

Venezuelans Vote: Presidential Elections. Maduro vs. Capriles

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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On Sunday, April 14, PSUV's Nicolas Maduro (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) faces opposition Rountable of Democratic Unity (MUD) candidate Henrique Capriles Radonski. Most Venezuelans deplore him. They do so for good reason. He represents oligarch power, ties to Washington, and returning Venezuela to its ugly past.

Polls show Maduro way ahead. On average, he leads by 16 points – 53% to 37%.

On Friday, Latin American expert James Petras told Progressive Radio News Hour listeners to expect a heavy turnout. Maduro should win easily. He'll likely get 55% or more of the vote.

Perhaps he'll do better than expected. He represents what most Venezuelans support. It showed in Friday's massive turnout. It was the final pre-election rally.

Huge crowds packed seven avenues in central Caracas. Shoulder-to-shoulder supporters numbered over two million. Some estimates said three million.

It was impressive by any standard. It was one of Venezuela's largest ever rallies. It shows Chavismo lives.

Maduro addressed supporters. He paid tribute to Chavez's legacy. He said "imperialism and the decadent and parasitic bourgeoisie" thought Bolivarianism post-Chavez was "over."

It's institutionalized. "What's coming now is that there will be Chavez for a good while yet in the future of this free and independent nation."

"I'll be the president of the poor, the humble, of those in need, of the children."

He urged supporters to turn out en masse on Sunday. He warned about pre and post-electoral disruptions. "If they try a state coup," he said, "we'll make an even deeper revolution than this one."

"If they try to defeat us with votes, with votes we'll beat them too." Maintain "serenity, peace and trust," he urged. "Be alert" at all times.

He promised to "fulfill the entirety of the (Bolivarian) Plan of the Nation, handwritten by Hugo Chavez." He stressed "focus points."

They include combating crime and corruption, reducing insecurity, improving government efficiency, advancing social programs, maintaining economic growth, deepening participatory democracy, and eliminating internal sabotage.

On April 4, Maduro ordered Venezuela's military to protect power plants. He did so following

suspicious Cararcas and Aragua state outages.

He called them opposition efforts to wage “electricity” and “economic war.” He stressed the urgency of protecting “national security.”

Venezuela’s state-run National Electricity Corporation (Corpoelec) found 11 burned out transformers throughout Aragua state. Electrical lines were cut. Company president Argenis Chavez cited sabotage.

So did Maduro. He warned about other pre and post-election disruptions. [Venezuela Analysis](#) reported a foiled plot. On Friday, Vice President Jorge Arreaza announced it.

It involved Salvadorian mercenaries. They “wanted, but could not, intervene to disrupt the peace of the republic at the last minute.” Maduro explained more, saying:

“A group of mercenaries has entered the country from Central America. They have 3 objectives. They are coordinating with right wing groups from a Central American country, and they have coordinated with some of the sectors connected to the opposition candidate.”

One of their key objectives, he added, was to assassinate him days before April 14. Doing so would create an electoral and constitutional crisis.

On Thursday, he said security forces arrested Colombian paramilitaries. They’ve been operating covertly. They had Venezuelan military uniforms.

They were stockpiling C4 explosives, weapons and munitions. They came to incite violence. They “came to kill,” said Maduro. Mining and Oil Minister Rafeal Ramirez warned that Venezuela’s oil facilities may be targeted.

Maduro said opposition figure Armando Briquet’s involved. He’s a Capriles confidant. He’s “the go-between that Capriles has put in with the mercenaries which the El Salvadorian right have sent to sabotage the electrical system, mercenaries to assassinate Venezuelan men and women, who bring a plan to kill me too.”

“They want to kill me because they know that they cannot win in free elections, like those which we are going to have on the 14th of April.”

Foreign Minister Elias Jaua said mercenaries are connected to retired Salvadorian colonel Francisco Chavez Abarca, David Koch Arana, Guillermo Cader Acuna, Luis Posada Carriles, and others.

They’re linked with US-backed death squads involved in murdering thousands under the former Salvadorian dictatorship. They’re working with Capriles to destabilize Venezuela, Jaua added.

Maduro said they came to “increase homicides (and) commit scandalous crimes to exasperate public fears.” They also planned to sabotage Venezuela’s electrical grid.

Doing so would cause power outages. Opposition forces would take full advantage. They’d falsely blame them on government ineptitude.

“We have a lot of sabotage,” said Maduro. “We have already caught various people, and we

militarized the electrical substations.”

Tires were found in Aragua State. They were strategically placed. They were under electrical lines. They were there to create fires.

Opposition forces “declared war on the people,” said Maduro. They’re “conspiring to create a national power cut, but I call the people onto the streets to defend this revolution if those people dare to turn off this country.”

“I have a recording,” he added. “I have the photo of the meeting between the functionaries of the US embassy with a representative of (Capriles’ party) First Justice. (They’re) planning a nationwide power cut.”

Days earlier, PSUV’s Diosdado Cabello released other phone recordings, documents and emails. They showed Capriles and other MUD opposition figures planning not to recognize election results.

Pre-election, a smear campaign targeted Venezuela’s National Electoral Council (CNE). It oversees election procedures. It functions independently.

It’s separate from the executive, legislative and judicial branches. CNE President Tibisay Lucena heads it. She’s done so since 2006.

Smartmatic touchscreen electronic voting machines are used. They’re reliable. They work as intended. They’re designed to eliminate tampering. They provide verifiable paper ballot receipts. They’re a permanent record. CNE saves them. They’re available for recounts if needed.

Voters leave an electronic thumbprint. Doing so assures no one votes more than once.

Independent studies verify that results reflect popular sentiment. Pre and post-election audits are conducted. Carter Center director Jennifer McCoy calls Venezuela’s electronic voting system “the most comprehensive (she’s) seen in the world.”

She said post-election audits “never had any significant discrepancy between the paper receipts and the electronic system.”

CNE oversees Venezuela’s electoral process fairly, reliably and conscientiously. Jimmy Carter calls it the world’s best. It’s no exaggeration.

OAS Secretary-General Jose Insulza Salinas called last October’s presidential election an “exemplary” one.

At the same time, the Report of the EU Observer Mission said it was conducted “in respect of national laws and international standards. (It had) a high turnout and peaceful atmosphere.”

According to the Union of South American Nations:

“Venezuela has a very credible and reliable electoral system. (It’s) one of the most sophisticated systems in Latin America. It has been an international leader in electoral matters.”

Even MUD officials disagree. Executive Secretary Ramon Guillermo Aveledo called CNE procedures “an excellent indication of the democratic institutions in the country (and) a demonstration of respect from us to them.”

All Venezuelans are enfranchised at birth. It’s constitutionally mandated. Article 56 states:

“All persons have the right to be registered free of charge with the Civil Registry Office after birth, and to obtain public documents constituting evidence of the biological identity, in accordance with law.”

Article 63 calls suffrage “a right. It shall be exercised through free, universal, direct and secret elections. The law shall guarantee the principle of personalization of suffrage and proportional representation.”

According to article 64, all Venezuelan citizens aged 18 or older “are qualified to vote.” In state, municipal and parish elections, foreign nationals aged 18 or older who’ve lived in Venezuela over 10 years may do so.

Faced with certain defeat, opposition forces may try anything. Venezuelans have final say. On Sunday, expect Bolivarianism to remain triumphant. It’s institutionalized. It’s here to stay.

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