

Chavez Struggles to Recover

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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A previous article said major surgery for any reason is daunting. Four times for the same illness in 18 months present special challenges.

Chavez struggles to recover. He hopes he's cancer free. He's undergoing difficult post-operative procedures. Reports suggest he's proceeding on track. Internal bleeding and respiratory infection problems were corrected. More on his current status below.

It's unclear if he'll return in time for his January 10 inauguration. A previous article said under Venezuelan constitutional law, Article 233 states:

"The President of the Republic shall become permanently unavailable to serve by reason of any of the following events: death; resignation; removal from office by decision of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice; permanent physical or mental disability certified by a medical board designated by the Supreme Tribunal of Justice with the approval of the National Assembly; abandonment of his position....and by recall by popular vote."

If the President is permanently unavailable to serve during his first four years, a new election will be held "by universal suffrage and direct ballot" within 30 days.

"Between pending election and inauguration, the Executive Vice President shall assume the Presidency."

"If permanent unavailability occurs during his last two years, the Executive Vice President shall complete the term of office."

Article 234 states:

"A President of the Republic who becomes temporarily unavailable to serve shall be replaced by the Executive Vice President for a period of up to 90 days, which may be extended by resolution of the National Assembly for an additional 90 days."

"If the temporarily unavailability continues for more than 90 consecutive days, the National Assembly shall have the power to decide by a majority vote of its members whether the unavailability to serve should be considered permanent."

Under Article 235, "The absence of the President of the Republic from the territory of Venezuela requires authorization from the National Assembly or the Delegated Committee, when such absence continues for a period exceeding five consecutive days."

Chavez may need more recovery time. Aides want swearing-in postponed. Venezuelans overwhelmingly elected him. If able, they want him to serve. Constitutional interpretation

has wiggle room.

Article 231 states:

“The candidate elected shall take office as President of the Republic on January 10 of the first year of his constitutional term, by taking an oath before the National Assembly.”

“If for any supervening reason, the person elected President of the Republic cannot be sworn in before the National Assembly, he shall take the oath of office before the Supreme Tribunal of Justice.”

No date is specified. National Assembly president Diosdado Cabello said “The decision of a whole people can’t be subject to just one day, whatever the constitution may say.”

“There’s the precedent of a mayor who postponed his taking on the position for three months. I don’t remember his name right now but it’s a true fact. The law just can’t be interpreted so rigidly.”

Venezuela’s National Assembly can extend Chavez’s absence up to six months. Vice President Maduro can replace him for 90 days. The NA can authorize an additional 90 days.

Thereafter it would decide if absence is permanent by majority vote. Chavez’s PSUV members dominate the body. They’re not about to unelect their popular leader.

At issue is whether Chavez is healthy to serve. When swearing-in is possible appears secondary. Government officials say he’ll be sworn in on January 10 or some other date.

On December 25, the [Havana Times](#) published Chavez’s Christmas eve message. Vice President Maduro conveyed his wishes.

“President Chavez asked me to give his special greeting to all the children of Venezuela on this Christmas eve,” he said.

“He told me that he has received with much love the prayers of our people and the sister peoples of the world.”

He added that he’s doing his post-operative exercises. He asked about government 2013 – 2019 planning progress. Maduro said he’s keeping him informed.

On December 18, [Granma Internacional](#) published Fidel Castro’s letter to Vice President Maduro. It was read during ALBA’s 8th anniversary commemoration.

“Dear Nicolas Maduro,” it said.

“To mark the anniversaries that you are celebrating today I wish to express the following to you: The absence of the President elected by more than eight million Venezuelans moves us all.”

“I met Hugo Chávez exactly 18 years ago. Someone invited him to Cuba and he accepted the invitation. He told me that he was thinking of asking for an interview with me.”

"I was far from imagining that those soldiers branded as coup plotters by the news agencies, who sowed their ideas with so much discretion for years, were a select group of Bolivarian revolutionaries."

"I waited for Chávez at the airport, took him to where he was staying and talked with him for hours, exchanging ideas."

The following day, in the University of Havana's Aula Magna, each one of us expressed our ideas."

"Our conceptions differ in aspects which are far removed from political ideas and principles. We do not even discuss those conceptions."

"Our medical cooperation with Venezuela began as a result of the Vargas tragedy, in which thousands of people died as a consequence of the abandonment and lack of foresight experienced by the poorest population of this state."

"For its part, Venezuela has shown particular solidarity with the peoples of the Caribbean, Central America and South America."

It has developed strong links with Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and other nations."

"It has cultivated relations with Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and other republics of the former USSR. It has not forgotten Palestine or Libya."

"It pays special attention to its economic links with China. It stands in solidarity with the peoples of Africa. It practices a policy of peace with all countries."

"The name of Hugo Chávez is admired and respected throughout the world. Everyone, even many of his adversaries, wishes him a prompt recovery. The doctors are fighting with optimism for this objective."

"As is known, all Cuban revolutionaries are followers of Martí and Bolívar. I have the certainty that, with him and however painful his absence, all of you will be capable of continuing his work."

"¡Viva Hugo Chávez!

¡Hasta la victoria siempre!

Fidel Castro Ruz"

On December 25, the [London Independent](#) headlined "Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez 'improving' after surgery," saying:

Maduro spoke to him by phone. He's up and walking. He's exercising. His spirit is positive.

Venezuelan officials gave "little specific information on (his) condition or his long-term prognosis."

On December 24, [AP](#) said Bolivia's Evo Morales was largely "silent" after visiting him in Havana last weekend. His stay was short. He came to express support.

On return to Bolivia, he said nothing further. Maduro and several cabinet ministers attended a Christmas eve mass. They assured Venezuelans that recovery is proceeding on course.

He suggested Chavez may not return by January 10. Attorney General Flores says constitutional authority lets the Supreme Court administer oath of office any time at its discretion if the National Assembly can't do it.

"Those who are counting on that date, hoping to thwart the Revolution and the will of the people, will end up frustrated once again," she said.

"What we have is a president who has been re-elected. He will take over, will be sworn in on that day, or another day. That is a formality."

Caracas District head Jaqueline Farias said "we are very happy because each hour (Chavez shows) signs that he is overcoming this phase of" his surgery.

Another Chavez supporter said Venezuela without him is "like a ship without a rudder." Venezuelans hope he'll recover, return, and continue leading the country.

On December 25, Maduro told them to "let January 10 arrive, and don't fall victim to speculation. The people reelected a president on October 7, and that's Chavez. The rest is speculation."

"What is certain is that the president has a leave of absence granted by the National Assembly to attend to his health."

"If this leave of absence has to be extended beyond January 10, the constitution will be activated and surely his swearing-in would take place before the Supreme Court" on an unspecified date.

Opposition lawyer Ricardo Antela says postponing swearing-in is possible if "by (January 10) there was a medical guarantee, publicly supported by the National Assembly, that the president will recover, and a new date is decided on."

Dubious reports circulate about Chavez's health. Some say he had a tracheotomy. Others suggest he needs artificial respiration. His condition is worsening. Liquid accumulated in his lungs, and/or he has a serious renal deficiency.

Maduro said his daily routine proceeds normally. Healing takes time. Chavez underwent six complicated hours of major surgery. Perhaps weeks more recovery time is needed. Most Venezuelans want him back no matter how long it takes.

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archived for easy listening.

<http://www.progressiveradionetwork.com/the-progressive-news-hour>

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