



Newsletter of the Hands Off Venezuela campaign

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Dominant PSUV Sweeps Venezuela's 'Mega-Elections'

On November 21, Venezuelans went to the polls in regional and municipal elections. The election saw the return of the US-backed reactionary opposition which had boycotted elections for many years, as well as the presence of European Union observers. We reproduce here Paul Dobson's report of the results for Venezuelanalysis.com

Mérida, November 22, 2021 (venezuelanalysis.com) – The United Socialist Party (PSUV) landed a comprehensive victory in Venezuela's regional and local elections on Sunday, winning 83% of the governorships.

The ruling party secured at least 19 of the 23 governorships, as well as the important Caracas mayoralty according to initial results from the National Electoral Council (CNE) on Sunday night. The PSUV also successfully overturned rightwing incumbents in Mérida, Táchira and Anzoátegui states and held off fierce challenges in a number of others, including Miranda, Carabobo, Bolívar and Apure.

The ballot saw Venezuelans additionally elect 335 mayors, 253 regional legislators and 2,471 local councillors in what was the country's twenty-seventh election since 1998.

The 42.3% turnout was twelve points higher than December's parliamentary elections, bucking a recent downwards trend. Sunday's vote saw a wider electoral offer than on past occasions, with 111 parties running including the US-backed hard-right which returned to the ballot on the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) ticket. According to CNE Rector Roberto Picón, increased turnout is "the first step in reactivating politics in Venezuela and re-sewing trust in the institutions."

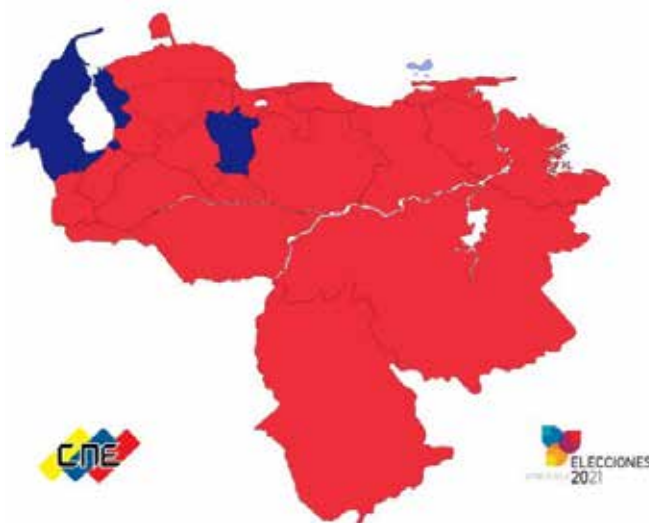
Following the CNE's initial bulletin with 91% of the votes

tallied, President Nicolás Maduro addressed the nation, promising to work alongside elected opposition leaders and lauding his party's continued hegemony. In the previous regional elections in 2017-18 the PSUV won 19 governorships.

"With this electoral victory, we will continue consolidating peace and stability in Venezuela. We will see a new prosperity and wealth generation coming from the workplace and collective efforts. The people have decided and shown us the path. The Patria has won!" he later tweeted.

For its part, opposition forces landed three governorships, with Barinas yet to be called. In the symbolically important government heartland where former president Hugo Chávez was born and raised, PSUV forces were narrowly leading but opposition candidate Freddy Superlano has claimed the voting tallies show he will win once the numbers are final.

In Zulia, the country's most populous state, the MUD scored a strong win in the race for governor, with former governor and 2006 presidential candidate Manuel Rosales defeating incumbent PSUV governor Omar Prieto by 57 to 37%. Following his victory, Rosales, who is already being projected as a potential 2024 presidential candidate, took to Twitter telling supporters that "hope had won" in the oil-rich region. The opposition alliance also won the mayor-



al race in the Zulia state capital of Maracaibo. The hardline sectors likewise scored a surprise and inaugural victory in the rural and traditional government stronghold state of Cojedes.

For its part, the more moderate right Democratic Alliance landed just one victory after backing Morel Rodríguez of the recently formed Neighborhood Force. He beat the PSUV's Dante Rivas by 43 to 39% in Nueva Esparta state. Despite strong candidates, opposition splits saw the alliance fail to make inroads in Anzoátegui, Táchira, Lara and Carabobo states, which were all won by the PSUV.

The fourth major bloc running - the leftwing APR - did not score any governorships but raised its vote percentages in a few states, including Portuguesa (10%).

Complete mayoral, regional legislator and local councilor results are still to be fully announced, but a more diverse political map is expected following recent electoral reforms benefiting smaller parties. With

13 of 335 mayoral races still to call, the CNE indicated that the PSUV had won 205, the MUD 59, the Democratic Alliance 37 and other unnamed parties 21.

Despite winning most of the governor races, the ruling PSUV secured only 45.7% of the vote, compared to 54.3% for anti-government forces. In addition to the three states won by the opposition, analysts have been quick to speculate that opposition splits allowed government victories in many regions. According to CNE data, a unified right may have won Apure, Barinas, Bolívar, Falcón, Guárico, Lara, Mérida, Monagas, Táchira, Trujillo and Yaracuy states, many of which are traditional Chavista strongholds. Likewise, no party won more than 50% of the vote except in Zulia (MUD), Delta Amacuro (PSUV) and Caracas (PSUV).

