



General Assembly

Topic:

Upholding democratic norms: Defining the international community's role in resolving the political crisis and restoring constitutional order in Venezuela

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Introduction:

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations, is the primary deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the Organization. It is the only UN body with universal membership, as all 193 Member States participate in equal footing, each holding one vote regardless of size, political system, or economic power. GA provides a unique forum for international discussion on the full perspectives of issues covered by the Charter, ranging from peace and security to human rights, development, and international law. Every September, world leaders gather in the General Assembly Hall in New York for the annual session and general debate, which has become one of the most significant platforms for global diplomacy.

GA's powers and responsibilities are defined by the UN Charter and its resolutions. As the Organization's main deliberative body, the GA holds extensive authority to discuss international matters and issue recommendations to Member States and to other UN organs. Although its resolutions are generally non-binding, they carry political and normative weight, often guiding the international community's collective response to emerging crises. The Assembly also exercises key institutional responsibilities, including approving the UN budget, determining Member States' financial contributions, and overseeing the allocation of funds for peacekeeping operations. According to Article 17 of the UN Charter, the GA maintains oversight over the Organization's administrative and financial structures. In addition, the General Assembly plays a critical role in shaping the composition of the UN system. It is responsible for appointing the Secretary-General upon the recommendation of the Council, admitting new Member States to the UN, and the development and codification of international law.

Background:

The political crisis in Venezuela has emerged as one of the most complex challenges to democratic governance and constitutional order in America. Since the mid-2010s, the country has faced a progressive deterioration of its democratic institutions, including contested elections, the elimination of judicial independence, restrictions on political participation, and documented human rights violations. Reports from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and independent fact-finding missions have constantly highlighted concerns about the rule of law, detentions, suppression of dissent, and the weakening of checks and balances. These developments have called for a debate within the international community regarding the nature of the crisis and the responsibilities and limitations of external actors under international law.



Throughout this period, Member States and regional organizations have adopted divergent positions on the legitimacy of Venezuela's institutions and governing authorities. Some governments have recognized opposition-led bodies such as the 2015 National Assembly, while others continue to recognize the executive authorities currently in power. This divergence has complicated efforts to establish a unified international response and has made Venezuela a focal point for discussions regarding democratic norms, sovereignty, and the Responsibility to Protect. While some argue that Venezuela's crisis strengthened diplomatic engagement, humanitarian assistance, and pressure to restore constitutional order, others emphasize the principle of non-interference, insisting that any political solution must respect national sovereignty.

The General Assembly serves as a crucial platform for debate, adopts resolutions that act against human rights violations, calling for dialogue or mediation, and recognizes democratic institutions, creating political and moral pressure on the parties involved. Its universal representation allows it to articulate the collective will of the international community and to highlight the importance of restoring democratic governance, protecting civil liberties, and ensuring transparent, credible electoral processes in Venezuela. The crisis in Venezuela raises fundamental questions about the extent to which the international community should act to defend democratic norms, protect populations from the consequences of institutional instability, and support efforts toward constitutional restoration.

Historical context:

Chávez had served time in prison for his participation in the two failed coup attempts, but as public dissatisfaction began to rise and as the rising discontent of the public began to grow toward the political system, Hugo Chávez became a "popular" candidate and was elected as president of Venezuela by the citizens through elections held on December 6, 1998. Following this election, Hugo organized a constituent assembly to create the constitution of 1999, allowing him a government structure to conduct business differently than would have been previously done. This new constitution gives more authority and power to the executive branch and gives it the opportunity to dissolve the National Assembly to form a single party.

Additionally, the events surrounding the coup of April 12, 2002, also demonstrate how social conflict (Chavismo Movement) both visually as well as in writing demonstrate an unrest in Venezuelan Society with such incidents of public riots, demonstrations for Chavez, and how the military placed Chavez back in power in the same way as Pedro Carmona, were allowed to change the constitution, dissolved the National Assembly, and then announced Pedro Carmona would be the interim president.



Chávez nationalized major industries in 2007 by using the power of a National Assembly filled with supporters to take control of telecommunications companies and to seize the electricity sector from private ownership. The government also took control over the Central Bank of Venezuela during this same time. Chávez then went on to revoke RCTV's broadcast license, which was Venezuela's main TV station that openly criticized the government. Moreover, in 2007, Chávez gave himself authority under the Enabling Law (which was supposed to expire after 18 months) that allowed him the ability to govern via decree. As a result, the amount of time that Congress was able to supervise Chávez was drastically reduced, and executive power became concentrated within Chávez and the executive branch.

