

# New Zealand government refuses to condemn Trump's Venezuela intervention

John Braddock  
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The day after the US Trump administration's military invasion of Venezuela and abduction of its President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters issued an evasive statement that tacitly supported the illegal takeover.

Peters briefly posted on X on January 4 that New Zealand was “concerned by and actively monitoring developments in Venezuela and expects all parties to act in accordance with international law.” In a thinly veiled endorsement of right-wing opponents of Maduro, Peters added that New Zealand “stands with the Venezuelan people in their pursuit of a fair, democratic and prosperous future.”

This was said after the US military had bombed Venezuela, killing about 100 people as part of its kidnapping operation. Peters did not explain how such actions are consistent with “international law” and “democracy.”

Approached by NZ media for a “higher level” comment, Prime Minister Christopher Luxon's office simply referred journalists back to Peters' tweet. Amid the blanket silence in Wellington, the international situation rapidly escalated with Trump declaring the US would “run” Venezuela and seize its oil.

Peters' statement echoed that of Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who similarly refused to condemn Washington. Albanese said his government was “monitoring developments.” He called on “all relevant parties” to support “dialogue and diplomacy,” and backed “international law and a peaceful, democratic transition” in Venezuela that reflected the “will of the people.”

This is said even as the fascists in Washington are abandoning any pretence of adhering to “international law,” dialogue and diplomacy. Trump's Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller dismissed “international niceties” and declared the Hitlerian “iron law”—that might makes right—now applied not just to former colonies but even the

territories of European powers.

As Trump renewed his threats to annex Greenland, a territory of Denmark and a NATO ally of the US, throwing the European Union into crisis, the NZ government remained silent—despite New Zealand having close military-strategic ties with NATO.

The Venezuela invasion was a decisive act of US imperialism—part of a broader strategy to reassert dominance in the Western Hemisphere, seize resources and isolate geopolitical rivals, above all China. New Zealand's silence is firmly embedded in this global context: it aligns Wellington with Washington's war preparations against China.

Trump's actions have created a crisis for governments internationally: they cannot pretend to be supporting “democracy” in Taiwan or Ukraine if they openly endorse the blatant criminality of US imperialism in Venezuela. Meanwhile US allies refuse to denounce Washington for fear of the negative ramifications for their long-standing strategic and commercial partnerships, particularly following Trump's use of retaliatory tariffs.

At the same time, there is palpable nervousness among the ruling elites in New Zealand about widespread anti-war sentiments in the population, as seen in ongoing protests against the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Sections of big business are also concerned about repercussions for New Zealand's relationship with China, NZ's biggest trading partner. China's ambassador to New Zealand, Wang Xiaolong, expressed “grave concern” over the forcible seizure of Maduro and his wife. “The U.S.'s move is in clear violation of international law, basic norms in international relations, and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter,” he said, later adding in response to Miller's declaration that the world is now governed by strength, force and power: “All masks now off!”

The New Zealand opposition Labour Party's associate

foreign affairs spokesperson, Phil Twyford, released a statement condemning the Venezuela attack and Maduro's kidnapping. He described the Trump administration's threats against Greenland as "a fundamental threat to New Zealand values and our place in the world," and where "might takes precedence over international law."

This is not a statement Labour would have issued if it was in government; in fact it is an utter fraud. Labour fully supports the alliance with US imperialism and preparations for war against China. While Labour was still in the government it supported the genocide by Israel as an act of "self-defence."

Green Party leader Marama Davidson called on Luxon to "show leadership and moral courage and condemn the US attacking Venezuela." Davidson described the attack as "pure American imperialism over a region that has some of the world's largest oil reserves. This is a display of illegal might that has never had the interests of the Venezuelan people at its core."

The Greens' position, no less than Labour's, is completely fraudulent. Davidson falsely boasted that New Zealand has a "strong and proud tradition of standing up for the rule of law on the international stage" and "resolving conflict through peaceful means."

In fact, NZ is a minor imperialist power which has always sided with the major powers—first Britain, now the US—to pursue its own predatory neo-colonial interests, particularly in the Pacific.

Former Labour Prime Minister and ex-UN official Helen Clark told Radio NZ there was "no doubt" the attack on Venezuela was illegal under the UN charter, as the US was not acting in self-defence. But like Twyford, Clark was at pains to refuse any defence of Maduro, saying there was "a case" for him to appear before the International Criminal Court "on charges for crimes against humanity," of which she declared there was "quite a long list." Clark's own history involved sending NZ military forces to join the criminal US-led occupation of Afghanistan.

The Green Party has never challenged this. While posturing as opponents of the Gaza genocide, the party was in the 2017-2023 Labour Party-led government which took no action against Israel. Labour's then Prime Minister Chris Hipkins denounced pro-Palestine protests while endorsing Israel's right to "self-defence." The Greens and Labour both fully support New Zealand's alliance with US imperialism, including the war against Russia over Ukraine and militarisation of the Indo-Pacific

against China.

Labour and the Greens are positioning themselves to head off and derail emerging popular opposition. Moralising about Maduro's legitimacy and so-called "crimes" is already repeated by pseudo-left groups. At a rally in Wellington on Friday, Valerie Morse from Peace Action Wellington told Radio NZ the government's response had been "pathetic," but emphasised: "We are not in favour of a violent dictatorship, and that's what Maduro's regime was. There's nobody here supporting Maduro."

Some corporate media commentators, while nominally opposing the actions of the Trump administration, continue to denounce China, the main target of the relentless US-led warmongering.

Robert Patman from Otago University told *Stuff* that the New Zealand government had run a "softly softly" approach with the Trump administration, which had proven to be unsuccessful. The problem, he declared, "is that it could embolden China to step up its efforts to forcibly reunify, or unify, Taiwan with China." This turns reality on its head. Trump's Western Hemisphere takeover strategy is to further advance US preparations for war against China over Taiwan—an agenda that the likes of Patman do not oppose.

The positioning of all factions of the ruling establishment highlights their complicity with imperialist aggression. The plunge into world war and fascist barbarism cannot be countered by making moral appeals to the imperialist governments or parties, or to the UN. Such appeals—put forward repeatedly by the middle class organisations that have led the Gaza protests—have proven to be completely futile.

The only way forward is the mobilisation of the international working class, in opposition to all the capitalist parties and their pseudo-left backers, based on a socialist program to put an end to imperialist war by abolishing the capitalist system which is the source of war.



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