

Guatemala's incoming president to cut ties with Venezuela



Guatemala City, November 5 (RHC)-- Guatemalan President-elect Alejandro Giammattei says he plans to sever all diplomatic ties with Venezuela after his inauguration in January 2020.

The right-wing Giammattei, who won the Central American country's presidency in a run-off election in August, made the announcement to reporters and said his administration would instead recognize opposition figure Juan Guaido as Venezuela's leader.

"We will do this on January 14. We are going to completely break off relations with Venezuela," the Guatemalan president-elect said. "I think it's the right thing to do. There are other South American [governments] that will do the same."

Last month, Giammattei accused Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro of destabilizing the Latin American region after he was denied entry into Venezuela for talks with Guaido. Giammattei had reportedly attempted to enter with an Italian passport.

The announcement came shortly after El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele ordered Venezuelan diplomats to leave the country within 48 hours. Bukele said he recognized Guaido as Venezuela's leader, and that only diplomats representing Guaido's "government" would be welcome in El Salvador.

Caracas reciprocated the diplomatic expulsions, giving Salvadorean diplomats only two days to pack their bags and leave Venezuela.

Backed by the U.S. and its allies, Guaido pushed Venezuela into political turmoil last year by rejecting the outcome of the May 2018 presidential election -- which was won by Maduro -- and declaring himself "interim president" of the country. Guaido was not even a presidential candidate, and was 'selected' rather than elected, by the United States.

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