



## U.S. Condemns Venezuela's Election

On Monday, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert stated the U.S. government's official position on Venezuela's Sunday elections: "We condemn the lack of free and fair elections yesterday in Venezuela. The voice of the Venezuelan people was not heard." She added that there had been "last minute changes to polling station locations without public notice, manipulation of ballot layouts, and limited availability of voting machines in opposition neighborhoods." In addition, independent credible outside monitors of the elections were prohibited from overseeing the election process by Marxist dictator Nicolás Maduro's (shown) regime.



Independent polls showed that opposition candidates in the 23 state mayoral elections should have crushed the regime's candidates, but instead 17 of those elections went overwhelmingly — sometimes by 2:1 margins — for Maduro's selected people. Some suggested that Maduro allowed four opposition candidates to win in order to make it appear that the election was legitimate.

As those mayors are sworn in, they will be required to pledge allegiance to the Marxist regime or they will be arrested. If they are arrested, they will join some 400 other political prisoners, some of them mayors who had been duly and properly elected to their posts.

Nauert's words are likely to be of little comfort to those opposed to Maduro. She pledged "the full weight of American economic and diplomatic power" to "the Venezuelan people as they seek to restore their democracy." So far, such opposition has done nothing but drive Maduro to his enablers — Russia, Cuba, and China — for support.

The citizenry has expressed its dissatisfaction and unhappiness with the Maduro regime repeatedly through public gatherings and protests, during which at least 120 people lost their lives. Potential protesters are now much more likely to be focused on finding their next meal as wives comb through public garbage dumps to find something with which to feed their families, many of which are down to just two small meals a day.

Jobs are scarce, inflation is soaring, the economy has shrunk by a third in the last two years, and, to top it off, the previous election in July was manipulated as well. What options are left?

There are outside sanctions. At present Argentina, Colombia, and Spain have applied economic sanctions on the Maduro regime, while the United States has halted all trading in Venezuelan bonds. Trump has applied sanctions on Maduro and many of his top officials. Maduro has responded by awarding them medals of honor and higher pay.

The European Union is threatening sanctions, while others more sympathetic to Maduro are taking a wait-and-see attitude before joining in.



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on October 17, 2017

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At present, Maduro is being supported by oil purchase agreements from Russia and China and receiving military support from Cuba. Some observers on the scene claim that there are so many Cuban military personnel inside Maduro's war department as to make Venezuela essentially a Cuban surrogate.

There are two factors that could weigh against Maduro, one of which is under President Trump's control. At present, Gulf Coast refineries are continuing to purchase Venezuelan crude to the tune of \$1 billion a month. So far the president has kept those agreements in place, having been persuaded that without those imports, many American jobs will be lost and oil prices could move higher.

The other is time. Maduro is scrambling to make interest payments on the country's enormous external debt, estimated to be \$589 billion. In the next two months, Maduro is scheduled to make \$3.5 billion in payments. If he defaults — and Cuba, China, and Russia fail to rush in with financial assistance or forgiveness — then seizure of vital assets would essentially end the tyrant's regime.

One of Maduro's staunchest opponents, Angel Oropeza, said on Monday, "Yesterday, fraudulent elections, without precedent in our history, took place. We take the responsibility of not recognizing the results and will fight so the will of the people is respected, and to change this corrupt ... system."

*Photo: AP Images*

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