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Puerto Rico Justice Secretary Resigns as Turmoil Deepens in U.S. Territory

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SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Puerto Rico’s political turmoil deepened Thursday as the island’s newest justice secretary resigned in the wake of an investigation targeting the U.S. territory’s governor, who remains under scrutiny.

Wandymar Burgos, who took over the position a week ago, said the prudent thing to do was step down.

“I have my head held up my high,” she said in a letter. “All my actions have been motivated by my ethical and upstanding work style.”

The resignation comes a day after several top legislators who are members of the governor's party threatened to vote against her nomination and demanded she resign, given her actions in recent days.

Burgos on Monday identified herself as the person who recalled six files about to be delivered to Puerto Rico's Special Independent Prosecutor's Panel for further investigation. One of the files names Gov. Wanda Vázquez, according to Dennise Longo, the island's previous justice secretary who recommended that the case involving the alleged mismanagement of disaster supplies be further investigated. Longo was asked to resign on Friday.

Vázquez has denied she made that request out of alleged retribution, instead accusing Longo of improperly intervening in an unrelated federal investigation into alleged Medicaid fraud. Vázquez also said the investigation targeting her is rigged and vengeful and comes as she prepares for her party's Aug. 9 gubernatorial primary. Vázquez had defended Burgos' actions, saying that while they might seem unusual, they weren't wrong or illegal.

However, Nydia Cotto, president of the Special Independent Prosecutor's Panel, told The Associated Press that the agency had never seen that happen before.

Burgos said earlier this week that she requested the six files be returned to the island's Department of Justice because she had just found out about them and needed to know what they were about.

Her explanation was questioned by legislators, including Puerto Rico Senate President Thomas Rivera Schatz.

"It may have been inadvertent, or inexperience, or out of good faith, or whatever the reason, but the simple fact of suggesting that the files going toward the panel be returned at the very least raises doubts about the reasons behind it," he told radio station Z-93 on Wednesday.