

# Standing Up for Human Rights and Democracy in Venezuela

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**Presented by:** JSD (Portugal) and NNGG (Spain)

**Supported by:** Young Fine Gael (Ireland), Junge ÖVP (Austria), Junge Union (Germany), ONNED (Greece), and Forza Italia Giovani (Italy)

## Recognising that:

- The economic situation in Venezuela has been deteriorating for decades as a result of gross economic mismanagement, massive productivity decline, unemployment, closure of businesses, corruption, widespread expropriations, and near-total dependence on oil exports, leading to hyperinflation and triggering rising opposition to President Nicolás Maduro<sup>1</sup>.
- President Maduro has responded to increasing contestation by doubling down on Venezuela's autocratisation and on political repression, culminating in the 2018 presidential elections, widely condemned as illegitimate given record-low turnout and the ban on opposition leaders competing in the elections<sup>2</sup>.
- This political trajectory has been accompanied by a humanitarian crisis, with food shortages, a crumbling healthcare system, credible reports of hundreds of extra-judicial killings, and over 7.7 million refugees across the world, many of whom left Venezuela on foot<sup>3</sup>.
- The Barbados Agreement signed on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, between the government and the opposition parties under the United Platform banner entailed –in theory– an electoral reform that enabled free and fair elections, including equal access to the media, the release of political

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<sup>1</sup> Friesen, G. (2021) *The path to hyperinflation: What happened to Venezuela?*, *Forbes*. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/garthfriesen/2018/08/07/the-path-to-hyperinflation-what-happened-to-venezuela/#2c5f2f8f15e4> (Accessed: 01 October 2024). Verrastro, F. and Stanley, A. (2019) *The Oil Industry Won't Save Venezuela*, CSIS. Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/oil-industry-wont-save-venezuela> (Accessed: 01 October 2024).

<sup>2</sup> Graham, D. (2018) *Regional 'Lima Group' leaders urge Venezuela to suspend election*, *Reuters*. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-election/regional-lima-group-leaders-urge-venezuela-to-suspend-election-idUSKCN1IF2R1/> (Accessed: 01 October 2024).

<sup>3</sup> Benzaquen, M. (2017) *How food in Venezuela went from subsidized to scarce*, *The New York Times*. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/07/16/world/americas/venezuela-shortages.html> (Accessed: 01 October 2024). Keane, J. (2016) *Venezuela crisis: Caracas hospital shows sorry state of health system*, *BBC News*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-37562058> (Accessed: 01 October 2024). Nebehay, S. (2018) *U.N. seeks inquiry into killings in Venezuela, says poll not credible*, *Reuters*. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-election-rights/u-n-seeks-inquiry-into-killings-in-venezuela-says-poll-not-credible-idUSKCN1GJ17C> (Accessed: 01 October 2024). *Refugees and migrants from Venezuela (2023) Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela*. Available at: <https://www.r4v.info/en/refugeeandmigrants> (Accessed: 01 October 2024). Casey, N. and González, J.C. (2019) *A staggering exodus: Millions of Venezuelans are leaving the country, on foot*, *The New York Times*. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/20/world/americas/venezuela-refugees-colombia.html> (Accessed: 01 October 2024).

prisoners, the free selection of presidential candidates, and the presence of international observers<sup>4</sup>.

- Nevertheless, this Agreement was not implemented by the Maduro regime. The regime created multiple bureaucratic obstacles for the opposition, including the ban of Maria Corina Machado, the winner of the opposition primary, from running for President. The proxy violent groups controlled by the government threatened and intimidated opposition supporters all over the country. Due to the impossibility of Maria Corina Machado running for President, Edmundo González Urrutia was elected as the new opposition candidate<sup>5</sup>.
- In addition, the electoral process was carried out without transparency and in the absence of international observers. Only allies of the Maduro regime were allowed to enter Venezuela as international observers. Invitations for the EU or its Member States to send election observers were revoked, even though the EU temporarily lifted sanctions on four officials, including the chairman of the National Electoral Council (CNE). In particular, a delegation of EPP Members of the European Parliament, as well as of Spanish Senators and Members of Parliament, were detained at the airport and sent back to Madrid on the same day.

#### **Acknowledging that:**

- While the results announced by the regime-controlled CNE claim Maduro won, independent election observers have insisted these results are fraudulent and that the election took place amidst restricted political and press freedoms<sup>6</sup>. Among other things, opposition observers were not allowed to monitor the fair and democratic counting of the votes.
- Despite calls from the international community, the CNE has failed to make local election results at the polling station level available. By contrast, the opposition has collected and published the printed voting tallies of over 25,000 election machines, or over 80% of the machines used in the vote, which show Edmundo González Urrutia won the elections with 67% of the vote<sup>7</sup>, in spite of the hostile political environment created by the regime.
- The Maduro regime has employed “unprecedented” levels of repression against peaceful demonstrators following its sham election, according to a

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<sup>4</sup> *Barbados deal sets Venezuela on a rocky path to competitive polls* (2023) *International Crisis Group*. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/venezuela/barbados-deal-sets-venezuela-rocky-path-competitive-polls> (Accessed: 01 October 2024).

