



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 24, 2018

## Venezuela Pushes Presidential Election Forward With Maduro the Only Candidate

Venezuela's Marxist dictator Nicolas Maduro turned Tuesday's ironic celebration of the end of Venezuela's dictatorship of Marcos Perez Jimenez 60 years ago [into securing the continuation of his own](#). He told his supporters that if the United Socialist Party, which he controls, wants him to run for reelection, "I'm ready to be a candidate."

He then turned the celebration into a political rally, declaring once again that the real enemy causing the country's economic decline into barter and chaos is the president of the United States: "Donald Trump is not the boss of Venezuela!" said Maduro, adding that since they still hold elections in Venezuela (even if they are phony), "The people rule in Venezuela, not empires." Then, adding irony on top of audacity, Maduro asserted: "I'm ready.... We're going to win big."

The only way he'll "win big" in the elections to be held before the end of April is because he has either exiled or jailed nearly all his potential opposition. Henrique Capriles, a two-time presidential candidate, is prohibited from running again, while former mayor Leopoldo Lopez is under house arrest for leading protests against Maduro. Freddy Guevara, one of Lopez' young protégés, has been forced to take refuge in the Chilean embassy in Caracas for fear of being arrested by Maduro over similar charges. Antonio Ledezma, another hardline opposition leader, escaped house arrest and fled to Spain.

It's easy for Maduro to win reelection (even if polls show the voters loathe and despise him by three-to-one) when all the opposition has been either jailed or rendered impotent.

The façade of real elections was continued with exclamations by Maduro's number two man in his United Socialist Party, Diosdado Cabello. In defiance Cabello shouted, "If the world applies sanctions, we'll apply elections. Nobody is going to come and give us lessons or tell us what to do.... The Venezuelan people have the right to choose their own destiny!" His utterances followed on the heels of additional sanctions levied by the European Union against seven of Maduro's top people just a day earlier.

With Maduro's full control of every major political lever, the "people" may have the "right" but they won't have the power. That power rests in the hands of the country's dictator. Maduro's control of the Supreme Court, the National Election Commission, the fraudulent "constitutional" Assembly that replaced the legitimate National Assembly last spring, and the military, which controls the distribution of food, have relieved him of any possible threat to his regime.





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Maduro's decision to push the presidential "election" forward (it used to be held during the last three months of the election year, but that was when the country's constitution still meant something) was likely a pragmatic one as well. If he waits, things will only continue to worsen. A student of Venezuela's implosion, Geoff Ramsey at the Washington Office on Latin America, said: "Despite the obstacles to the [non-existent] opposition right now, it's to [Maduro's] advantage ... to encourage people to vote." It will take their minds off other things, such as surviving in what was the world's richest economy that Maduro and his Chavismo policies have all but destroyed.

Under socialism, called "Chavismo" in remembrance of its initial instigator, Hugo Chavez (who died in 2013, leaving Maduro as the new dictator), the result has been both predictable and catastrophic: The country is now suffering from horrific crime, poverty, and disease, plus exponential increases in child mortality, drastic declines in medical care and supplies, malnutrition, hunger, shortages of essentials, runaway inflation, a shrinking economy, and a populace reverting back to barter just to stay alive.

Tuesday's announcement that Maduro would "be ready" if his party called him to stand for reelection in April was a brazen fraud, according to his hardline opponent Maria Corina Machado, who declared, "These are not elections; it's a military occupation with a fraudulent election board."

Image of Nicolas Maduro: [Screenshot from a report by Telesur](#)

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