

US assault on Venezuela exposes Turkish ruling elite

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5 January 2026

The United States' imperialist gangsterism in attacking Venezuela and abducting President Nicolás Maduro once again exposed the pro-imperialist character of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government and the capitalist political and media establishment.

In the first official reaction from Ankara, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs avoided mentioning the US assault or Maduro's fate and said only that "Türkiye attaches importance to the stability of Venezuela and the peace and welfare of the Venezuelan people. We call on all parties to act with restraint so that the present situation does not give rise to negative consequences for regional and international security."

Erdoğan, who remained silent for nearly three days on the imperialist assault on Venezuela, finally made a statement on Monday evening, carefully avoiding condemning the lawlessness of his "friend" US President Donald Trump or demanding the release of his former "friend" Maduro.

He said, "We do not approve of any action that violates political legitimacy and international law, wherever it may be in the world," adding, "In the case of Venezuela, we are striving to do what is best and right for both Turkey and our friends, the Venezuelan people."

This stance reveals what truly drives the foreign policy of Erdoğan and his government, who were the target of a US-NATO-backed coup on July 15, 2016, and who exchanged mutual support statements with Maduro at the time: the interests of the ruling class, which is deeply tied to imperialism.

Ula? Sevinç, chair of the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi, the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), condemned the Turkish government's stance on X, saying:

This is an open declaration of submission to and support for US imperialism. Trotsky explained, some 120 years ago, why the bourgeoisie and its representatives in countries with late capitalist development, such as Türkiye, cannot consistently be anti-imperialist or democratic (Theory of Permanent Revolution).

What makes Erdoğan's stance striking is that, unlike

many other governments, he claims to be "anti-imperialist" and "anti-Zionist." Yet now they waste no time in legitimizing an open crime by the US government—the same government they previously accused of backing the 15 July [2016] coup and whose policies made possible the genocide against the Palestinians.

Sevinç drew attention to the irony that Erdoğan's 2018 article in the *New York Times* now reads like an accusation against Ankara itself. Then Erdoğan wrote that "The Turkish people expected the United States to unequivocally condemn the attack and express solidarity with Türkiye's elected leadership. It did not. The United States reaction was far from satisfactory. Instead of siding with Turkish democracy, United States officials cautiously called for 'stability and peace and continuity within Türkiye.'"

Just three months after the 2016 coup attempt, Maduro visited Istanbul—the first Venezuelan head of state to do so. Erdoğan said at a 2022 joint press conference in Ankara that "I would never forget President Maduro's strong solidarity with Türkiye on July 15. Venezuela had been one of the first countries to express support to the Turkish government in the aftermath of the heinous July 15 coup attempt."

In 2019, Maduro won the elections held in Venezuela, while National Assembly President Juan Guaidó declared himself interim president. Imperialist countries, led by the US, recognized Guaidó, while Erdoğan supported Maduro. It was reported that Erdoğan told Maduro, "My brother! Stand firm, we are with you." Erdoğan was among the few leaders who called Maduro to congratulate him after the controversial 2024 presidential elections.

This friendly relationship also formed the basis for discussions held prior to the US kidnapping about sending Maduro into exile in Türkiye. According to a *New York Times* report, the Mafia administration in Washington made Maduro an "offer" that included exile to Türkiye, and Maduro, in turn, offered the US access to Venezuelan oil to prevent the imminent attack.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham confirmed this bargain,

stating, “He could be in Türkiye today, but he’s in New York. Maduro has nobody to blame but himself. Trump gave him a way out. He chose to defy Trump and the U.S. military, and his a** is in jail where he deserves to be.”

The pro-European Union and NATO-supporting Republican People’s Party (CHP) responded verbally to “Trump’s coup” but, by repeating its EU allies’ claims that Maduro is “illegitimate”, demonstrated its inability to take a consistent stance against imperialism.

