

Maduro declared winner of presidential vote, as Washington escalates drive for regime change in Venezuela

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The National Election Committee (CNE) in Venezuela declared the re-election of President Nicolás Maduro early Monday by a margin of 51.2 percent against 44.2 percent for right-wing challenger Edmundo González.

The electoral body blamed a cyberattack for delays but said it counted 80 percent of the votes and that these show Maduro's victory to be "irreversible." As of this writing, the CNE website is still down, and no further results have been published.

As expected, the Biden administration, its puppet regimes in the region, and the US-funded Unitary Platform have refused to acknowledge the results. In a response clearly coordinated beforehand, US imperialism is instead using the elections to escalate its efforts for regime change.

Washington has repeatedly employed failed attempts to kidnap and kill the Venezuelan leadership, brutal sanctions to starve the population into submission and threats of a military invasion—all aimed at pressuring sections of the Venezuelan military and ruling circles to oust the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV).

Despite earlier statements by opposition officials concluding that irregularities in the voting process had been rare and insignificant, opposition leader María Corina Machado immediately claimed the results announced by the CNE were the product of a massive fraud. The Unitary Platform had access to 40 percent of voting center reports, she said, and these gave Gonzalez 70 percent of the vote.

While demanding that the CNE show the records from all polling stations, Machado made clear that the exact results are really beside the point. Her main appeal was to the military leadership, subtly arguing that the large vote for the opposition makes clear that Maduro can't secure its interests or capitalist rule any longer.

Machado declared: "Today we defeated them in votes all over Venezuela, but also the members of the Plan República [military oversight of the elections], the military-citizens know it, they were there in the front row, they saw the people with joy and hope, organized in a civic, peaceful way. They know it and the duty of the Armed Forces is to enforce the popular sovereignty expressed in the vote."

She concluded by warning of future actions "in the coming days."

The key to understanding the political crisis in Venezuela is that neither the PSUV regime, US imperialism nor its proxies give a second thought to the democratic will of the Venezuelan people or to resolving the humanitarian catastrophe.

All contenders in the election represent factions of the capitalist class associated with foreign powers that are squabbling over access to the profits from exploiting Venezuelan workers and the world's largest oil reserves.

The overall strategy of Washington was summed up in plain terms by Geoff Ramsey of the Atlantic Council, a think-tank with close ties to the

US intelligence apparatus. "This isn't over," he wrote, "Maduro has to convince the ruling elite that he can keep things under control, but both he and the military know that he can't govern a country in flames. He's effectively inviting the biggest loyalty test he's faced in years. I doubt Venezuelan elites are eager for six more years of repression, sanctions, and economic catastrophe."

Shortly after the preliminary results, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken predictably expressed "serious concerns that the results announced does not reflect the will or the votes of the Venezuelan people."

Speaking for a power that has installed more dictators than any other—from Pinochet and Videla to Suharto and countless others—and that employs proxy wars and invasions as preferred policies for securing geopolitical and corporate interests around the world, Blinken said in a menacing tone: "The international community is watching this very closely and will respond accordingly."

Earlier during the day, US Vice President and presidential candidate Kamala Harris wrote on X, "The will of the Venezuelan people must be respected."

Blinken and Harris would be hard-pressed to find a less democratic society than the United States, where a group of billionaires have purchased control over all institutions and media and enforce its interests through bipartisan tyranny. With the acquiescence of the Democratic Party, the US Supreme Court not only stole an election in 2000, but has now turned the American president into a king above the law.

The threat of international action beyond the sanctions that have already devastated the Venezuelan economy poses a real threat that a new front of the expanding third world war will erupt in Latin America. For US-NATO imperialism, Venezuela is already a key battlefield in its efforts to undermine Russia, China, and Iran, all of whose governments maintain economic and political ties with Caracas and have already congratulated Maduro.

The regime of Argentine President Javier Milei—a defender of the fascist-military dictatorship under Gen. Jorge Rafael Videla—has been assigned the role of spearheading the response of pro-US forces to the Venezuelan elections. This operation follows months of meetings between Milei and other Argentine officials with the leadership of the CIA and Pentagon.

Nothing else could better express the predatory and anti-democratic character of US interests in the region than its partnership with these forces.

On Monday, Argentina led a meeting and joint statement with eight countries (Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay) echoing the "serious concerns about the conduct of the presidential elections" in Venezuela. The document then demands a "full review of the results."

It is worth adding that fascist billionaire Elon Musk re-tweeted a statement by Milei denouncing a “fraud” in Venezuela. Musk added lamely, “Shame on Dictator Maduro.”

In a signal of what is to come, Milei’s Security Minister Patricia Bullrich rallied thousands of Venezuelan opposition supporters to effectively lay siege to the Venezuelan Embassy in Buenos Aires on Sunday.

While not signing the Argentine statement, the pseudo-left Presidents Gustavo Petro of Colombia and Gabriel Boric of Chile, as well as the Brazilian President Lula da Silva, made similar appeals, casting doubt on the results and submissively joining the US-led push for regime change.