The voting process unfolded in a largely peaceful climate, with the only major issues coming in Zulia state.

According to a Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) press

release, over 800 people were denied their right to vote in Jesús María Semprun municipality after “grave violence and vandalism” and police tear gas forced a number of voting centers to be temporarily closed. While the causes of the violence remain unclear, the PCV has pointed to the local PSUV mayor and claimed “sabotage” against their candidate, who it alleges had a “great chance of victory.” The municipal race is yet to be called by the CNE.

Elsewhere in Zulia, local media reported that one man had died in a shooting outside a voting center and, in an unrelated incident, MUD candidate Eduardo Labrador claimed to have been attacked in San Francisco municipality.

Sunday’s vote was overseen by over 300 international observers from 55 countries and a host of international organizations, including the Carter Center, United Nations, the Latin American Council of Electoral Experts

(CEELA) and the European Union (EU). CEELA president Nicanor Moscoso praised the process and claimed it had “consolidated Venezuela’s democratic institutions.” Other missions, including the EU, are due to present their findings on Tuesday.

International reaction to the elections has been slow, with Brussels yet to comment. For its part, the US State Department rejected the vote as “flawed” and “grossly skewed,” claiming that the Maduro government

had “deprived” the country of a free and fair election. No evidence was offered to back up the claims.

“We commend the political parties and candidates as well as voters who decided to participate in this process despite its flaws to preserve and fight for much-needed democratic space,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrote in a statement while reiterating support for self-proclaimed “Interim President” Juan Guaidó.

For a Christmas without jailed workers

Open Letter to President Nicolas Maduro Moros

The letter that we publish below was written by the groups and political organizations that are part of the Committee of relatives and friends for the freedom of jailed workers, in order to demand justice for the seventeen cases of worker comrades and revolutionary social fighters, unjustly detained for having opposed the commission of acts of corruption and / or having defended the interests and historical achievements of the Venezuelan working class.

It has been signed so far by more than 300 revolutionary militants, workers, artists, students, intellectuals, members of political parties of the left, social organizations, among others.

Caracas, November 10, 2021
Citizen Nicolás Maduro Moros

Constitutional President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Respected Colleague:
The Committee of Family and Friends for the Freedom of Work-

ers is a grassroots organization made up of people and organizations of the Venezuelan labor, trade union and human rights movement, which have been accompanying the struggles for the transformation of the country for many years. and, especially, starting in 1999, with the arrival of the

Bolivarian Revolution to power, led by Commander Chávez. Exercising our rights, we have come together in this Committee to demand freedom and respect for due process for our relatives and friends, who are unjustly deprived of liberty.

Today we are writing to you in your capacity as President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Head of State, constitutionally empowered to make decisions regarding the proposals that we present below.

Our relatives and friends are people who come from the people, without wealth, who are part of the popular and excluded subject that the Bolivarian Revolution has claimed as the main protagonist of this process; committed to the struggles that have historically put the rights of the working class and the oppressed and exploited people at the center. Today they are being prosecuted by a penal system that, as Commander Chávez recalled in the Plan for the Homeland, has not managed to transform itself and continues to reproduce the social inequalities that the Bolivarian Revolution aims to eradicate. Their cases have been characterized by irregularities such as: arrest without a court order, baseless prosecutorial accusations, repeated postponement of hearings, adoption of legal decisions against the law, resulting in trials and convictions without evidentiary basis in the files. Additionally, our relatives are in precarious prison conditions.

We are concerned to see that

this situation does not seem to interest anyone within the Venezuelan State. We say so because we have made multiple efforts at all levels in the Venezuelan State and in its different public powers, including numerous requests to be received by the Presidential Commission for the Judicial Revolution, which you appointed a few months ago due to your concern about the peremptory transformation that our penal system requires. However, we have not received any response.

For all this, and in order to correct this enormous injustice that the Venezuelan State is committing by keeping innocent workers deprived of their liberty, without allowing them to have had a fair and just trial; contributing with these actions to make a reality the profound transformation of the criminal justice system in Venezuela that you have demanded; we ask you, in your capacity as Head of State, to repair the damage caused to our people and make possible a Christmas without Jailed Workers. In this sense, and based on the attributions indicated in article 236, literal 19 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, or any other legal mechanism that you consider pertinent and allows a clean, fast, objective and true justice, we request that you grant a measure of grace that concedes full and immediate freedom to the people mentioned in the attached list, prioritizing for humanitarian reasons, those who are deprived of liberty.

Join Hands Off Venezuela!

The international broad-based Hands Off Venezuela campaign was established in 2002 to generate awareness about Venezuela, especially within the trade union and Labour movements. Our main task is to mobilise public opinion against imperialist aggression towards Venezuela.

The basic aims of the campaign are to:

- Give full support to the Venezuelan revolution, which has repeatedly proved its democratic credentials.
- Defend the revolution against the attacks of imperialism and its local agents the Venezuelan oligarchy.
- To counteract the media distortions and lies about Venezuela.

To get your trade union or other organisation affiliated, here are the recommended annual affiliation fees: National trade unions: £500, regional bodies: £250, branches/trades councils: £50, others: £25. Membership fees for individuals are: waged: £7.50 and unwaged: £5 (suggested)

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