

Venezuela's regime is cracking, quietly

Antonio De La Cruz

Executive Director

28/Mar/2025

In the tangled web of contradictions sustaining Venezuela's regime, exits are closing one by one. The diplomatic, economic and legal siege surrounding Nicolás Maduro is no longer rhetorical—it is operational, quiet, and increasingly effective. Far from the regime's propaganda, what's unfolding in Venezuela today is not the endurance of a resilient dictatorship, but the slow collapse of a power apparatus crumbling under pressure, with no short-term solutions in sight.

A recent investigation by Chilean prosecutors has revealed that the criminal organization known as Tren de Aragua —born in Venezuela with protection from Chavista regional authorities—has operated abroad under direct orders from the regime's upper echelons. Specifically, Diosdado Cabello, one of Maduro's closest allies, is accused of ordering the assassination of Venezuelan Lieutenant Ronald Ojeda in Santiago, Chile. This direct link between organized crime and the highest levels of the Maduro-Cabello regime confirms what many governments had long suspected: the regime not only tolerates criminality—it weaponizes it.

Adding to this is the region-wide impact of Venezuelan migration. Millions have fled poverty and repression, only to fall into human trafficking networks tied to the same criminal-political structure. This is not a byproduct of the crisis—it is a direct consequence of a failed, mafioso state. The result is devastating: thousands of Venezuelans, indebted by their northbound journey, find themselves vulnerable, while in Washington the narrative linking this migration to national security risks continues to gain ground.

Amid this, the oil giant Chevron secured an extension until May 27 to wind down its operations in Venezuela, thanks to lobbying efforts appealing to Washington's political pragmatism. But this does not amount to a lifeline for Maduro—it's a new form of leverage. The U.S. is demanding concrete concessions in exchange for each commercial license: acceptance of deportation flights, limits on oil export revenues, and tighter scrutiny of trade operations.

The latest blow doesn't come from the Americas, but from Asia. Chinese "teapot" refineries and India's Reliance Industries—both of which buy discounted Venezuelan oil—have paused their April purchases due to the threat of a new 25% U.S. tariff on products from those countries. The message is unmistakable: anyone maintaining trade ties with the Maduro regime will face stiff tariffs in all their U.S.-bound commercial dealings starting April 2. The effects are already being felt.

Meanwhile, Russia—once one of Maduro’s most stalwart allies—is now focused on a new phase of negotiations with Ukraine, brokered by the United States. For Moscow, Maduro is no longer a strategic asset, but a marginal problem in a much larger geopolitical chess match. Putin’s shifting priorities only further erode the regime’s international position.

All of this unfolds while the will of the Venezuelan people continues to be ignored. On July 28, 2024, Venezuelans voted overwhelmingly for a change in government. Yet Maduro remains entrenched in the presidential palace, defying that mandate.

The international community, though not always swift, is beginning to respond with clarity. These are no longer symbolic sanctions but practical measures that expose the regime’s contradictions and force uncomfortable decisions. Maduro is conceding because he has no room left to maneuver. He’s accepting terms he once refused. He’s welcoming flights he once vowed to reject. He’s relying on allies who no longer guarantee loyalty.

The power of the Maduro-Cabello regime, long propped up by anti-imperialist rhetoric and territorial control, is now facing a quieter but relentless dynamic: a web of pressure that makes little noise but never lets up. The erosion is not sudden—but it is irreversible.

At the heart of it all lies the simplest truth: the Venezuelan people have already decided. They did so at the ballot box, unambiguously. Everything else is power squatting. And every day, holding onto it becomes more costly.