

Letter of Canadians Calling on the Government of Canada to Cease Its Illegal Attacks on Venezuela

By [Canadian Intellectuals, Professionals, Artists](#)

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Region: [Canada](#), [Latin America & Caribbean](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

The purpose of this letter is to persuade the Government of Canada and all the Members of Parliament to reverse its counterproductive policy towards Venezuela, on the grounds that it contravenes international laws, is unethical, undemocratic and is against the interest of the vast majority of Venezuelans.

The Canadian Government prides itself in its respect for the rule of law. It is therefore disturbing that this has not included the respect for international law, which is the only thing capable of preventing war among nations, any erosion of which is a threat against peace.

Canada has become leader of the ad-hoc Lima Group, a group that only came together after the OAS failed to achieve the majority vote necessary to support overthrowing Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro whose legitimate government is recognized by the United Nations, the Organization of American States, all the Non-aligned Countries, all Caribbean States under CARICOM, the African Union, Russia, China, and India. Innumerable social organizations and unions throughout the world support the legitimate government of President Maduro including the Canadian Labour Congress and CUPE.

This Lima Group declared its support for an individual who proclaimed himself president of Venezuela in a public plaza, without the benefit of any presidential election and in violation of the Constitution and electoral laws of Venezuela.

Canada has abandoned its longstanding policy of “constructive engagement” and adhered itself to the United States’ economic sanctions against Venezuela, sanctions imposed with the explicit declared purpose of bringing about regime change in Venezuela, and were accompanied by the statement that “the United States will continue to take concrete and forceful action”. These sanctions were not imposed by the UN Security Council and therefore violate international law. The sanctions also violate the U.N.’s Charter, the OAS’ Charter and resolutions of the International Court of Justice.

The UN Charter in its Article 2 states:

“All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.”

The UN Charter rests on the philosophy of multilateralism, a commitment to international cooperation and the sovereign equality of States. The principle of non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states have been reaffirmed in the UN General Assembly notably in Resolutions 2625 (XXV) and 3314 (XXIX).

This principle is invoked by a recent report of the judicial experts body of the Bundestag, Germany's lower house of the German parliament, by stating that there are "strong reasons" to affirm that the international recognition of Venezuela's self-proclaimed "interim president" Juan Guaidó could amount to interference in the country's internal affairs.

As well, the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action Article 32 of the UN Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States (adapted in 1974) stipulates that

"No state may use or encourage the use of economic, political, or any other type of measures to coerce another State in order to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights."

On 23 March 2018, the UN Human Rights Council condemned the unilateral coercive measures against Venezuela imposed by the USA (under Obama and Trump), Canada and the European Union.

The International Criminal Court in its Article 7 of the Rome Statute considers sanctions crimes against humanity. A recent UN Report of the Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order, Dr. A. De Zayas, has noted that the sanctions against Venezuela "are effectively compounding the grave crisis affecting the Venezuelan economy", and recommended an investigation of the economic sanctions against Venezuela as crimes against humanity under Article 7, and

The OAS Charter in its Chapter 4, Article 19, states:

"No state or group of states has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state. The foregoing principle prohibits not only armed force but also any other form of interference or attempted threat against the personality of the state or against its political, economic and cultural elements."

Further, the OAS Convention on the Duties and Rights of States in the Event of Civil Strife (21 April 1972) resolves:

"To reiterate solemnly the need for the member states of the Organization to observe strictly the principles of non-intervention and self-determination of peoples as a means of ensuring peaceful coexistence among them...and... To reaffirm the obligation of those states to refrain from applying economic, political, or any other type of measures to coerce another state and obtain from it advantages of any kind."

The US, Canadian and EU sanctions against Venezuela, are illegal and immoral. They directly impact the civilian population to create suffering. Sanctions are felt most especially among the poorest sectors of the Venezuelan population by causing shortages of food and medicines. They are human rights violations aimed at coercing a sovereign democracy.

Venezuela held presidential elections according to its laws, on 20 May 2018, a date that had been agreed upon by an opposition that had been clamoring for elections to be called ahead of schedule. Six opposition candidates backed by 16 opposition parties took part in the elections. Three other opposition parties chose not to participate, by their own decision. The

results were:

- President Maduro: 6.3 million votes, 67%
- Henry Falcón: 1.9 million votes, 20.9%
- Javier Bertucci: 996,181 votes, 10.8 %

The losing candidates all accepted the validity of the election results. 150 independent international observers, including a credible and respectful Canadian delegation, all accepted the election process as clean and transparent.

We regret that Canada's long tradition of balanced international diplomacy and its role in peacekeeping has been sullied by this aggressive, interventionist stance against a friendly country. Canada once could boast of an independent foreign policy, as when it withstood strong US pressure during the Cold War and refused to break relations with China and Cuba, and when it refused to join the U.S. military adventure to invade Vietnam and Iraq.

So it is with dismay that we see Canada joining the U.S. in this absurd recognition of an individual who, without the knowledge and support of the main Venezuelan political parties, without any public elections, claims to be president of Venezuela. If Canada hopes to be, and be seen as, a country that truly respects the rule of law, it must not collaborate with the U.S. neo-colonial war of conquest in Latin America to take possession of its natural resources - as the U.S. administration admits.

We ask the Canadian Government to withdraw from the Lima Group, to distance itself from the interventionist policy of the U.S. government, to rescind its illegal sanctions against Venezuela, and to repudiate any intervention by foreign countries in the internal affairs of Venezuela.

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