<sup>5</sup> Cano, R.G. (2023) *Venezuela government's ban on longtime foe draws attention to the opposition's presidential primary*, *Associated Press*. Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/venezuela-opposition-primary-election-maduro-crisis-cda408a6089e2bae695b0f9c946a4118> (Accessed: 01 October 2024).  
Sequera, V. (2024) *Venezuela revokes invitation to EU election observers for Presidential vote*, *Reuters*. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuela-revokes-invitation-eu-election-observers-during-july-presidential-vote-2024-05-28/> (Accessed: 01 October 2024).

<sup>6</sup> *Carter Center Statement on Venezuela election* (2024) *The Carter Center*. Available at: <https://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/2024/venezuela-073024.html> (Accessed: 01 October 2024).

<sup>7</sup> *Resultados Elecciones Presidenciales - Venezuela 2024* (2024) *Resultados CON VZLA*. Available at: <https://resultadosconvzla.com/> (Accessed: 01 October 2024).

UN fact-finding mission. Over 2,000 people were detained, including over a hundred children, in the first week of protests, and many of them were subject to torture and sexual abuse<sup>8</sup>.

- Opposition politicians have lived in an atmosphere of violence, with the arrest of 143 opposition party members and leaders. The ransacking and vandalising of the headquarters of Maria Corina Machado's movement by masked assailants who broke down doors and stole equipment and documents is especially concerning<sup>9</sup>.
- Edmundo González Urrutia has, after a period at the Spanish ambassador's residence in Caracas where he was subject to threats to him and his family, been granted political asylum in Spain. Maria Corina Machado remains in hiding in Venezuela, while security forces have besieged the embassy of Argentina, which shelters six opposition figures<sup>10</sup>.

### **YEPP calls on:**

- The EU and its Member States to follow the international election observation missions in denouncing the lack of integrity of the 2024 Venezuelan presidential election and the fraudulent nature of the results announced by the CNE.
- The EU and its Member States to do their utmost to ensure the will of the Venezuelan people is respected, including the full and detailed publication of voting records by the government and the inauguration of the legitimate and democratically elected President of Venezuela.
- The EU and its Member States to, in accordance with the copies of the electoral records publicly available at present, recognise Edmundo González Urrutia as the legitimate and democratically elected President of Venezuela.
- The EU and its Member States to support human rights and pro-democracy activists in Venezuela, to do their utmost to ensure the integrity and security of opposition politicians who remain in Venezuela, to help

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<sup>8</sup> (2024) *Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*. Human Rights Council. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session57/advance-versions/a-hrc-57-57-en.pdf> (Accessed: 01 October 2024).

<sup>9</sup> Sá Pessoa, G. *et al.* (2024) *Masked assailants ransack Venezuela opposition leader's headquarters as post-election tensions mount*, Associated Press. Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/venezuela-election-brazil-mexico-colombia-diplomacy-fa5780b54ffd166b4e20513d5b457512> (Accessed: 01 October 2024).

<sup>10</sup> Quesada, J.D. (2024) *Edmundo González leaves Venezuela and heads to Spain after receiving political asylum*, *El País English*. Available at: <https://english.elpais.com/international/2024-09-08/edmundogonzalez-leaves-venezuela-and-heads-to-spain-after-receiving-political-asylum.html> (Accessed: 01 October 2024). Tsirkin, J. (2024) *Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado tells Sen. Ben Cardin the fight against Nicolás Maduro will go on*, *NBC News*. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/venezuelan-opposition-leader-machado-tells-sen-cardin-fight-maduro-wil-rcna170727> (Accessed: 01 October 2024). Phillips, A. (2024) *Venezuelan forces surround embassy sheltering opposition figures*, *BBC News*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c207958pp9qo> (Accessed: 01 October 2024).

address the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the country, and to increase access to asylum for Venezuelans under political prosecution.

- The EU and its Member States to support the International Criminal Court's investigations into the Venezuelan regime's extensive crimes, acts of repression, and alleged crimes against humanity and, in particular, to request the arrest of high-level figures of the Venezuelan regime, including President Maduro.
- The EU to reintroduce the sanctions lifted in May 2024 against the members of CNE and to examine the appropriateness of additional sanctions.