In 2008, HRW released a report documenting numerous human rights violations by the Venezuelan government, including the government's interference in the judiciary, intimidation of independent media sources, and the breakdown of the separation of powers between the three branches of government. In retaliation, HRW officials were expelled from Venezuela by the Venezuelan government. By 2012, the political environment had become extremely divisive. Despite forming a viable alternative that revived many in the opposition, Capriles Radonski was unable to defeat Hugo Chávez in the presidential election. The opposition party, called the MUD, nominated Capriles Radonski as their candidate.

Political Transition in 2013 Following the death of Hugo Chávez, an intensely competitive run for president of the country ensued between interim President Nicolas Maduro (representing the ruling party) and Henrique Capriles (representing the opposition). An initial poll indicated that Maduro, who had been identified as Chávez's candidate, held a greater than ten-point lead over Capriles before the April 14, 2013, election, which resulted in a very narrow victory for Maduro (50.6% of the vote) over Capriles (49.1%).

Increase in Authoritarianism: Starting in 2014, developments in Venezuela have been seen as creating an environment in which the balance of power has been shifted away from the people (the electorate) towards the ruling party. Protests began almost immediately, leading to many arrests and government crackdowns against demonstrators and the opposition. Following the opposition's 2015 victory in parliamentary elections, the Supreme Court of Justice decided to limit the authority of the National Assembly, subjecting it to 'contempt'. Following this, the government called together a National Constituent Assembly (on July 30, 2017) to rewrite the country's Constitution, without first consulting the country through a referendum, and to suspend the legislative authority of the National Assembly, and thereby, create a dual governing body. This move has led to a significant amount of debate and



discussion amongst countries worldwide regarding the legitimacy of the National Constituent Assembly and the authority of the National Assembly.

Nicolás Maduro began a second term in January 2019, following elections that many, including the National Assembly and various foreign governments, labeled as not legitimate. The assembly used Article 233 of the Venezuelan Constitution to declare Maduro's presidency invalid and named its own leader, Juan Guaidó, to be the "provisional president." Thus, two competing governments emerged, one led by Maduro, and one led by Guaidó, which was supported by numerous countries throughout Central and South America as well as Western Europe. During this time, Guaidó's administration reported numerous arrests and legal actions aimed at preventing them from participating in politics. There were numerous occasions when some members of his administration or opposition leaders had been arrested, while others had been prevented from leaving their military homes. Even with the National Assembly approving the "Transitional Statute," the Maduro administration was able to maintain a firm grip over several institutions, such as the military, judiciary, and executive branches of government.

More recently, in the 2024 elections, Maduro won, and that also meant that Chavismo managed to govern in 23 of the 24 states of the country, and in the local elections, it was victorious in 285 of the 335 municipalities of the country (85%).

On January 3, 2026, the United States carried out a military operation in Caracas, culminating in the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. The operation, partially directed by David Fitzgerald, included bombings of strategic installations, the alleged use of jamming technology, and, above all, extensive infiltration and planning by the CIA.

Witnesses heard explosions at Fort Tiuna, a sprawling military base in downtown Caracas where high-ranking Venezuelan officials reside, including rumors of Maduro's presence. Videos and witness testimonies also confirmed that the explosions caused by the operation reached La Carlota Air Base in Caracas, the port of La Guaira, and Higuerote Airport. According to high-ranking Venezuelan officials, the operation resulted in 40 deaths among civilians and military personnel. President Donald Trump asserted that no American soldiers died during the operation and that there were no casualties whatsoever; however, military sources claim that soldiers were wounded.

Maduro and his wife were transferred to the USS Iwo Jima, one of the US warships that has been patrolling the Caribbean coast, accompanied by seven other naval vessels. Following this, Maduro was transferred to the headquarters of the U.S. Drug



Enforcement Administration in New York. He was later moved from Manhattan to the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, where he is expected to remain in custody.

The Cuban government reported that 32 of its citizens died at the hands of U.S. forces. These were bodyguards provided by Cuba to protect Maduro. These actions generated a political rupture with significant internal and regional impact, reopening the debate on state sovereignty, international law, and the limits of foreign intervention in Latin America. Nicolás Maduro is currently facing charges of being part of a conspiracy with three other people to smuggle tons of cocaine into the United States. International opinion has also weighed in, with many countries, such as Colombia, Mexico, Russia, and France, strongly condemning the interventionist actions of the U.S. government, while others, like Argentina and Israel, celebrate them.

