

US-backed opposition in Venezuela suffers further setbacks after its candidate fled to Spain

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Two weeks since Edmundo González Urrutia, presidential candidate for Venezuela's US-backed right-wing opposition, fled to Spain, the effort by Washington to overthrow President Nicolás Maduro has suffered a series of further blows.

On Wednesday, the government disclosed a signed document in which González recognizes the victory of Maduro in the July 28 presidential elections.

González said he signed “under duress” during a meeting at the Spanish Embassy in Caracas with Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodríguez and her brother Jorge Rodríguez, president of the National Assembly. The candidate had spent a few days living at the Dutch and Spanish embassies after arrest warrants were issued against him based on charges related to the elections.

The signing by González of an admission of his political defeat to be allowed to board a Spanish Air Force airplane with his family—and reportedly get guarantees that his properties would be safe—entirely discredits him, his coalition, his CIA enablers and the Spanish Socialist Party-Sumar government.

Even before this disgraceful event, pro-opposition demonstrations had already subsided after a few days of repression.

Another blow was the exposure of at least one plot to destabilize the government and kill Maduro. Last Friday, the Maduro administration arrested the 15th person and fourth American related to an alleged plan to assassinate the Venezuelan leadership and attack public infrastructure.

Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello presented 400 seized automatic rifles and pistols that were allegedly intended for the suspected “mercenaries,” and claimed that the CIA and Spanish intelligence were behind the operation.

The White House has confirmed that one was an active Navy SEAL, but both Madrid and Washington deny any plot. The Venezuelan authorities claim that the two Spanish citizens arrested are agents for the Spanish National Intelligence Center, while one Czech citizen under arrest is an active reservist and paratrooper.

This would not be the first and will not be the last effort by US-sponsored mercenaries to kill or overthrow the Chavista leadership in Venezuela. Moreover, the Israeli terror attacks using explosives planted in communication devices used by Hezbollah officials in Lebanon shows the methods embraced by Washington and its allies to eliminate those considered as obstacles to their

geopolitical interests.

Similar operations cannot be ruled out in Caracas, even by US “assets” or mercenaries without the full approval of Washington.

However, as Israel and its American backers expand the genocide in Gaza into a regional war against Lebanon and Iran, and amid the ongoing US-NATO war against Russia, the Biden administration is responding with relative quiescence to its setbacks in Venezuela.

On Monday, opposition spokesman Rafael de la Cruz called on the US government to cancel all licenses that allow Chevron and other companies to produce and sell Venezuelan oil. “We want them canceled. ... [T]his is a lifeline to the regime,” he said.

This is unlikely in the short term. The current license for Chevron is valid until March 2025, and US officials speaking anonymously to Reuters have expressed “misgivings about actions that could spike global oil prices or inflict serious damage to Venezuela’s already struggling economy.”

The Democratic administration also reportedly hopes to avoid a new surge in migration that could be exploited by the Republicans ahead of the US election.

New US sanctions have been limited to 16 individuals in Maduro’s circle, including in the security apparatus, along with visa restrictions. Legislation to ban American investments in Venezuelan oil and further sanctions were introduced in the US Congress but have not been acted upon.

Washington has sought to act through its regional allies to pressure Maduro into negotiating his own ouster, with the ostensible “leftist” allies of Maduro, Presidents Ignazio Lula da Silva of Brazil, Gustavo Petro of Colombia and Andrés Manuel López Obrador of Mexico acting as instruments of imperialism as much as the openly right-wing regimes like that of Argentina’s fascist President Javier Milei.

On Wednesday, the influential US think tank Atlantic Council called on these efforts to be sustained to “encourage dialogue” with Maduro and to “develop consistent messaging on conditioning sanctions relief and/or new sanctions with progress on negotiated political agreements.”

These proposals mark a shift in US foreign policy circles to prioritize “stability” ahead of the American elections. The think tank concludes that “the possibility of a transition in Venezuela appears dim after González was forced to seek asylum in Spain.”

This shift has not deterred the Unitary Platform leadership under fascistic María Corina Machado from working with far-right forces inside and outside Venezuela to organize provocations, including attacks on infrastructure and further attempts to detain or kill Maduro and other officials. It was Machado, a long-time CIA “asset,” who chose González as her stand-in after being banned from running in the election.

