



**National Lawyers Guild Report
Election Monitoring Delegation
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**

July 28, 2024

The National Lawyers Guild (NLG) sent five election observers to monitor the presidential elections in Venezuela that took place on July 28, 2024. Guild members collectively visited a number of polling centers on the day of the election, where they observed thousands of voters participate. The delegation witnessed no instances of fraud or serious irregularities, and found overall voter satisfaction with the electoral process. We observed a deeply participatory and pluralistic process where the Venezuelan people are directly engaged in the social and political life of their nation.

The official election results were announced shortly after 12 am on July 29. President Nicolas Maduro has been re-elected with a 51.2 percent share of the vote. His leading challenger, Edmundo González, took 44.2 percent of the vote. Voter turnout was approximately 59 percent of a voting electorate of over 21.3 million people. Opposition violence ensued at multiple polling stations across the country before the closure of the polls, functioning to effectively block the final count. Following his announcement of the election results, Elvis Amoroso, president of the electoral commission, called upon the attorney general to investigate the attacks on the electoral transmission system and the polls. Despite the soundness of the electoral process, the US-backed opposition and US mainstream media refuse to accept the results, aiming once again to threaten Venezuela's democracy and sovereignty.

The Guild's delegates were among a total of 910 electoral monitors from 95 countries around the world. Member organizations included the Carter Center, the United Nations, the African Union and the Latin American Council of Electoral Experts (CEELA). Notably, Venezuela's electoral commission withdrew its invitation to the European Union team, citing the body's continued sanctions policy against the Caribbean nation.



Delegates await results from the Consejo Nacional Electoral, July 28, 2024

Electoral Democracy in Venezuela

Historically, Venezuela has had a strong commitment to democracy, identifying the election process as one of the pillars of its political system. The Venezuelan government is composed of five branches of government and includes a whole branch committed to elections, the Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE). CNE is an independent branch that oversees all elections and guarantees their transparency. Articles 5 through 8 of the Bolivarian Constitution of 1999 identify the untransferable sovereignty of the Venezuelan people, who exercise their power through a variety of means, one of which is suffrage.



Venezuelan mother and baby await their turn at the polls, July 28, 2024

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter of the Carter Center, which routinely conducts election monitoring in Venezuela, has called the electoral system “the best in the world.” [Venezuelans go through the so-called “electoral horseshoe”](#) to cast their votes. The first station sees voters run their fingerprints through a biometric ID machine. Once cleared, they move to the second step, where a touchscreen machine is unlocked. After picking their preferred candidate, the machine prints a paper backup confirming the choice that is to be deposited in a ballot box. The fourth and final station has voters sign and stamp their fingerprints on the electoral record. The voting process includes many safeguards. This includes the biometric ID, which stops people from voting more than once or at the wrong electoral center. The total number of votes has to match the electronic tally and the electoral record; this process is witnessed by members of any political parties who choose to have witnesses. After polls close, 54 percent of voting machines are randomly chosen for an audit to compare the electronic totals with the paper tallies.

Fast track lines expedite the voting process for those with disabilities, small children and the elderly. There is also a system called “assisted voting” that allows voters with disabilities to either bring a family member or the president of the voting station into the voting booth to assist with the process. We saw multiple examples of assisted voting throughout the day.

Overall, we witnessed an efficient and voter-friendly process. At the Simon Rodriguez National Library Cathedral Parish polling station in Caracas, which accommodates 2100 voters, over 800 individuals had already voted by 10:52 am. At Zoe Xiques Silva School in Caracas, which accommodates 3940 voters, 1049 had voted by 11:17am.

Each polling station hosted election observers from a variety of political parties, including the opposition parties. Notably, at one



Elderly voter escorted at the polls, July 28, 2024.

polling station we visited in Caracas, the incumbent party of President Maduro, Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela, did not have any observers present. At every station we visited, both voters and party observers expressed unanimous confidence in the electoral process and its efficiency. Cesar Gladé of the Mesa de la Unidad Democrática, the opposition party supporting Edmundo González, stated that “the polls opened at 6 am, exactly as the law states. The process has been smooth and peaceful.” Ysibel Castellanos, in the photo below, was moved into the fast-track lane because she had her infant with her. She reported “no problems voting.”



Election observers from various Venezuelan political parties at the polling station, July 28, 2024

At another polling station, Yaljira Narval of opposition party Vente Venezuela, the party of opposition stalwart María Corina Machado, stated that “everything has gone smoothly until now and we will wait to see in the end to be satisfied.” First time voter Jesus Saber reported that “the process was quick and there were many people. I waited like 20 minutes. This was my first time voting. Everyone has their political opinion but it is the first time I voted and everything turned out well.”

Only one voter of the many we spoke with expressed his concerns regarding the soundness of the electoral system. Héctor Diaz, a member of an opposition party, stated that “I hope everything will be fine. I am waiting to see since there have been some irregularities [with the voting system] over the last 25 years. I’m waiting to see; I’m waiting for a real change.”

