

European Union welcomes Maduro's abduction, while invoking international law

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On Sunday, the European Union (EU) officially took a stand on the US attack on Venezuela. The brief statement, which was supported by all 27 EU member states with the exception of Hungary, has schizophrenic traits. In half a page, it invokes no less than five times the principles of international law, territorial integrity, sovereignty and democracy, but explicitly welcomes the overthrow of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, which violated all of these principles. It invokes international law, but does not condemn its violation by the US with a single word.

"The EU recalls that, under all circumstances, the principles of international law and the UN Charter must be upheld. Members of the United Nations Security Council have a particular responsibility to uphold those principles, as a pillar of the international security architecture," the statement says. The EU supports the fight against transnational organised crime and drug trafficking, but these challenges must be addressed "in full respect of international law and the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty."

But even though the US has trampled on all these principles by pillaging Venezuela, the statement did not criticise the Trump administration. On the contrary, it welcomed the kidnapping of the Venezuelan president by stating that the EU has "repeatedly stated that Nicolás Maduro lacks the legitimacy of a democratically elected president."

European heads of government reacted in a similarly hypocritical manner.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, a trained lawyer, has so far strictly refused to condemn the US attack on a sovereign country, which violates international law. He said that the legal classification of the US intervention was "complex" and that the German government was taking its time to consider it. At the same time, Merz expressed his satisfaction with the kidnapping of Maduro, whom he accused of leading his country to ruin, rigging

the last election and playing a problematic role by entangling Venezuela in the drug trade. Germany therefore did not recognise Maduro's presidency, he said.

French President Emmanuel Macron initially supported the US raid, saying that the Venezuelan people now had "reason to rejoice." He later qualified this by saying that France had "neither supported nor approved the method used." At the same time, he demanded that a *fait accompli* be created and power be handed over to Edmundo González Urrutia, who lost to Maduro in the 2024 presidential election and subsequently fled into exile in Spain.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who is politically close to Trump, criticised that "external military action" was not the right way to "end totalitarian regimes," but declared that "defensive intervention" against hybrid attacks on one's own security, such as drug trafficking, was legitimate. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer also welcomed the end of the rule of "illegitimate President" Maduro.

The schizophrenia of the European powers, who invoke international law all the more loudly the more openly they violate it, is an expression of the political dilemma in which they find themselves. They care as little about international law as Trump does. They invoke it when it suits them—in the war against Russia and in the conflict with China—and reject it when it stands in their way—in the genocide in Gaza, the economic strangulation of Iran, the kidnapping of Maduro, etc.

But the US invasion of Venezuela, Trump's claim to "run" the country and "own" its oil and the goal formulated in the new US National Security Strategy "to deny non-Hemispheric competitors the ability to own or control strategically vital assets in our Hemisphere" are directed not only against Chinese and Russian interests, but also against European interests.

Europe has close economic ties with Latin America. A

free trade agreement with the Mercosur countries of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela was supposed to be signed in December but was blocked at the last minute by French and Italian agricultural interests.

Even greater is the fear among Europeans that the reckless foreign policy of the US could directly affect them. Trump's threat to annex Greenland, controlled by NATO member Denmark, which he repeated after the attack on Venezuela, is being taken very seriously in Copenhagen and Brussels.

An editorial in the *Financial Times* on "Trump's reckless intervention in Venezuela" concludes:

At the start of the second year of Trump's second term, his message is clear: his US does not just feel unbound by the niceties of the post-1945 ideas of international rules and law, it will intervene all but at will in its own hemisphere — and possibly elsewhere too. The blatant violation of sovereignty of a major South American state sends a bleak signal to the rest of the world. ... Trump is willing to lead by example in presiding over a world where might is right.

The German weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* published an article on what would happen if Trump were to take Greenland. It may sound absurd, but it is "very likely that this will occur." Trump is not only disregarding international law, but he will also dismantle NATO if it suits his purposes.

Die Zeit raised the question of whether the article in the EU treaties that obliges all EU members to support a member state whose territory is attacked with all means at their disposal would then be activated. It thus discusses the possibility of an armed conflict between Europe and the US. What sounds like wild fantasy, according to *Die Zeit*, is "a reasonable response to a reality that has gone wild."

Other commentaries, particularly in the *F.A.Z.*, admire Trump's "remarkable achievement" in capturing Maduro and recommend that others follow suit. One *F.A.Z.* commentary notes appreciatively: "What Trump's military accomplishes in the blink of an eye, Putin has not come close to achieving in four years with his war of annihilation in Ukraine."

The conclusion is always the same: Europe, and Germany in particular, must rearm in order to assert itself

in a world where "might makes right" prevails. Pacifism means "better to be a slave than to risk your life," explains the *F.A.Z.* In his New Year's address, Chancellor Merz called for "defending and asserting our interests even more strongly on our own."

The European powers do not yet dare to openly oppose Trump. They are dependent on US support to continue the war against Russia in Ukraine. On Tuesday, a summit meeting of the "coalition of the willing" is taking place in Paris, at which decisions will be made on the continuation of negotiations with Russia and further support for Ukraine. The Europeans want to win Trump, who has been zigzagging for months, over to their side and not anger him.

"We must not forget that we are still involved in Ukraine," said Christian Democratic Union foreign policy expert Armin Laschet, explaining the European stance on Venezuela. "The question is: Would it be wise for the Europeans to decide now to make a one-sided accusation against US President Donald Trump?" Doing so could lead to a loss of support for further steps in Ukraine.

The Greens, who are no longer part of the federal government, are less diplomatic. The party, which is one of the most aggressive agitators in the war against Russia in Ukraine, denounced Trump's attack on Venezuela as a clear violation of international law, accused the US president of wanting to destroy the European Union—and attacked Merz for lacking the will to confront Trump and be aggressive!

The past few months have shown that "those who make themselves small in front of Trump will be steamrolled. Those who appear strong will be respected," said Green Party leader Franziska Brantner. She accused Merz of fleeing from reality and trying to avoid confrontation. Trump only responds to determination, and Germany and Europe must now demonstrate this determination. This is one of Merz's "most urgent duties."

The working class on both sides of the Atlantic must oppose this war hysteria. The answer to Trump's "might makes right" policy is not the rearmament of Europe, but the disarming of the warmongers in the US and Europe, the overthrow of capitalism, which breeds war, and the building of an international socialist society.



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