

Venezuela: Fear of the new CNE adds a level of difficulty to the primaries

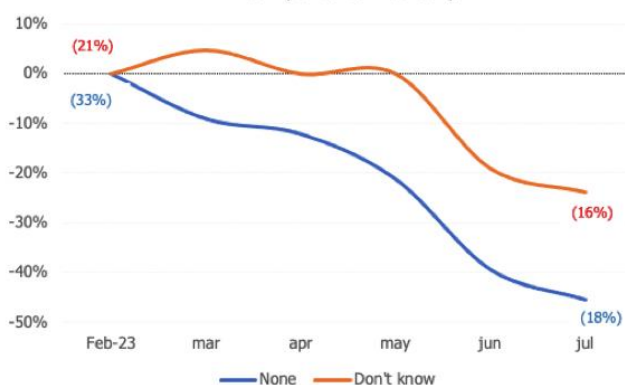
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With four Sundays left before the primary election to choose the united presidential candidate of the democratic forces, Nicolas Maduro's electoral power (Cilia Flores) and the National Primary Commission (CNdP) declared this Monday the reinstatement of the joint commission to "exchange views on the progress of the primary process, the phase it is in, and the support that the National Electoral Council (CNE) can provide". This intervention of the CNE is a new level of difficulty for advancing towards a successful primary on October 22nd.

The first challenge was on June 18th, when the forced resignation of the electoral body's rectors linked to Maduro's usurping government and the alleged representatives of the opposition, whose mandate lasted until 2028, took place. At that time, the democratic forces overcame the barrier using the resources of the self-managed primary and manual voting, achieving tremendous enthusiasm for participation from the people, which, in February, was below 50%.

Overcoming the June barrier allowed the percentage of undecided and abstaining voters to decrease by 19% and 39%, respectively, according to data from Meganalisis polling firm.

Evolution of the abstentionist (none) and undecided (don't know) vote, compared to February



Source: Meganalisis | Author's calculation

In April, the rejection of CNE's participation in the primaries was reflected in a study by Meganalisis; 82.5% of those surveyed believed that the primary should be conducted "without the presence of the CNE and with manual voting".



A new challenge arose on July 26th: María Carolina Uzcátegui, vice president of the CNdP, resigned, claiming that there were no appropriate technical and logistical conditions to conduct broad and accessible primaries for most Venezuelans, regardless of their social class. However, this challenge was swiftly overcome by accepting her resignation and appointing Mildred Camero. The planning for the internal elections continued smoothly. Venezuelans can vote in 80 cities in 31 countries and at 3,008 polling stations with 5,133 tables in Venezuela, covering 98.8% of its municipalities, that is, 331 out of 335. At the parish level, Venezuela is divided into 1,102 out of the 1,141.

However, the road to October 22nd has been fraught with threats from the regime to those participating in the electoral process, the blocking of candidate events in public squares, intimidation throughout the chain supporting the electoral campaign (rallies and tours), physical assaults on the candidates, arbitrary arrests, among other adversities.

Despite these obstacles, most 13 candidates have responded with determination and cunning. Only on rare occasions have these barriers slowed the momentum of the primaries. In this new phase, the regime is trying to instill fear in the voters leading up to October 22nd, using the CNE as coercion. It reminds us of the story of the "chained elephant" that, believing it cannot free itself, remains tied to a stake.

We presume total control of the electoral process by the Venezuelan regime. The administration will have the list of those who vote; it will know who we vote for; it will make the worst opposition candidate win; the CNE machines are rigged, among other actions. These unconscious fears have constrained us for years, preventing us from emancipating ourselves as a people, similar to the elephant in captivity.

Now is the time to recognize that in the challenge of fear, the regime's CNE to which we are subject, we find the key to our freedom. In it lies the opportunity to free ourselves from the mafia state and the chance to build a prosperous nation where we reunite with our loved ones. By facing these obstacles, we fuel our ambitions, give life to our dreams, and emphasize the value of our challenges. It is the step before achieving the final goal of the first phase on the road to the presidential election. A final surprise may always appear to eliminate the primary. If it opts for this option, it will also end its search for legitimacy of origin. It could trigger other possibilities we cannot imagine now because "the pitcher goes to the water until it breaks".

Let's not allow fear of the CNE to stifle the voice and action of the people in the primaries. Venezuela, let's unite as in Lope de Vega's play because freedom is a good that is conquere

red every day, with individual commitment and the union of all.