We did witness some voter frustrations with the heat and wait times, but this was not the norm. At each station, there is one touchscreen voting machine for approximately 800 voters. This could be the cause of delays. We recommend purchasing more machines, but understand that they may be expensive and sanctions may contribute to shortages.

Overall we observed a climate of political energy grounded in an understanding that the voting day process, regardless of one's individual political ideology, functions fairly and is legitimate. The level of voter participation – approximately 59 percent – was especially remarkable in the context of severe US sanctions. NLG observers were most struck by the diversity of the voters. We saw young and old, parents with children, and people of different races and ideologies come together to practice democratic values in a nation that has suffered from Spanish colonialism and US imperialism for generations. We learned that voting, to Venezuelans, is a pillar of liberation.



Hector Diaz, opposition voter, speaks with international election observers, July 28, 2024.

A Brief History of Venezuelan Opposition Movements

Venezuela maintains a clear and robust commitment to electoral democracy. Because there is broad faith in election procedures and the overall electoral system, as our interviews suggest, mainstream media within the US has ramped up negative media representations of the Maduro government in the weeks leading up to the elections. This is a flagrant attempt to delegitimize the Bolivarian Republic, downplay widespread popular support for the Maduro government, and present the divided opposition as more unified and influential than it actually is. Emblematic of US mainstream media representations, [one Washington Post journalist wrote](#), “Venezuela is a political-military dictatorship....” Adjectives like “dictator,” “autocrat” and “repressive” are used repeatedly throughout US mainstream media coverage of President Maduro, but the leading opposition candidate, Edmundo González is described as a popular, soft-spoken former diplomat, even though he has “[rarely ventur\[ed\] out to the campaign trail](#)” and has allowed US-backed opposition figure and far-right politician María Corina Machado be the face of his campaign.

Contrary to depictions of Edmundo González in US media, the truth is more sinister: González is alleged to have directed death squads in El Salvador while he was stationed there in the Venezuelan embassy from 1981 to 1983. At the time, he reported directly to Ambassador Leopoldo Castillo, who received his training at the infamous School of the Americas. Castillo is now an opposition journalist. Recent reports indicate that González was involved in Operation Condor, a CIA operation linked to the assassination of religious leaders and other civilians in El Salvador. Documents [declassified in 2009](#) state that [he was an advisor](#) to the intelligence apparatus when six Jesuit priests and two university workers were murdered by death squads on November 16, 1989,

a matter that is still under investigation. In the years that Castillo and González ran the embassy in El Salvador, [13,194 civilians were](#) reportedly murdered by US-backed death squads.

González is aligned with María Corina Machado, who is not on the ballot after her political disqualification was upheld by the Venezuelan Supreme Court in January due to her central role in [numerous attempts](#) to overthrow the democratically elected government of Venezuela. These efforts include the six-month waves of violence in 2014 and 2017, support for Juan Guaidó's so-called interim presidency, the illegal seizing of Venezuelan assets abroad including 31 [tons of gold](#) in the Bank of England, fervent calls and support for all 930 of the US brutal sanctions against Venezuela that led to the unnecessary death of tens of thousands and the misery of millions of innocent Venezuelans, as well as the short-lived coup d'état in 2002 against President Hugo Chávez and the failed coup d'état against President Maduro in 2019. It is also noteworthy that [Machado wrote a letter to Prime Minister of the Zionist entity](#), Benjamin Netanyahu, for a military intervention in Venezuela, through a document published on her social network X in 2018.

Notably, US mainstream media analysis never discusses the actual right-wing program of the opposition. Machado's [85-page](#) electoral program details plans to privatize Venezuelan national industries, cut social spending, abolish free health care, deregulate the labor market, reduce worker protections, and institute other reforms that dismantle and reverse the social and humanitarian gains made by the Bolivarian Revolution. This is the same violent austerity which Argentine President Javier Milei is carrying out in Argentina, coupled with brutal repression. Milei and Machado celebrate each other on X (Twitter). On the night of the election, just hours prior to the announcement of the results, [President Milei incited violence against the Venezuelan embassy](#) in Buenos Aires in violation of the Vienna Convention and called for a coup against President Maduro. This is part of a broader trend of right-wing interference in Venezuela's electoral process, including by members of the Lima group.

We condemn the resurrection of the School of the Americas legacy and demand that the US withdraw all support for any candidates that have participated in death squads, coup attempts, and other violations of sovereignty and human rights across Central and South America.

US Election Interference and Hybrid Wars Against Venezuela

The United States engages in electoral interference in Venezuela in a variety of ways, directly undermining the nation's democracy and sovereignty. First, the mainstream media publishes articles using distorted polling data that claims [strong opposition support](#). Some of these reports also quote exit polls, which are not legal in Venezuela, and purport to show results that are entirely non-credible. These articles have been routinely disproven, even by opposition pollsters. Ahead of this election, opinion pollsters without a track record in past contests placed Edmundo González with a sizable lead despite evidence from a leaked report by pro-opposition pollster [Datanálisis](#) predicting a narrow Maduro victory on July 28. Such efforts manufacture western consent for foreign intervention and can have the impact of shaping people's voting choices in Venezuela. As

[Venezuela Analysis has pointed out](#), “polling in Venezuela is considered unreliable, with pollsters historically showing a measurable pro-opposition bias.”

