

The venezuelan crossroads: between resignation and democratic struggle

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"The greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people." - Martin Luther King Jr.

In a world increasingly convulsed by geopolitical crises, we encounter a scenario reminiscent of the tense days of the Cold War, marked by constant threats to the international order. However, the West's approach to these threats has changed in this new era. Rather than addressing them as elements of a broader challenge, these issues are tackled separately, with the hope that normalcy will soon return. However, reality paints a different picture: conflict has emerged as the new normal.

In Venezuela, under the command of Nicolás Maduro, we have reached a critical point that demands a coordinated and firm international response alongside democratic forces. His continuation in power and the totalitarian nature of his government represents significant obstacles to the restoration of democracy and the fulfillment of human rights in the country. In this context, the possibility of holding democratic elections is uphill due to the regime's refusal to comply with the Barbados agreement and its interference in the electoral process".

William Brownfield, former United States ambassador to Venezuela, has pointed out that Maduro will never comply with a pact that threatens his power stability. He lacks incentives to allow a democratic transition. The consequences of a defeat in a free, fair, and competitive election paralyze him. Despite this, he needs presidential elections to legitimize the usurpation he has committed in the executive branch since 2018.

According to Brownfield, Maduro would have three options before the presidential elections: "Let the opposition choose another candidate he can beat, steal the election as he did six years ago, or postpone the electoral process".

However, the only alternative that would allow him to achieve legitimacy of origin is to measure himself against a candidate who is not María Corina Machado -she has a popular mandate after the primary election on October 22- because she would be competitive, according to all polls.

Moreover, he would have to partially comply with the Barbados agreement to obtain the 'good graces' of the international community. If he chooses the other two options, he will continue to

be seen as a usurper. This status has led to individual sanctions against his henchmen and economic sanctions against the criminal organization.

Therefore, the proposal of the functional opposition –known as scorpions, plugged-in, normalizers, and collaborators– and some actors from the White House that María Corina chooses her successor to face Maduro is a show of naivety or, worse, collaboration with the dictatorship. The U.S. administration has said that the process is the most important because there is “the determination of Venezuelans to participate in the electoral process and defeat Maduro”.

It suffices to remember the precedent of 2008 with Leopoldo López and Antonio Ledezma –the election for the Mayor’s Office of the Metropolitan District of Caracas-, how Chavismo-Madurism did not hesitate to alter the political game rules to remain in power, invalidating strong opponents and manipulating public powers in their favor. Ledezma’s story is particularly illustrative: even after winning the Metropolitan Mayor’s Office of Caracas, he was stripped of much of his functions and resources and finally imprisoned in 2015 when he was sentenced for conspiring to overthrow Maduro’s regime.

Maduro is not competitive against María Corina, even if the electoral field is tilted 90 degrees in his favor.

Facing this reality, to talk about replacing María Corina is to ignore the essence of the Venezuelan struggle. It’s not about accommodating pieces on the game board dictated by Maduro but about rejecting and challenging the very bases of his illegitimate and authoritarian regime, challenging him with the “commandos” under the umbrella of GANA throughout the country.

It’s time to understand that the crusade in Venezuela is not about having an alternative candidate that allows the dictator to be competitive but about the struggle embodied by María Corina between good and evil that allows the restitution of democracy, respect for human rights, and the liberation of an oppressed people.

One should not continue seeking a fictitious consensus with a regime that has demonstrated no scruples in its eagerness to perpetuate itself in power. Efforts should focus on creating conditions that allow for an election in which María Corina and Maduro can participate.

Those advocating for finding a substitute for Machado under the pretext of political pragmatism are offering a disguised capitulation. It’s time to continue on the path of resistance, not resignation. We are not here to surrender to tyranny but to face it and overcome it democratically for the good of Venezuela and its future.

The international community, primarily led by actors like the United States and the European Union, faces the challenge of assessing the effectiveness of their strategies towards Venezuela.

The solution to the Venezuelan crisis does not lie solely in the imposition of sanctions or diplomatic isolation but in unwavering support for democratic forces within the country, ensuring that any transition is led by Venezuelans, with María Corina Machado at the forefront.

Suppose Putin achieves a victory in Ukraine due to the West's lack of commitment to defending its values, having yielded to Russia in civilized countries. In that case, international laws will no longer prevail. Finally, democracy will end. This scenario could encourage regimes in the Middle East and Latin America to occupy other territories. We are heading towards global chaos. If the West does not stop tyrants now, let us not weep later for what we failed to defend.

This historic moment in Venezuela is not just a call to action for the international community and democratic forces; it is essential to adopt a coherent and coordinated strategy that prioritizes the restoration of democracy and respect for human rights. We are at a critical turning point. Adapting to this reality is not about finding the most acceptable candidate for Maduro but about freedom and democracy, values that are not negotiated under terms dictated by a dictatorship. Victory in this struggle will require courage, unity, organization, and unwavering determination to restore the dignity of the Venezuelan nation”.