CHP leader Özgür Özel criticized Erdoğan’s silence, stating, “You stood behind Maduro when he held unfair elections and treated his own people unjustly, calling him ‘my brother’. You were wrong then. But your friend Trump came, violated international law, and took your brother Maduro from his bedroom with his wife, blindfolded and gagged him, and took him away. Now, how sad it is that you remain silent in the face of this photo. When it came to defending democracy, you defended Maduro. Now, when it comes to defending the world order, your silence is supporting Trump’s coup in another country.”

The CHP’s imprisoned Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Mayor and presidential candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu stated on his X account that “Nicolás Maduro is an authoritarian leader who disregards the will of his people in elections and systematically violates democratic values,” adding, “However, the authoritarian nature of a government does not justify military intervention by another state.” He called for “neutrality”: “Türkiye should be a country that defends principles, not takes sides; that shows the way, not remains silent.”

The pro-government press raced to find excuses for the pro-imperialist character of the Erdoğan government, now blatantly apparent over Venezuela, following its support for Trump’s new colonialist plan in Gaza.

Hürriyet columnist Abdulkadir Selvi stated that Ankara’s stance is actually guided by the Turkish bourgeoisie’s desire to protect its interests: “Erdoğan is a leader who knows when, where, and how to respond... Barring any mishaps, Erdoğan will meet with Trump today [January 5]. There are very vital issues between Türkiye and the US. The lifting of CAATSA [Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act] sanctions, the purchase of F-16 and F-35 aircraft needed by the Turkish Armed Forces, the Halkbank case, the integration of the SDF [Syrian Democratic Forces] into the Syrian army, and so on... There is no benefit to Türkiye in doing this [criticizing the US attack] before a meeting where vital issues for Türkiye will be discussed.”

The truth is that Erdoğan, who leads NATO’s second largest army, has never taken a principled stance against imperialism; he cannot do so, given the class interests he defends.

Erdoğan’s resort to anti-imperialist rhetoric was linked to a series of developments triggered by the US-NATO’s making Kurdish nationalist forces their main proxy power in the war

for regime change in Syria, as well as his attempt to exploit anti-imperialist sentiment among the people. Türkiye’s attempts to maneuver between US-NATO imperialism and Russia and China laid the groundwork for the July 15, 2016 coup attempt

Erdoğan adopted a more openly pro-US stance in the belief that he could develop closer cooperation with Trump once he took office. Even if he had tactically condemned the attack on Venezuela, this would not change his and his government’s fundamentally pro-imperialist character.

As Leon Trotsky explained in his theory of the Permanent Revolution, and as the entire history of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has proven, in the era of imperialism, the national bourgeoisie’s fear of the working class drives it into the arms of the imperialist powers that have divided the world among themselves.

Various protests were held in Türkiye over the weekend against the US attack on Venezuela. The Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Türkiye (DİSK), the Confederation of Public Employees Trade Unions (KESK), the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB), and the Turkish Medical Association (TTB) issued a joint statement condemning the US operation and calling on the United Nations and international institutions to “not remain silent in the face of imperialist interventions and to take a clear and decisive stance.”

The Labourist Movement Party (EHP), Labor Party (EMEP), Socialist Assemblies Federation (SMF), Workers Party of Türkiye (TİP), and Social Freedom Party (TÖP) put forward the same bankrupt policy of “pressure” in a joint statement titled “US, Hands Off Venezuela!”

The statement called for an end to “US and NATO military bases and presence in the country [Türkiye]. Türkiye should leave NATO,” while simultaneously appealing to the “international community” and the United Nations to “immediately intervene with the US”. It called on Erdoğan to “cancel Monday’s meeting with Trump and condemn the US.”

The US-NATO-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza has made clear that such appeals and protest politics directed at the UN, international institutions, and capitalist governments disarm the masses politically and lead to a dead end. The way forward lies not in calling on imperialist and capitalist governments to change their policies, but in building an international revolutionary movement to transfer power to the working class.



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