

OAS Chief Luis Almagro's Twitter Warfare Reveals Obsession with Venezuela



Washington, April 22 (RHC)-- Almagro has tweeted 243 times about Venezuela -- 10 times more than his tweets on Brazil's coup and Berta Caceres' murder combined. The secretary general of the Organization of American States has increasingly faced criticism for his apparent fixation on attacking and attempting to destabilize Venezuela's government, while hypocritically remaining silent on political crises and human rights abuses elsewhere in the region, including in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico.

As Luis Almagro continues to set his sights on Venezuela, most recently with a four-minute video message harshly criticizing the government of Nicolas Maduro and pushing the fringe opinion that only general elections will offer a way out of the country's high-running political tensions, an analysis of the OAS chief's Twitter account reveals that he has been disproportionately obsessed with Venezuela since he took office as head of the regional body.

Since taking on the role of OAS secretary general on May 26, 2015, Almagro tweeted 3,372 times, and 7 percent of all tweets have referred to the political and economic situation in Venezuela -- a huge amount for the person charged with bringing to the attention of the body's 35 member states any issues that "might threaten the peace and security of the Hemisphere."

Of his 3,372 tweets since his 2015 inauguration, Almagro has tweeted 243 messages about Venezuela, including calls to authorize its suspension from the international body, criticizing Maduro's democratically-elected government and even demanding that the government call for general elections to remove Maduro from power.

This figure doesn't include the hundreds of Almagro's retweets of Venezuela-related content, including media outlets that have interviewed him on the topic of Venezuela, messages of support from opposition leaders who he personally met in Washington, organizations sending messages against the government and other news relating to the country that aligns with his criticism of the Maduro government.

Almagro's consistent tweeting about Venezuela stands in contrast to his much less enthusiastic engagement on the social media platform with various pressing human rights situations in the region.

For example, the OAS chief has barely mentioned various human rights crises in Mexico including murders of journalists and human rights defenders, record levels of forced disappearances, state repression of social movements and arbitrary detentions.

Almagro did not tweet a single message when Mexican police violently cracked down on teachers striking against President Enrique Peña Nieto's neo-liberal education reform last year. While four journalists have recently been killed in just six weeks in the most violent country in Latin America for press workers, Almagro hasn't tweeted about violence against journalists in Mexico since last year, when he sent his only-ever tweet about a murder of a journalist in the country.

Meanwhile, even though, according to the organization Front Line Defenders, Mexico is one of the top 10 most dangerous countries in the world for land and environmental defenders, Almagro has only tweeted twice about cases of murdered activists in the country.

The OAS chief tweeted once about the murder of Mexican Mayor Gisela Mota in January 2016. Months later, three Mexican mayors were murdered in 10 days and Almagro did not tweet about their cases.

And on the case that became the hallmark of systematic impunity and state complicity with organized crime in Mexico, before he took office in May 2015, Almagro wrote just three mild tweets about the forced disappearance of 43 students from the Ayotzinapa teachers' training college in Mexico. Since then, Almagro has tweeted just five times about the still-unsolved case, largely calling for investigations to continue but not criticizing the Mexican government despite a series of irregularities in the investigation.

Similarly, with respect to the crisis of murders of human rights defenders in Colombia that saw 156 activists killed in 14 months, Almagro wrote just one tweet about one case of a social movement leader being killed in the South American country. Rural and social leaders have continued to be killed by paramilitary groups in Colombia at an alarming rate despite the signing of the peace agreements between the FARC rebel army and President Juan Manuel Santos' government last year.

Honduras has also been a hotbed for abuses against land and environmental defenders. Almagro sent 10 tweets after the murder of environmental leader Berta Caceres last year amid international outcry over human rights abuses in Central America, an international news story that dominated headlines about the region for weeks. Almagro has tweeted more than 24 times more about Venezuela than Berta Caceres.

And in Argentina, Almagro has also been disproportionately quiet about the situation in the country despite increasing warnings from social movements and labor unions about a rollback in rights. For example, after the arrest of Indigenous leader and lawmaker Milagro Sala -- deemed arbitrary by the United Nations -- the OAS chief wrote just seven tweets, in which he acknowledged receiving a letter from her and announced that he was analyzing his response.

Finally, with respect to another case that has been a hallmark of Almagro's hypocrisy, Almagro wrote 13 tweets after the parliamentary coup against Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff. The former president was impeached for using common budgetary tricks to cook the books despite expert analysts finding analysts finding there was no evidence to suggest she was personally responsible for fiscal wrongdoing. Her ouster was widely condemned nationally and internationally as a parliamentary coup -- a criticism of the impeachment that Almagro never echoed.

For months, Almagro has been looking to invoke the OAS's so-called "Democratic Charter" against Venezuela, which would trigger the suspension of the country from the bloc. The Venezuelan government has slammed the OAS over this move, arguing that it would pave the way for foreign intervention.

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