Following Maduro's arrest, Vice President Delcy Rodríguez assumed the presidency in an acting capacity, supported by articles in the constitution that stipulate actions in the event of the president's temporary absence. Forty-eight hours after the capture of Maduro and his wife, Delcy Rodríguez was sworn in as interim president of Venezuela. Just before Maduro's capture, Rodríguez simultaneously held the following five positions: Executive Vice President of the Republic (since 2018), direct supervision of the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (Sebin), "Leader of the economy" position that ensured her control of fiscal policy, trade and international negotiations, Representative of the Executive to the Central Bank of Venezuela (BCV), and Minister of Petroleum in charge of Petróleos de Venezuela S. A. (Pdvsa), the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and oil licenses under sanctions.

Her appointment was a decision of the Venezuelan Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ). A few hours later, Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino confirmed and supported the TSJ's decision, ordering the assumption of power to preserve constitutional order. Forty-eight hours after the capture of Maduro and his wife, Delcy Rodríguez was sworn in as interim president of Venezuela on Monday. Her appointment was a decision of the Venezuelan Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ). A few hours later, Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino confirmed and supported the TSJ's decision, ordering the assumption of power to preserve constitutional order. Initially, Rodríguez reaffirmed her position of considering Maduro "the only president of Venezuela" and denounced his capture as a "kidnapping." However, after pressure from the United States, her stance changed, and she agreed to cooperation and negotiation.

Later, interim President Rodríguez announced a meeting with the heads of the European Union's labor relations departments, where they agreed on a peaceful resolution and the need for deeper communication to advance towards a more productive relationship, as well as to strengthen and review political and trade



relations. She also made internal changes to the executive cabinet, appointing Juan Escalona, a member of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), as Minister of the Office of the President.

President Donald Trump also issued a statement declaring the operation a success and stating that the United States government would assume control of the Venezuelan government. He also emphasized the importance of Venezuelan oil and the reactivation of its production as part of the country's economic recovery.

Major nations' positions:

United States:

The United States currently maintains a posture of strong pressure and delegitimization toward Maduro's regime, framing Venezuela's leadership and publicly declaring that it does not recognize Maduro or his inner circle as the legitimate government but as criminals. The U.S. government has designated that foreign terrorist organizations expand legal and financial sanctions, sending naval and aerial operations in the Caribbean, and carrying out strikes on vessels alleged to be involved in drug trafficking. These actions reflect U.S. concerns on security, counter-narcotics priorities, regional instability, and geopolitical interests. While these measures have increased pressure on Caracas and shown a commitment to democratic restoration, they also sparked national division, with 53% of Americans approving of the force used, while 47% disapprove. It also unleashed international criticism for possible human rights violations and escalated tensions, reinforcing polarization around the Venezuelan crisis.

The United States has a historical precedent for international intervention in Latin America and other continents, such as Iraq in 2003, the election of leaders in certain Latin American countries during the Cold War, or more recently, the massive economic boost to Milei's campaign in Argentina.

Following the recent US operation that captured Nicolás Maduro, the Trump administration is now grappling with the complex consequences of its bold military incursion while attempting to secure a stable source of authority in Caracas. The US government has vowed to maintain its oil embargo, effectively a "quarantine," to compel Venezuela's remaining leaders to comply with Trump's directives. The president also stated in a press conference that the US government would assume control of Venezuelan policy and its oil relations. Trump and the US government are seeking allies and cooperation from Venezuelan politicians. Trump even issued a threat to Venezuela's vice president. "If she doesn't do the right thing, she's going to pay a very big price, probably bigger than Maduro," he told The Atlantic. In response,



Rodríguez issued a more conciliatory statement offering a "cooperative agenda" with the United States. President Trump has also made statements expressing his intention to conduct military operations in various countries to combat drug trafficking, including Mexico and Colombia.

China:

China shows a cooperative and supportive relationship with the Venezuelan government, viewing it as a strategic partner within its broader presence in Latin America. Through expanded economic, technological, and infrastructural agreements of over 600 in 2025 alone, China has reinforced Venezuela's economy, oil sector, and political stability. Its motivations include securing long-term access to natural resources, countering Western influence, and defending the principles of sovereignty. While China's involvement has helped Venezuela resist external economic isolation and maintain internal stability, critics argue that such support indirectly reinforces authoritarian practices and limits democratic progress.