Florida Republicans Rick Scott and Marco Rubio introduced a Senate bill on Thursday to raise the bounty for the arrest of Maduro from \$15 million to \$100 million, which would be paid from the estimated \$450 million in assets confiscated from Caracas.

The fascistic American billionaire and founder of military contractor Blackwater, Erik Prince, claims to have raised \$1 million to prepare the “downfall of the regime” in Venezuela and that “thousands and thousands” of Venezuelan security forces have reached out to him. In 2019, he had proposed the creation of a private army of 5,000 mercenaries to topple Maduro, before holding a meeting with Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodríguez possibly to hear alternative business offers.

Earlier this week, opposition lawyers requested a US court to postpone the auction of Venezuela’s most valuable overseas asset, oil refiner Citgo. The parent company of Citgo, PDV Holding, had already been stolen from Caracas in 2019 and handed to representatives of the self-appointed “interim President” at the time, Juan Guaidó.

A US court ruled that its stocks would be auctioned to foreign firms as compensation for debt defaults and expropriations. Now, the opposition camp wants to wait until January to renegotiate with the firms and potentially use the assets to oust Maduro.

The right-wing opposition also successfully lobbied to have the European Parliament, the Spanish lower house and the Senate in the Dominican Republic pass resolutions recognizing Edmundo González as president-elect of Venezuela. The resolutions in Europe were promoted by the far-right allies of Machado, including Vox in Spain and the Alternative for Germany (AfD).

While the immediate political and geostrategic context may keep Washington from escalating the measures against Caracas, this is temporary. It has spent billions over two decades to overthrow the Chavistas in order to gain unfettered control over the largest oil reserves on the planet, which lie under Venezuelan soil.

US imperialism considers China its main geopolitical rival and the ultimate target of the expanding global war. It concluded long ago that undermining Chinese economic and political influence in Latin America requires ousting the Maduro administration.

Despite lower production today due to sanctions, Venezuelan oil has historically been a key component of the global profits and power of US and British imperialism since the 1920s. During the 1973 oil embargo, triggered by the Arab-Israeli war, Venezuelan oil was crucial for the US and Europe to partially limit an increase in prices.

Sitting just across the Caribbean from Florida, Venezuela is also seen as a geopolitical beachhead in efforts to undermine regional and outside powers. These realities have cultivated dependency, corruption and submissiveness in the Venezuelan bourgeoisie and resulted in extreme levels of misery and inequality and a

particularly explosive class struggle.

Writer Eduardo Galeano wrote in 1958, when more than half of the global profits for the US-based Standard Oil and British Shell came from the country: “Venezuela was a vast oil well surrounded by prisons and torture chambers, importing everything from the United States: automobiles and refrigerators, condensed milk, eggs, lettuce, laws and decrees.”

Periods of boom such as in the 1970s under Social Democratic President Carlos Andres Perez and the 2000s under Hugo Chavez allowed the ruling class room for limited nationalizations and social assistance programs. Chávez and Maduro also sought to gain better terms from US imperialism by seeking closer ties to Russia and China.

But at no point did the submissive character of the ruling class diminish, despite the radical phraseology of its Chavista faction, and there was never a sustained effort for actual economic and democratic development. The inevitable bust in the oil market led Pérez and Chávez to launch austerity measures. In the latest period, this has been combined with devastating US sanctions to produce the worst humanitarian disaster in the country’s history.

Maduro ultimately agreed behind closed doors to the entirely illegitimate elections in July as a cover to subordinate Venezuelan oil further to the diktats of Chevron and Wall Street, hoping that Washington would relent in its efforts to install direct puppets like Machado and González. This has been combined with the increased police state repression of opposition to the government’s left and within the working class, as well as restrictions on X, Signal and other apps.

Austerity and privatizations in the 1980s led to the massive workers’ uprising known as the *Caracazo* in 1989. A major strike and protest movement that continued into the 1990s was channeled behind the election of Chávez.

As elsewhere in the region and internationally, the long history of imperialist oppression and extreme inequality is rooted in the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the working class in its objective struggle to overthrow capitalism. It is urgent that a new leadership be built as a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, which is the only one that has drawn the necessary historical lessons of the betrayals at the hands of Social Democracy, Stalinism, Pabloism and the many variants of bourgeois nationalism like *Chavismo* that have characterized the history of Venezuela and the region.



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