

# UK Labour government supports US abduction of Maduro, while pledging to defend Greenland

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Britain's Labour government has continued its tacit support for the US invasion of Venezuela and abduction of its President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, even as it comes into conflict with the White House over Greenland.

On January 3—after confirming to the media that the UK had not been involved—Prime Minister Keir Starmer refused to condemn the military action carried out hours earlier against the leader of a sovereign state.

Starmer was interviewed by the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg who said of the US operation: “that surely flies in the face of international law?” The Labour leader dodged the question, insisting he was not sufficiently versed in the facts while squirming, “I've been a lifelong advocate of international law”. Starmer was a human rights barrister and authored legal opinions arguing that the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the US and Britain was “not lawful” as it lacked a clear UN Security Council resolution.

Later Saturday evening, in words that could have been drafted by the White House, Starmer declared, “The UK has long supported a transition of power in Venezuela. We regarded Maduro as an illegitimate President and we shed no tears about the end of his regime.” The only actual mention of Washington was to state that the UK would “discuss the evolving situation with US counterparts in the days ahead as we seek a safe and peaceful transition to a legitimate government”.

In the next 24 hours, Treasury Secretary Darren Jones was asked by Sky News if the government was “in favour of colonialism”, in reference to Trump's pledge to “run” Venezuela. He responded, “We're not exactly clear yet what President Trump meant by those

comments.” Jones refused to give a direct answer even to LBC's question of whether the government would “urge the United States not to abduct any other foreign leaders?”

In a statement to MPs in Parliament on Monday evening, Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said the UK supported the removal of Maduro and made a pitch for British imperialism getting involved in the regime change operation. It could offer “the work that we have done over many years to build up relationships and dialogue with Venezuelan opposition parties and with the current authorities and regime”. To that end she had spoken with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and “with Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado.”

Nigel Farage, leader of the poll-leading far-right Reform UK, said the quiet part out loud: “The American actions in Venezuela overnight are unorthodox and contrary to international law—but if they make China and Russia think twice, it may be a good thing.” For him this was an opportunity to earn some more respectability in Britain's rabidly anti-Russia ruling class, having previously been denounced for being soft on Putin.

Labour's response to such flagrantly illegal imperialist aggression was perhaps the most unabashed of any of the European powers, whose governments overwhelmingly welcomed Maduro's abduction, while hypocritically prattling about the sanctity of international law.

Starmer's subservience continues his efforts since coming to office 18 months ago—following Britain's economically and geostrategically disastrous withdrawal from the European Union—to cement Britain's

relationship with the US as its main junior partner and secure favourable trading relations. He has repeatedly fawned over Trump, including by hosting him for a historic second state visit, and has marched side by side with the President in supporting the Israeli genocide in Gaza.

During his visit to the White House last February, the Labour leader announced that “No two militaries are more intertwined than ours”. His one truthful comment in the interview with Kuenssberg following the Venezuela events was that “I constantly remind myself that 24-7, our defence, our security, and our intelligence relationship with the US matters probably more than any other relationship that we have in the world, and it would not be in our national interest to weaken that in any way.”

Trump’s actions in Venezuela and comments since have emphasised the fragility of British imperialism’s strategy, however. As supportive as Starmer has been of Trump’s crimes, the UK has been excluded from the spoils and is increasingly in the firing line of a White House which views Europe as an enemy and only draws a distinction with Britain as far as it can be wielded like a club against the continent.

These concerns were voiced by MPs across the political spectrum, worried that Trump’s actions provide no benefit to the UK and jeopardise efforts by Britain and Europe to further the war against Russia in Ukraine—shredding the propaganda about “sovereignty” used to justify their involvement. Of course, this is framed as providing an excuse to Russia and China to carry out their own aggression.

Liberal Democrats leader Ed Davey posted on X, “Keir Starmer should condemn Trump’s illegal action in Venezuela,” while denouncing Maduro as “a brutal and illegitimate dictator.” The problem was that “Trump is giving a green light to the likes of Putin and Xi to attack other countries with impunity.”

The pro-war *Guardian* lauded Davey’s comment as well as those of Labour MP Emily Thornberry, who chairs the House of Commons foreign affairs committee. A shadow foreign secretary under previous Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, and Starmer’s former shadow attorney general from 2020-24, Thornberry told Times Radio: “[I]t sets a really bad precedent for countries such as China and Russia, who may also think: ‘Well, we’ve got spheres of influence, why

can’t we do things like that within our sphere of influence, like Ukraine or Taiwan?’”

Zack Polanski’s Greens and Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana’s Your Party provide a more radical sounding version of the same politics—a new course for British imperialism—advocating for pressure to be placed on Starmer to denounce Trump’s actions, call for Maduro’s release and take his distance from the US President in future.

By Monday, Trump’s predatory statements were such that Starmer himself was forced to issue a rare, if indirect, rebuke. After repeated intimations from the White House about seizing Greenland, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said she would “strongly urge the US to stop the threats against a historically close ally. Starmer commented, “I stand with her. She’s right about the future of Greenland.”

On Tuesday, both joined the leaders of France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain in signing a statement which reaffirms Greenland’s membership of NATO via Denmark, and therefore protection by its collective defence (Article 5). “Greenland belongs to its people. It is for Denmark and Greenland, and them only, to decide on matters concerning Denmark and Greenland,” they wrote, adding, “These are universal principles, and we will not stop defending them.”

Within a few hours, the UK’s premier foreign policy think tank Chatham House published the article, “US intentions towards Greenland threaten NATO’s future,” which argued, “European countries need to think seriously about what NATO without the US would look like, and accelerate investments in those capabilities where the US remains strongest...”

“They will now also need to seriously consider what kind of an adversary the US might be, especially in the event that it attacks Greenland. Much of this should and will be done quietly or privately. But states can no longer afford to ignore this possibility.”



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