

Maduro's quest for legitimacy

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"Oh invincible Prince, bring help against the attacks of the lost spirits to the people of God and give them victory. They venerate thee as their protector and patron; in thee holy Church glories as her defense against the malicious power of hell; to thee has God entrusted the souls of men to be established in heavenly beatitude. Oh, pray to the God of peace that He may put Satan under our feet, so far conquered that he may no longer be able to hold men in captivity and harm the Church." – Prayer to St. Michael

Introduction

On the verge of a decisive moment for Venezuela, the country's political situation is critical with the upcoming presidential elections in July 2024. Nicolás Maduro, after six years in power and branded as the usurper of Miraflores, faces the ultimate test of his political career. He desperately seeks to validate his mandate in pursuit of the legitimacy that has eluded him. Against him stands a determined and united opposition, led by figures such as María Corina Machado and Corina Yoris, posing a formidable challenge not only to his reelection aspirations but also to the continuity of the regime he represents. This scenario is a battle not just for power but for the democratic soul of Venezuela, testing the resilience of the people's will. Electoral manipulation, the silencing of dissenting voices, and international pressure are among the elements shaping this critical panorama, which will determine Maduro's immediate future and that of a nation yearning for change and justice.

Maduro's Political Future

Nicolás Maduro is gambling his political future on the next presidential election in July 2024. Having been labeled as the usurper of Miraflores for six years, he seeks to gain legitimacy in the upcoming elections. Maduro needs the Democratic Unity Roundtable to nominate a candidate to help him achieve this. However, he aims to impose a contender who fits his plans.

Emboldened by achievements in negotiations with the Biden administration—from the release of his nephews involved in narcotics to his front man and the suspension of economic sanctions—he believes he can continue to intimidate democratic forces to maintain his grip on power. Yet, he aims to avoid facing the outcome that Henri Falcón encountered in 2018 when they disregarded electoral results due to fraud and breach of agreements.

Now, the situation is different. Maduro has lost popular support. According to the latest Meganálisis survey, only about one-tenth of voters, or 1 in 10, would vote for him.

In this context, his electoral apparatus, the National Electoral Council (CNE), only allowed the registration of 12 candidates guaranteed to secure his victory, known as “alacranes”—opposition political party members who make agreements with the regime behind the party’s own back to conspire against it—or functional opposition. The National Electoral Council (CNE) denied registration to those posing a risk of exposing electoral fraud, including María Corina Machado and Corina Yoris, who had their registrations blocked.

Despite pressuring the leaders of the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) to nominate an “acceptable” candidate who would recognize the results, the regime failed to break the “perfect political unity” surrounding the two Corinas. The CNE’s strategy of blocking the system manifested how the country is infringing upon democratic freedoms, directly attacking Venezuela’s democratic fabric.

Yesterday, the MUD registered a placeholder candidate to replace at the appropriate time.

The Vendetta Against María Corina

The marked frustration and anger felt by the Gang of Five—Diosdado Cabello, Cilia Flores, Vladimir Padrino López, Nicolás Maduro, and Jorge Rodríguez—towards María Corina Machado is due to her strong connection with the people, a bond also achieved by Hugo Chávez in 1998, but through resentment. Seeing her as a real threat to their continued stay in power, they decided to implement a definitive tactic: invalidate any effort initiated by the primary winner, fragment the opposition ranks, and steer Venezuela towards rigged elections with the support of allies and, in some cases, “political collaborators”, challenging any rejection, whether local or international.

Their frustration reflects their concern over the hope that María Corina represents for the people, leveraging resentment.

International Community

The expressed “concern” over the electoral crisis by Latin American governments, including Brazil and Colombia, shows a determination that Maduro’s regime and democratic forces must respect the Barbados Agreement, which, so far, only the opposition has adhered to.

It is a global call to defend fundamental democratic and humanitarian principles. Solving the Venezuelan crisis requires a concerted effort beyond the country’s borders, involving the international community in restoring democracy and stability in Venezuela.

Maduro's weakness

The systematic exclusion of opposition voices and electoral manipulation are mere reflections of a strategy designed to perpetuate the Gang of Five's rule in power, regardless of the suffering and deep crisis this may cause in the nation.

Maduro's government makes a new mistake in trying to silence the true opposition. It refuses to accept candidates with moral strength, such as Dr. Corina Yoris, as a method of suppressing dissent. This act also reveals the weakness of Maduro's regime, which appears afraid to face the will of the people.

María Corina's call for calm and firmness yesterday is not just a strategy of resistance but also the Venezuelan people's right to know the truth about what is happening in the country.

Conclusions

The steadfastness of the opposition, particularly evidenced by the unity around figures like María Corina Machado and Corina Yoris, along with widespread support and international backing, reflects significant resistance against the repressive and exclusionary tactics of Maduro's regime. The exclusion of legitimate candidates and electoral manipulation by the CNE are seen not only as an assault on democratic principles but also as a sign of the regime's vulnerability to an organized and morally resolved opposition. This scenario underscores the critical nature of the fight for transparent elections and the involvement of all Venezuelan sectors committed to restoring democracy, marking a decisive moment for Venezuela's political and social future.

Let them if the Gang of Five insists on clinging to power at all costs on July 28. Their tenure in power will shorten if they continue to occupy Miraflores without the legitimacy of origin they so desperately seek. And then, Maduro will remain the usurper.