

## **The Venezuelan elections: To vote or not to vote, that's the question**

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Venezuelans are debating whether or not to vote in the upcoming parliamentary elections on December 6. With these elections, President Nicolás Maduro's lawless regime seeks to appropriate the ultimate constitutional authority and be recognized by 60 dubious nations as the only legitimate power left in the country. Consequently, the [27 political parties](#) that make up the bulk of the opposition—including all those currently represented in the National Assembly outside of Chavism—have decided not to participate in what they characterize as an electoral farce. Those grouped in what is known as “the little roundtable,” or national dialogue table, who participated in the illegitimate 2018 presidential election, plan to compete.

Voting or not voting is a decision that expresses the political will of the citizen. Let us remember that elections are one of the pillars of democracy. Polls give legitimacy to the winner or winners of the electoral contest when they are free, fair, and transparent. Maduro's illegitimacy as president of Venezuela springs precisely from the violation of these principles. On May 20, 2018, he won an election that did not involve all the political actors in Venezuela and utterly failed to meet international standards of an indisputably democratic process.

Today, Hugo Chávez's successor continues to act as the de facto authority from Miraflores Palace, even though 60 democratic governments recognize Juan Guaidó as the interim president of Venezuela due to his status as president of the National Assembly, who, according to Article 233 of [Venezuela's constitution](#), takes over in case of usurpation.

Since 2019, an international coalition and the interim government have learned and developed capacities to peacefully resolve the country's present crisis. The U.S. “[Framework for Democratic and Peaceful Transition in Venezuela](#)” of March 31, 2020 points in this direction, offering a way to end the people's suffering caused by the dire political, economic, and humanitarian situation and opening a path to a better future for Venezuela.

Not voting on December 6 will allow consensus to build further for restoring democratic order in Venezuela. The 60 governments that do not recognize Maduro's presidency will continue to stand on international law and their national legislation, taking the diplomatic, political, economic, and financial measures necessary to restore democracy. By contrast, voting on December 6 will strengthen the counter-narrative that Venezuela is a democratic country and cast doubts on the fact of Maduro's illegitimacy. At this historical moment, it is crucial to maintain the strategy employed in the 2018 presidential election. The international coalition has

isolated Maduro and preserved the nation's assets, located in [Great Britain \(gold\)](#) and the [United States \(Citgo\)](#), for a future democratic government. It has also confirmed Maduro's illegitimacy in continuing to wield power in Venezuela.

The specter of abstention in the 2005 legislative elections should not encourage participation in the next election or support the notion that "Venezuelans want to vote". These arguments undermine international support for the effort to restore democracy in Venezuela.

If the December 6 election were to increase the likelihood of a transition to democracy, voting would offer a way to take back the country. Thus, the Venezuelan Episcopal Conference's parliamentary elections [communiqué](#) invites citizens vote: "Despite the irregularities, the massive participation of the people is necessary and will be able to overcome the totalitarian attempts and the advantage of the regime". Nevertheless, voting would legitimize Maduro and weaken the unity of purpose of the 60 coalition countries in the cause of restoring democracy in Venezuela.

Something similar happened in 2016, when the proposed November 3 march to Miraflores was suspended until further notice at the request of [Pope Francis](#) in a call to Henrique Capriles. This was at the democratic opposition's moment of greatest strength. It had swept the parliamentary elections the year before, and a majority of Venezuelans approved the midterm presidential recall referendum—a peaceful solution to the crisis. However, the pontiff's mediation demobilized the protest and kept Maduro in power, buying time for the "enemy".

Voting is not the solution today. Choosing not to vote will allow the 60 coalition countries and democratic forces to continue to carve out a democratic future for Venezuela. When it comes to voting or not voting, the right choice is not to vote.