For China, Washington's military attack and capture of Maduro is a warning about the White House's willingness to impose its power and redefine borders in the name of its hemispheric dominance. "This is not a regional crisis, but a direct attack on the post-World War II international order," Gao Jian, a Chinese geopolitical expert, told TRT World. Many ministers, including the foreign minister, affirmed and condemned the actions of the US government, stating that they could not tolerate the United States becoming the judge of the world.

Russia:

Russia's relationship with Venezuela is shaped by strategic, military, and ideological alignment. Moscow recognizes Maduro as the legitimate head of state and has deepened cooperation through arms sales, military training, defense partnerships, and commercial alliances in the oil and gas sector. Motivated by the desire to project influence and challenge U.S. dominance, Russia views Venezuela as a vital geopolitical foothold. Its support has helped sustain the Venezuelan government during economic collapse and international pressure, but it has also been criticized for entrenching authoritarian power structures and complicating multilateral efforts to promote democratic norms and accountability.

Russia also condemns the actions of the United States, reaffirms its support for Venezuela and its sovereignty, and calls for a UN Security Council session to seek a peaceful solution. Expressing solidarity with Venezuela and urging sovereignty and democracy in Latin America, Russia called for the immediate release of the "legally elected president of a sovereign state," as well as the resolution of tensions between the United States and Venezuela through dialogue.



Colombia:

Colombia is a key player in the Venezuelan crisis due to its extensive border, historical ties, and political weight in the region. Its geographical position makes it the main recipient of Venezuelan migrants. Under the government of Gustavo Petro, Colombia has chosen to reestablish full diplomatic relations with Caracas and avoid external intervention. However, the Colombian government continues to advocate for human rights and competitive electoral processes. Despite its ideological proximity to communism, Colombia does not recognize the latest elections, considering that they were not held under conditions of freedom and transparency. Petro publicly urged Venezuela to rejoin the inter-American human rights system, abandoned his previous insistence on the unilateral lifting of US sanctions, and organized an international conference in Bogotá to reactivate negotiations between the Venezuelan government and the opposition. Overall, Colombia combines diplomatic cooperation, selective pressure, and regional leadership, positioning itself as a key mediator in the search for a negotiated solution to the crisis.

Despite Trump's initial threats against the Colombian government following Maduro's capture, the presidents of Colombia and the United States managed to have an important phone call. The tone and dialogue of the meeting appear to have been key in preventing the conflict from escalating. Trump said that the call with the president was a great honor. Later, in an interview, Petro said that he was not asked for anything, nor were any concrete proposals for collaboration made; that would come later, perhaps during a future visit to the White House.

Brazil:

Brazil has resumed its diplomatic relationship with the Venezuelan government based in Caracas, but this should not be construed as meaning that Brazil automatically supports the Maduro government. With the arrival of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Brazil has taken the position that does not recognize the validity of the most recent election results due to a lack of transparency in the electoral process. Despite these reservations, Brazil has not severed its diplomatic relationship with Caracas or imposed economic sanctions on Maduro's regime, but, instead, takes the view that both David and the Venezuelan government are responsible for the humanitarian problems facing the Venezuelan people through the government of Maduro. Brazil's position has been to act as a mediator promoting dialogue between the two sides, while continuing to advocate for both political and human rights within Venezuela.



Brazil also condemned Trump's actions in the capture of Nicolás Maduro. Lula stated that an armed intervention would be a "humanitarian catastrophe" and a "dangerous precedent," and criticized the "military presence of an extra-regional power" in South America. Meanwhile, the Brazilian non-partisan movement "Rede Pela Soberania" (Network for Sovereignty) issued a statement calling the attention of Brazilian society and the peoples of the Americas to the "unacceptable offensives" of the Donald Trump administration against Venezuela.

International efforts and agreements:

Activation of the Inter-American Democratic Charter (2016–2019): It was activated and became important because it gave a regional response that the decline of democracy in Venezuela was NOT just a one-time incident within Venezuela; instead, it was a systemic threat to all the democratic norms of the Americas. It wasn't a direct intervention, ~~at the same time~~, OAS, the main political forum in the hemisphere, had now taken an active moral and political stance against the detrimental democratic deterioration. Similarly, the IDC process also provided a mechanism to discuss the change in the constitution and was helpful for most member nations to withdraw their legitimacy from the Maduro regime and thus view the ongoing events through a lens of preserving representative democracy.

