

US imperialist bandits parade kidnapped Maduro in show trial

Andre Damon
5 January 2026

In a degrading pseudo-legal farce, the Trump administration dragged kidnapped Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores before a federal court in Manhattan on Monday.

When Maduro was asked to confirm his identity, he declared: “My name is President Nicolás Maduro Moros. I am president of the Republic of Venezuela. I am here kidnapped since January 3rd—”

He was allowed to get only a few words out before 92-year-old Judge Alvin K. Hellerstein cut him off. “There will be a time and a place to go into all of this,” he snapped.

As deputy US marshals led him from the courtroom, Maduro declared in Spanish: “I am a kidnapped president. I am a prisoner of war.”

The hearing lasted just over 35 minutes. Both pleaded not guilty. Defense attorney Barry Pollack, who previously represented WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, announced he would challenge the legality of his client’s “military abduction.” Maduro, he said, “is head of a sovereign state and entitled to the privileges that go with that.”

Flores bore the marks of the violence inflicted upon her during the abduction. The *Telegraph* reported that Flores “had visible bruises to her face—one the size of a golf ball on her forehead—red cheeks and what appeared to be a welt over her right eye.” Her attorney, Mark Donnelly, told the court she had sustained “significant injuries during her abduction” and asked the judge to authorize an X-ray to determine whether her ribs were fractured.

Images of Maduro in chains and disheveled are aimed at humiliating him. This is itself a war crime under international law, as it falls under the prohibition of “outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment.”

The Manhattan federal courthouse where Maduro appeared is the same courthouse where Jeffrey Epstein, a

close associate of Trump, stood for his arraignment in 2019. Epstein was murdered in prison on August 10, 2019, in what the Trump regime calls a suicide.

Maduro and his wife are being held at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn—the same facility that once held former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández, whom Trump pardoned just weeks ago despite his conviction for trafficking 400 tons of cocaine into the United States.

The accusations against Maduro are not meant to be believed by anyone. Maduro was not kidnapped because he trafficked drugs. He was kidnapped because his country sits atop the largest proven oil reserves in the world—303 billion barrels—and the gangster Trump wants them. Trump said so himself at Saturday’s press conference: “We’re going to have our very large United States oil companies, the biggest anywhere in the world, go in, spend billions of dollars ... and start making money for the country.”

The Hill reported on Monday that Trump told oil companies about the assault on Venezuela before it happened, while not notifying Congress, let alone the American people. “Reporters on Air Force One asked the president if he spoke to American oil companies to tip them off before” the attack, *The Hill* wrote.

“Trump nodded and said he spoke to the companies ‘before and after’ the operation. ‘And they want to go in, and they’re going to do a great job for the people of Venezuela, and they’re going to represent us well,’ Trump continued.”

The Trump administration has issued a list of demands to Venezuela’s interim President Delcy Rodríguez, who was sworn in Monday after Maduro’s abduction. According to *Politico*, US officials demanded that Rodríguez stop “the sale of oil to U.S. adversaries, according to a U.S. official familiar with the situation and a person familiar with the administration’s internal

discussions.” Trump threatened Rodríguez in an interview with *The Atlantic*: “If she doesn’t do what’s right, she is going to pay a very big price, probably bigger than Maduro.”

Rodríguez initially responded to the seizure of Maduro defiantly, declaring on Saturday that “there is only one president in this country, and his name is Nicolás Maduro” and denouncing the US operation as “barbaric.” But by Sunday she had struck a more conciliatory tone, posting on Instagram that Venezuela sought “peaceful coexistence” and inviting the US government “to collaborate with us on an agenda of cooperation.”

The State Department posted an image of Trump declaring: “This is OUR hemisphere.” US imperialism is claiming the whole of Latin America (along with Canada) as its property, making clear that it will kidnap or murder anyone who resists, in a return to naked colonialism.

While Maduro declared his innocence in a Manhattan courtroom, the United Nations Security Council convened an emergency session a few miles to the north, where the magnitude of what the Trump administration had unleashed became clear. This was not simply a travesty of US criminal law and international law. This was an act of war targeting the entire world.

The atmosphere at the UN was one of crisis. Which country would be next? The European Union? Russia? Canada? Colombia? Cuba? China? In the past month alone, Trump has issued direct threats against at least six UN member states.

Venezuela’s UN Ambassador Samuel Moncada accused the United States of attacking Venezuela in a bid to seize control of its oil resources—“a move that harks back to the worst practices of colonialism and neocolonialism.”

Colombia’s representative stated, “There is no justification whatsoever, under any circumstances, for the unilateral use of force to commit an act of aggression. Such actions constitute a serious violation of international law and the United Nations Charter...”

China’s representative added: “China is deeply shocked by and strongly condemns the unilateral, illegal and bullying acts of the US.”

Economist Jeffrey Sachs, invited to brief the Security Council, placed the assault in context. “In the past year, the United States has carried out bombing operations in seven countries, none of which were authorized by the Security Council and none of which were undertaken in lawful self-defense under the Charter,” he said. “The targeted countries include Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia,

Syria, Yemen, and now Venezuela.”

Sachs traced the history of US regime-change operations against Venezuela: the US-backed coup attempt in 2002, the funding of anti-government protests in 2014, the crippling sanctions that collapsed oil production by 75 percent and real GDP per capita by 62 percent, the unilateral recognition of Juan Guaidó as “interim president” in 2019 and the seizure of \$7 billion in Venezuelan sovereign assets.

“Members of the Council are called upon to defend international law, and specifically the United Nations Charter,” Sachs declared. “Members of the Council are not called upon to judge Nicolás Maduro.”

Yet even as condemnation poured in from around the world, the American press celebrated the act of imperialist banditry. The *Wall Street Journal*’s editorial board railed against “The ‘International Law’ Illusion in Venezuela,” declaring that “Rogue regimes now use it [international law] as a shield to protect their own lawbreaking.” The *Journal* concluded: “The demonstration of U.S. nerve and military prowess will do more than a thousand U.N. resolutions to protect the free world.”

The *Washington Post* editorial board was equally brazen. Its headline declared: “Maduro’s arrest exposes legal fictions,” with a subtitle adding, “The administration concocts a legal rationale for a foreign policy objective. That’s OK.” The *Post* openly declared that international law is a “legal fiction.”

These editorials constitute open admissions that what the United States carried out was a crime, coupled with the declaration that American military power places it above the law.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated he was “deeply concerned that the rules of international law have not been respected.” But such statements will not stop Trump’s global military rampage.

The capitalist powers that built the post-World War II legal order are now tearing it apart in their drive toward a new colonial carve-up of the world. Opposition must come from below—from the independent mobilization of workers in the United States, Venezuela and internationally against imperialist war and the capitalist system that produces it.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact