

WIN WITHOUT WAR



MESSAGING GUIDANCE:

Supporting the Venezuelan People and Averting a U.S. Military Intervention

Venezuela faces an unprecedented political and economic crisis. As prices and inflation have soared and the availability of food and medicine has plummeted, millions of Venezuelans have fled, while others have taken to the streets in protest. Nicolas Maduro (who took over Venezuela following the death of Hugo Chavez in 2013), has violently cracked down on protestors, thrown opponents and dissidents in jail, and engaged in widespread corruption. After a highly-disputed, flawed election process, both Maduro and opposition leader Juan Guaido claim they are the rightful leaders of Venezuela. Over the last month, the Trump administration has sent concerning signals that it is attempting to justify regime change: from threatening military intervention to politicizing humanitarian aid under the guise of human rights and democracy. **A U.S. military intervention would be unacceptable and we urge all members of Congress to vigorously oppose one.**

Members of Congress must instead counter these actions by offering a concrete plan forward to actually help secure stability, minimize conflict, and facilitate a negotiated transition that serves all Venezuelans:

- Such a plan is essential to interrupting the Trump administration's plans for war and undermining the administration's politicization of humanitarian aid and human suffering, bellicose saber-rattling, and threats of military intervention.
- Putting forward a positive vision of U.S. leadership in this crisis will help undermine the jingoism being pushed by the Trump administration and hawks on the Hill who seek war for their own financial benefit and/or ideology.
- Failure to do so will facilitate the continuation of the administration's escalatory strong-arm approach that is more than likely to lead to an unnecessary and catastrophic U.S. military intervention that will only increase Venezuelans' suffering and do nothing to secure human rights nor democracy for the Venezuelan people.

Members of Congress must offer an alternative approach by:

- Affirming the suffering of Venezuelans and recognizing that our options to help aren't limited to "war" or "nothing." If U.S. policymakers are sincere about standing with the people of Venezuela and helping to alleviate their suffering, there are things they can do RIGHT NOW:
 - Endorse Temporary Protected Status for Venezuela;
 - Fully fund and increase refugee resettlement goals, and grant asylum to Venezuelans seeking safety in the United States;
 - End the weaponization and politicization of humanitarian aid by facilitating the delivery of U.S. humanitarian assistance through impartial international institutions;
 - Increase funding to the UN to fulfill its humanitarian funding appeal that is currently only 7% funded;
 - Back off bellicose rhetoric and end threats of military intervention that drive support to the regime;

- Endorse coordinated, multilateral pressure on the Maduro regime through diplomacy and constructive, targeted sanctions that would not further harm the Venezuelan people;
- Support multilateral engagement such as through the International Contact Group that could lead to a negotiated political solution to the crisis and ensure the people of Venezuela lead in determining their own leadership through new elections.
 - Note: Maduro is a serial abuser of “dialogue” which he has used as an excuse to string the international community along for years. But there are serious multilateral efforts that seek facilitate negotiation towards a new, credible election that should be supported, not opposed. These efforts should focus on offering incentives for key Maduro regime supports, like the military, to defect in support of a transition.
- Vigorously insisting that US military intervention will only make things worse and that the president has NO congressional authorization to go to war:
 - The majority of Venezuelans [oppose](#) foreign military intervention, even if it removed Maduro from power, and prefer a negotiated solution to the crisis.
 - The United States’ history of military intervention in Latin American indicates a foreign military intervention in Venezuela will only exacerbate the conflict and foment more bloodshed.
 - Historically, the United States has weaponized "human rights" and "democracy" to justify regime change wars in Latin America (and the Middle East) for corporate (oil) interests. When the U.S. does this, challenges get worse for everybody, but especially the people whose human rights the United States claims to be concerned about.
 - In Venezuela, this approach will likely entrench Maduro's power further, as recent interviews on the ground [indicate](#).
 - This approach also risks igniting a civil war that could quickly become internationalized, setting up a potential conflict between the United States and Russia, destabilizing the region without a plan for how to move forward, all of which would lead to a quagmire that would only exacerbate violence, poverty, hunger, displacement and the suffering of Venezuelans.
 - Meanwhile, Trump has ZERO authorization from Congress for a war in Venezuela and only Congress can decide whether, when, and where the United States goes to war.