For its part, the PSUV has sought to preempt moves from outside or within the state apparatus to carry out a coup. *Colectivos*, gangs of loyalists on motorcycles, and supporters were called to protect the presidential Miraflores Palace in Caracas on Sunday night and celebrate a victory hours before the results were announced.

Having previously warned of a civil war and bloodbath, Maduro told a meeting of international observers on Saturday evening, that “the Militia is the secret weapon of the doctrine of national defense, of the war of all the people.” This was a call to armed and trained pro-government forces who act as an extra-constitutional unit of the army to stand by in case sections of the military turn against his regime.

This was followed by a statement by Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino: “Count on the Bolivarian Militia for all the battles to come!”

Even while insisting that the military will not be an “arbiter” of the elections, Padrino ordered the deployment of 388,000 military, police and other security officials to patrol polling stations, guard and transport all electoral material and “guarantee order at all costs”.

This was an affirmation that, after all, the military will intervene to secure bourgeois rule, even if that means settling the election results.

In Tachira, a historically pro-opposition state bordering Colombia, men with face masks are shown in numerous videos using stun grenades and live ammunition against crowds. There are confirmed reports of the death of one man, Julio Valerio García, and several injured.

Venezuela stands on the verge of civil war, even deeper economic misery, and becoming an active front in an imperialist world war. It is high time for workers to draw far-reaching conclusions.

The fact that an unknown stand-in for Machado—a creature of the CIA, an extreme right-winger and proponent of US sanctions and even invasion—could plausibly have defeated Maduro is an indictment of the entire Bolivarian project and the pink-tide regionally.

The *Chavistas* have been unable to respond to US imperialist aggression and the crisis of capitalism other than by shifting aggressively to the right, relying increasingly on police state repression and becoming direct servants to the oil companies and Wall Street.

With US imperialism weakened and discredited like never before and with factions of the ruling class at each other’s throats, any revolutionary movement that represented the interests of the working class would use this juncture to fight for power and further the socialist revolution internationally.

But there is no revolutionary or genuinely left-wing alternative in Venezuela. Instead, at one point or another, all organizations claiming to fight for workers channeled popular opposition behind *Chavismo*, whose main role has always been to preempt any independent political intervention of the working class.

Hugo Chávez, a lieutenant coronel, won prominence in 1992 after leading a failed coup against the unpopular presidency of Carlos Andrés Pérez. Two years later, amid an unraveling financial crisis and low oil prices, President Rafael Caldera freed Chávez from jail, seeing him as a useful figure to contain massive opposition against IMF austerity diktats, privatizations, high inflation, and the hated bipartisan system under the Puntofijo Pact, which Caldera had himself engineered in 1958. Chávez

would win the election in 1998 having campaigned for years across the country for a constitutional assembly, along with democratic and social reforms.

After Chavez’s death from cancer in 2013, the *World Socialist Web Site* pointed to the fact that his government’s diversion of part of Venezuela’s oil bonanza into social programs and partial nationalizations did not “represent a path to socialism” and “made no serious encroachment on profit interests.” Instead, Chavez squandered most of the oil boom paying foreign creditors, increasing profits for transnationals and cultivating a faction in the ruling class and military leadership, called the *boliburguesia*, that grew rich from corruption and government contracts. Even though the GDP multiplied 4.5 times in the decade before his death, no major industrial or agricultural development took place, preparing a major downturn once prices fell.

The current social catastrophe, the growth of the far-right and the danger of civil war are primarily the responsibility of the pseudo-left tendencies who provided political support to Chavez and blocked a genuinely revolutionary alternative. This is true of a myriad of Pabloite tendencies that had long abandoned the principles of Trotskyism in the post-war period, advocating instead a liquidation into bourgeois nationalist forces.

From Argentine Gen. Juan Domingo Perón, to Fidel Castro in Cuba, Salvador Allende in Chile, Gen. J.J. Torres in Bolivia, Gen. Velasco Alvarado in Perú and Gen. Omar Torrijos in Panama, these forces repeatedly sought to subordinate workers to bourgeois reformist forces that in many cases ended up facilitating the rise of US-backed fascist-military dictators.

As the WSWS wrote in 2013, these forces:

... were drawn to Chávez’s “21st Century socialism” precisely because of their hostility to the Marxist conception that a socialist transformation can be carried out only through the independent and conscious struggle of the working class to put an end to capitalism and take power into its own hands. These petty-bourgeois political elements are instead attracted to a policy designed to save capitalism from revolution, imposed from above by a charismatic *comandante*. These layers have moved far to the right since the hey-day of their adaptation to Castroism in the 1960s and 1970s.

Objective developments in the past 40 years, including the dissolution of the USSR and the process of capitalist globalization, have rendered infeasible all national reformist programs. The growth of massive, urban working classes across Latin America, moreover, has made the ruling elites even more subservient to imperialism and hostile to any serious democratic reforms.

Against the growing threat of dictatorship and war, workers and youth in Venezuela and across the region must fight to build the International Committee of the Fourth International, the leadership of the world Trotskyist movement. As made clear by the tragic history of betrayals in Latin America, the first step must be a careful study of the programmatic lessons from the decades-long struggle of the ICFI against Pabloism and all other pseudo-left agencies of the local bourgeoisies and imperialism.



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