

An Open Letter to the United States: Stop Interfering in Venezuela's Internal Politics

Tuesday 29 January 2019, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 24 January 2019).

If the Trump administration and its allies continue to pursue their reckless course in Venezuela, the most likely result will be bloodshed, chaos, and instability. By over 70 scholars and experts, including Noam Chomsky, Laura Carlsen, Miguel Tinker Salas, Greg Grandin.

The following open letter—signed by 70 scholars on Latin America, political science, and history as well as filmmakers, civil society leaders, and other experts—was issued on Thursday, January 24, 2019 in opposition to ongoing intervention by the United States in Venezuela.

The United States government must cease interfering in Venezuela's internal politics, especially for the purpose of overthrowing the country's government. Actions by the Trump administration and its allies in the hemisphere are almost certain to make the situation in Venezuela worse, leading to unnecessary human suffering, violence, and instability.

Venezuela's political polarization is not new; the country has long been divided along racial and socioeconomic lines. But the polarization has deepened in recent years. This is partly due to US support for an opposition strategy aimed at removing the government of Nicolás Maduro through extra-electoral means. While the opposition has been divided on this strategy, US support has backed hardline opposition sectors in their goal of ousting the Maduro government through often violent protests, a military coup d'état, or other avenues that sidestep the ballot box.

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Under the Trump administration, aggressive rhetoric against the Venezuelan government has ratcheted up to a more extreme and threatening level, with Trump administration officials talking of "military action" and condemning Venezuela, along with Cuba and Nicaragua, as part of a "troika of tyranny." Problems resulting from Venezuelan government policy have been worsened by US economic sanctions, illegal under the Organization of American States and the United Nations — as well as US law and other international treaties and conventions. These sanctions have cut off the means by which the Venezuelan government could escape from its economic recession, while causing a dramatic falloff in oil production and worsening the economic crisis, and causing many people to die because they can't get access to life-saving medicines. Meanwhile, the US and other governments continue to blame the Venezuelan government — solely — for the economic damage, even that caused by the US sanctions.

Now the US and its allies, including OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro and Brazil's far-right president, Jair Bolsonaro, have pushed Venezuela to the precipice. By recognizing National Assembly President Juan Guaidó as the new president of Venezuela — something illegal under the OAS Charter — the Trump administration has sharply accelerated Venezuela's political crisis in the hopes

of dividing the Venezuelan military and further polarizing the populace, forcing them to choose sides. The obvious, and sometimes stated goal, is to force Maduro out via a coup d'état.

The reality is that despite hyperinflation, shortages, and a deep depression, Venezuela remains a politically polarized country. The US and its allies must cease encouraging violence by pushing for violent, extralegal regime change. If the Trump administration and its allies continue to pursue their reckless course in Venezuela, the most likely result will be bloodshed, chaos, and instability. The US should have learned something from its regime change ventures in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and its long, violent history of sponsoring regime change in Latin America.

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Neither side in Venezuela can simply vanquish the other. The military, for example, has at least 235,000 frontline members, and there are at least 1.6 million in militias. Many of these people will fight, not only on the basis of a belief in national sovereignty that is widely held in Latin America — in the face of what increasingly appears to be a US-led intervention — but also to protect themselves from likely repression if the opposition topples the government by force.

In such situations, the only solution is a negotiated settlement, as has happened in the past in Latin American countries when politically polarized societies were unable to resolve their differences through elections. There have been efforts, such as those led by the Vatican in the fall of 2016, that had potential, but they received no support from Washington and its allies who favored regime change. This strategy must change if there is to be any viable solution to the ongoing crisis in Venezuela.

For the sake of the Venezuelan people, the region, and for the principle of national sovereignty, these international actors should instead support negotiations between the Venezuelan government and its opponents that will allow the country to finally emerge from its political and economic crisis.

Signed:

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P.S.

- Common Dreams, Thursday, January 24, 2019:

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2019/01/24/open-letter-united-states-stop-interfering-venezuelas-internal-politics>