuela's political institutions by giving the ruling PSUV supermajority control over the National Assembly. Initial official results give the PSUV 67.7 percent of the vote,

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the nonboycotting opposition parties 18 percent and the Communist Party (PCV) a dismal 2.7 percent. These results constitute a victory for no one. While the government will gain control of the National Assembly, the low turnout reflects growing dissent, not only among the upper and middle classes, but also among popular classes, which have protested the government with increasing frequency in recent months. Popular disaffection with the PSUV has also led to a growing willingness of small leftist

“**Juan Guaidó is a clear loser: on Jan. 5 he will be without any public post within Venezuela...**”

— Gabriel B. Hetland

parties to challenge the government, but the PCV's low vote suggests this strategy has yet to find much traction. Juan Guaidó is a clear loser: on Jan. 5 he will be without any public post within Venezuela, making his implausible claim to Venezuela's presidency all the harder to sustain. Guaidó may retain some international support, but his appeal among (nonexile) Venezuelans is likely to remain exceedingly low. This reflects the utter failure of Guaidó's strategy to change the country. The task for the government and the opposition remains the same as it has been for years: to resolve Venezuela's crisis requires dialogue and negotiations that will allow for the recuperation of political democracy, the end of debilitating and criminal U.S. sanctions, and movement toward a program of economic and social reform that will address the population's dire situation with immediate, universal aid and a sustainable program of economic recovery. Unfortunately, none of this appears to be on the immediate horizon.”

**A** Geoff Ramsey, director for Venezuela at the Washington Office on Latin America: “Venezuela's legislative elections were held Sunday amid deep irregularities, and around 70 percent of voters abstained. We need to be clear: this was not a free and fair vote. But it's equally as important to understand how we got here, and how the Trump administration's missteps have once again failed the Venezuelan people. Rather than just sitting these elections out, a coalition of opposition voices tried to pressure Maduro to hold a clean vote. In September, they succeeded in getting the regime to pardon more than 100 dissidents and to request international observation from the European Union and United Nations. The European Union even sent a mission to Caracas to encourage this deal, after first getting support from the European and Latin American members of the International Contact Group on Venezuela. However, these efforts were undercut by a White House that does not believe in multilateralism. The Trump administration attacked the European diplomats and accused the European Union of engaging in ‘cowboy diplomacy.’ With the United States actively undermining them, negotiations fell through. This is par for the course for the Trump administration. Last year's talks, facilitated by Norway, also collapsed after the White House pulled the rug out from under opposition negotiators. This is a lesson for the incoming Biden administration, which should be actively working to make one thing clear: the only way out of this crisis is a negotiated solution—and Biden will need to demonstrate that it is in Maduro's interest to return to the table.”

*The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at [gene.kuleta@thedialogue.org](mailto:gene.kuleta@thedialogue.org).*

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