



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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Press Release

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Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 (Guyana v. Venezuela)

Guyana requests the Court to indicate provisional measures

THE HAGUE, 7 March 2025. Yesterday, Guyana filed in the Registry of the International Court of Justice a Request for provisional measures in the case concerning *Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 (Guyana v. Venezuela)*, pursuant to Article 41 of the [Statute of the Court](#) and Articles 73, 74 and 76 of the [Rules of Court](#).

Guyana states that its Request is prompted by Venezuela's announcement that it will soon hold elections in Guyana's Essequibo region. According to the Applicant, the conduct of Venezuelan elections, which are scheduled for 25 May 2025, as well as all preparatory acts in the disputed territory leading to the holding of such elections, would violate "Guyana's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, as well as the Court's Order [on the indication of provisional measures] of 1 December 2023". Guyana further contends that the conduct of electoral activities by Venezuela in the relevant territory will cause irreparable harm to Guyana and that "[t]he need for provisional measures is urgent".

Guyana requests the Court to indicate the following provisional measures:

- "1) Venezuela shall not conduct any election in, or in respect of, any part of the territory on Guyana's side of the boundary line as established by the 1899 Arbitral Award, including by doing any of the following acts:
 - a) purporting to extend the right to vote in any Venezuelan elections to any individuals living within that territory;
 - b) distributing ballot papers, poll cards, electoral materials or any other physical or electronic electoral documents to individuals within that territory;
 - c) presenting or naming or otherwise supporting candidates for any Venezuelan elections within that territory;
 - d) establishing polling stations, counting stations or electoral offices within that territory;

- e) purporting to establish, elect or appoint any office of governor, legislative council, deputies or any other legislative or governmental official in respect of any part of that territory; and
 - f) communicating directly or indirectly with any residents in that territory in regard to any elections planned by Venezuela.
- 2) Venezuela shall refrain from taking any action which purports to annex *de jure* or *de facto* any territory on Guyana's side of the boundary line established by the 1899 Arbitral Award, including by incorporating 'Guayana Esequiba' as part of Venezuela.
 - 3) Venezuela shall refrain from taking any action which would seek to modify the situation that currently prevails in the territory in dispute, whereby Guyana administers and exercises control over that area."

History of the proceedings

On 29 March 2018, Guyana filed an [Application instituting proceedings](#) against Venezuela with respect to a dispute concerning "the legal validity and binding effect of the Award regarding the Boundary between the Colony of British Guiana and the United States of Venezuela, of 3 October 1899".

As basis for the jurisdiction of the Court, the Applicant invokes Article IV, paragraph 2, of the "Agreement to Resolve the Controversy between Venezuela and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland over the Frontier between Venezuela and British Guiana", signed at Geneva on 17 February 1966, and the decision of 30 January 2018 by which the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in accordance with that Agreement, chose the Court as the means to be used for the settlement of the controversy.

On 18 June 2018, Venezuela informed the Court that it considered that the Court manifestly lacked jurisdiction to hear the case and that it had decided not to take part in the proceedings. The Court then decided to address first the question of its jurisdiction.

In its [Judgment delivered on 18 December 2020](#), the Court found that it had jurisdiction to entertain the Application filed by Guyana in so far as it concerned the validity of the Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 and the related question of the definitive settlement of the land boundary dispute between Guyana and Venezuela.

Further to the filing of preliminary objections by Venezuela on 7 June 2022, the Court, in its [Judgment of 6 April 2023](#), rejected Venezuela's preliminary objection concerning the exercise of the Court's jurisdiction and found that it could adjudicate upon the merits of Guyana's claims, in so far as they fall within the scope of the Court's jurisdiction as defined in the operative clause of its Judgment of 18 December 2020.

On 30 October 2023, Guyana filed a [Request for the indication of provisional measures](#) due to its concern over the Government of Venezuela's stated intention to hold a so-called "Consultative Referendum" on 3 December 2023 regarding the purported creation of the State of "Guayana Esequiba" within Venezuela, comprising the territory at issue in the current proceedings.

In its [Order of 1 December 2023](#), the Court stated that, in light of the strong tension that characterized the relations between the Parties, it considered that the conduct of Venezuela — in

organizing such a referendum and asserting that it would take concrete action on the basis of the results of that referendum — presented a serious risk of Venezuela acquiring and exercising control and administration of the territory in dispute. The Court therefore directed Venezuela to refrain from taking any action, pending a final decision in the case, which would modify the situation that currently prevails in the territory in dispute, whereby Guyana administers and exercises control over that area. The Court further instructed both Parties to refrain from any action which might aggravate or extend the dispute or make it more difficult to resolve.

Earlier [press releases](#) relating to this case are available on the Court's website.

Note: The Court's press releases are prepared by its Registry for information purposes only and do not constitute official documents.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It was established by the United Nations Charter in June 1945 and began its activities in April 1946. The Court is composed of 15 judges elected for a nine-year term by the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations. The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands). The Court has a twofold role: first, to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States; and, second, to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by duly authorized United Nations organs and agencies of the system.

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