



MARIN INTERFAITH

TASK FORCE ON THE AMERICAS

P.O.Box 925, Larkspur, CA 94977 (415)924-3227 mitf@igc.org

www.TaskForceAmericas.org

Statement on Venezuela

With US President Trump threatening military intervention and a domestic Venezuelan opposition, based in the wealthy and middle class, pursuing a strategy of violent street actions and sabotage to oust the democratically elected Maduro government, the gains of the Bolivarian Revolution are being eroded and could be lost.

Worse, if the opposition succeeds, a bloodbath could ensue, which would make the post 1973 Pinochet coup in Chile look mild by comparison. The stakes are high for the Venezuelan people, but also for all progressive peoples.

The Bolivarian Revolution began with Hugo Chávez's 1998 election, a revolution which used Venezuela's oil wealth to benefit the people and which made significant inroads in reducing poverty, increasing literacy, and making health care popularly available. Venezuela sparked a progressive wave in numerous Latin American countries.

Nicolás Maduro was elected president of Venezuela in 2013 after Chávez's death. The opposition disingenuously claimed electoral fraud and refused, along with their US government partners, to recognize the election. Ever since, the opposition has engaged in economic warfare, street actions, and colluding with the US government and other outside forces to overthrow Maduro. Meanwhile the working people of Venezuela have suffered shortages of consumer goods and conditions of instability.

The Chávistas have undoubtedly made mistakes and missteps, such as a failure to correct the dysfunctional currency system and allowing some corruption. But the domestic opposition and their US government partners would not improve conditions. They are really motivated to roll back the Bolivarian Revolution's successes to meet people's needs, rather than its alleged failures.

Surely the claims by the opposition and the US government that Maduro is undemocratic ring hollow when these same forces celebrate the unelected Temer government in Brazil, which is garnering single digit popular support ratings. In fact, these were some of the very same people who perpetrated the short-lived 2002 coup against Chávez with the blessing of the US government.

Maduro, for his part, has continually called for peaceful negotiations with the opposition. The Pope has even joined the call. Yet the opposition continues to ratchet up their extra-legal destabilization efforts, backed by the US government and some regional allies such as neighboring Colombia (the largest recipient of US military assistance and the biggest human rights abuser in the hemisphere).

The chief of state in any other country would have declared martial law. Instead, Maduro took the initiative to constitutionally call a Constituent National Assembly and in doing has mobilized the Chávista base, which voted in large numbers to support this supreme governing body. Meanwhile, the already factional opposition boycotted the vote and are now in disarray.

Under international law, it is up to the people of Venezuela to solve their own problems and determine their own destiny. Our responsibility as citizens of the U.S. is to do all we can to stop our own government from interfering.

25 August , 2017