The U.S. also provides support to opposition candidates, as it did for now reviled “interim president” Juan Guaido. Reports indicate that the US gave [Guaido \\$3 billion](#) in Venezuelan state funds, which he effectively pocketed, leading to his marginalization not only by the Venezuelan people, but also by the [opposition itself](#).

In the past, Venezuela has suffered from street violence emblematic of specifically Caribbean nations targeted and destabilized by the United States, including El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Haiti. In 2007, the CIA conducted Operation Pincer in Venezuela. A memo drafted by US embassy official Michael Middleton Steere revealed CIA-backed support for opposition forces that attacked the Consejo Nacional Electoral, the Supreme Court and the presidential palace. One of the most violent attacks by the CIA-backed opposition was an arson attack on the School of Social Work at the Central University of Venezuela, where the opposition trapped several dozen student supporters of then-President Chavez in the building and set it on fire, burning the building down.

Just a few days before the election, on Friday, July 26, 2024, a who’s who of Latin American right-wing personalities sought to enter the country on a private jet. US mainstream media portrayed this as a benign action without recognition of their previous human rights violations and their efforts to undermine Venezuelan democracy. Former Colombian Vice President Marta Lucia Ramirez, who was on the plane, has a long history of supporting campaigns to destabilize the duly elected Venezuelan government. While these individuals claim they sought to observe the election, it is unclear what training, framework, reporting mechanism, or authority they have to do so.

In the state of Tachira on the evening prior to the election, media reports indicated that six individuals including two Colombian paramilitaries entered Venezuela through the Colombian border. Their objective was to attack the electrical grid of several areas of the country. Venezuelan authorities arrested them as they were entering an electrical substation in Urena with explosives. Each bomb carried the equivalent of 15 kilos of TNT. Authorities say that had this attack been successful, it could have left those regions without electricity for up to a week, disrupting their ability to participate in the elections.

Attacks on electoral grids and transmission systems, media disinformation campaigns, financial support for opposition candidates, street violence and sanctions are all key aspects of US imperialist hybrid warfare across Asia, Africa, and Central and South America. We condemn these wars and demand that the US halt any violations of Venezuelan national sovereignty.

How US Sanctions Undermine Venezuelan Democracy & Sovereignty

Sanctions are a pillar of U.S. foreign policy, and are deliberately designed to interfere with Venezuelan sovereignty and democracy. These sanctions result in economic hardship, with the aim of undermining popular support for Maduro and the Bolivarian project. Recently, a decision

following negotiations with the Biden administration to temporarily lift some sanctions was reversed and oil sanctions were reimposed in April. As the Center for Policy Research (CEPR) has said, “The sanctions are like a gun pointed at the head of the electorate.” The US has now decided to wait until the elections conclude to decide whether to lift the sanctions, seeking to foment political confusion amongst the electorate. But Venezuelan voters certainly understand the stakes.

Political confusion is neither accidental nor a secondary harm of the sanctions regime. It is designed to create the conditions for regime change and to provide narratives of broad discontent for opposition forces, particularly proxies of the United States working to extend and intensify the sanctions regime. US mainstream media systematically ignores the role that sanctions play in undermining democracy in Venezuela.

In 2023, the US took steps to further incite regime change with the announcement of a \$15 million reward for information leading to the arrest and/or conviction of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. This reward functions as a de facto bounty on Maduro’s head, recalling those issued for the heads of state of Iraq and Libya shortly before their assassinations and the destruction, destabilization and looting of these states by imperialist forces.

Additionally, three bills introduced last year in the US Congress seek through legislative means to achieve the same ends: the Prohibition of Transactions and Leases with Venezuela’s Illegitimate Authoritarian Regime Act, the Venezuelan Human Rights “AFFECT” Act and the Venezuelan Democracy Act. These were introduced in 2023 to further increase the pressure of the sanctions, representing an escalation of imperialist intervention in the lead up to the presidential elections.

In sum, US interference in Venezuela reflects a multi-pronged strategy to upend the Bolivarian Revolution, undo the democratic victories of the people and replace the people’s republic with yet another US vassal state that would permit US exploitation and subjugation of the resource-rich nation. We commend the Bolivarian Republic for its commitment to electoral democracy in the face of such brutal repression by its powerful neighbor to the north and stand with the voters who cast their ballots in support of democracy, justice and liberation.

The National Lawyers Guild, whose membership includes lawyers, legal workers, jailhouse lawyers, and law students, was formed in 1937 as the United States’ first racially-integrated bar association to advocate for the protection of constitutional, human and civil rights.

Members of the Delegation:

- Suzanne Adely
- Audrey Bomse
- Nina Farnia
- Ken Montenegro
- Corinna Mullin-Rouabah