Agreements with Mexico and Barbados (2021–2023): This agreement will provide for the appointment of international observers at the presidential elections and, equally as important, will guarantee that every candidate could choose their own nominations for the presidency. The so-called "Barbados Partial Agreement" reflects a growing but tenuous consensus among the various factions involved that the only path out of the current crisis will be via a political solution and negotiations between the various factions, and that any future easing of sanctions and restoration of normal cordiality will depend on whether the "Barbados Partial Agreement" is adhered to or abrogated.

Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/51/29 (2022): The significance of this resolution is that it ensures the continued availability of independent and official UN documentation regarding human rights violations in Venezuela. By extending the mandate of the Fact-Finding Mission, the international community has reiterated its commitment to holding those responsible for these violations accountable and providing justice to victims, thus preventing these abuses from being ignored or going unpunished. This type of technical and evidentiary documentation is vital in exerting both political and moral pressure on the Venezuelan



government; it is also a crucial component of all investigations being conducted by the ICC and thus further strengthens the position that the human rights aspect of this crisis is significant enough to warrant addressing before any constitutional restoration can take place.

Key terms:

Authoritarianism: A system of government characterized by concentrated power in a leader or small elite, with limited political pluralism, restrictions on civil liberties, and weakened institutional checks and balances.

Electoral Democracy: A political system where leaders are chosen through regular, free, and fair elections with universal suffrage, multiple competing parties, and respect for political rights and civil liberties.

National Assembly: Venezuela's unicameral legislative body established by the 1999 Constitution. It holds constitutional powers to create laws, approve budgets, and provide oversight of the executive branch.

Constituent National Assembly: An extraordinary legislative body created in 2017 to rewrite the constitution. It assumed powers that superseded the elected National Assembly and operated parallel to it.

International Legitimacy: The recognition and acceptance of a government or political authority by the international community, typically based on adherence to democratic norms, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

Crisis of Governance: A situation where state institutions fail to function effectively, losing their capacity to maintain order, deliver services, enforce laws, and command public trust.

Referendum: A direct vote by the electorate on a specific political question or constitutional matter, used to legitimize major political or constitutional changes.

Political Polarization: The division of a society sharply opposed political camps with little middle ground, characterized by intense ideological differences and mutual distrust.

Systemic Corruption: Widespread corruption that permeates governmental institutions and becomes embedded in the political and economic system, undermining institutional integrity and public trust.



Electoral Transparency: The principle that all aspects of the electoral process should be open, verifiable, and subject to independent observation, including voter registration, vote counting, and results of publication.

Guiding questions:

- What regional and international factors have contributed to the dispute over the legitimacy of Nicolás Maduro's presidency?
- What is the limit of the GA's intervention to address a political crisis in a Member State without violating the principle of national sovereignty?
- What specific institutional reforms must Venezuela implement before the elections to ensure a level playing field?
- How should the GA address the issue of international invasion and presidential extraction?
- If your country applies or opposes sanctions, what concrete proposals does your country offer to ensure that these measures affect only political leaders and not the civilian population?
- How have international humanitarian organizations responded to the crisis within Venezuela and across its borders?
- What individual international actions has your country implemented to support Venezuela?
- How can diplomatic action by neighboring countries (such as Brazil, Colombia, and the Caribbean) be more effective in promoting transparency and dialogue than direct external pressure?
- How do geopolitical interests shape each major power's stance on Maduro and the Venezuelan opposition?
- To what extent are Venezuela's armed forces involved in internal repression or cross-border incidents?
- What is the role of Venezuela's oil industry in shaping international alliances and interests?
- Why have past mediation efforts failed, and what conditions are necessary for future negotiations?
- Is international intervention justifiable if the goal is to stop a transnational criminal network?
- How has the United States intervention affected your country's international and economic relations worldwide?

Countries list:

- Argentina



- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Canada
- Chile
- China
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Cuba
- Dominican Republic
- El Salvador
- France
- Germany
- Honduras
- Iran
- Laos
- Mexico
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Russia
- Syria
- Türkiye
- United States
- United Kingdom
- Venezuela

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