

**Testimony of Enrique J. Roig**  
**Deputy Assistant Secretary of State**  
**Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor**  
**Before the**  
**House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere**  
**“Maduro Stole the Elections Again: The Response to Fraud in Venezuela”**  
**September 20, 2024**

Chairwoman Salazar, Ranking Member Castro, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today about the ongoing human rights violations in Venezuela following the July 28th presidential election.

The post-election repression in Venezuela has been both severe and unprecedented in the country’s history. Nicolás Maduro’s regime has resorted to a campaign of violence and intimidation aimed at suppressing the democratic opposition and the Venezuelan people. As of September 9, there have been 24 deaths and over 2,000 detentions — including 84 minors — linked directly to the regime’s crackdown on those contesting the National Electoral Commission’s (CNE) election results. The daily average number of detained or disappeared is nearly 10 times higher than the pre-election average.

Security forces routinely stop citizens to review their WhatsApp messaging chats for potential organizing involvement and deployed an app for Maduro sympathizers to report suspected efforts to assemble.

The “anti-NGO” law passed by Maduro’s National Assembly in August, along with revival of the “law against fascism” highlight Maduro’s intentions to undermine civil society. These laws are designed to make it nearly impossible for NGOs and opposition organizations to operate in Venezuela, limiting their ability to provide services, organize, or campaign freely. The case of CNE rector Juan Carlos Delpino is particularly concerning. As one of two opposition-aligned CNE members, Delpino exposed election irregularities, stating the CNE had no evidence Maduro won. He has since

gone into hiding, fearing retribution. Edmundo González Urrutia, who won the most votes on July 28, faces an arrest warrant without legitimate charges and has sought refuge in Spain due to credible threats to his and his family's safety.

The Department of State, including the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, remains deeply committed to supporting the Venezuelan opposition, human rights defenders, and civil society. We are engaged in direct communication with opposition leaders, including Edmundo González and María Corina Machado. Secretary Blinken spoke with both leaders shortly after the election to express U.S. concern for their safety and support for their democratic cause.

We have also supported Venezuelan defenders of democracy through multilateral diplomacy. The Organization of American States passed a U.S.-sponsored resolution that calls for transparency, impartial review of the election results, and the protection of electoral integrity. Additionally, the United States continues to work through the UN Human Rights Council in supporting the renewal of the mandate of Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela. The Fact-Finding Mission plays a vital role in the international community's efforts to hold the Maduro regime accountable for human rights abuses. The United States also joined the European Union and 28 other governments in a Human Rights Council Joint Statement on Venezuela, demanding an end to repression and the release of detained opposition figures. It is also worth noting that on September 12, the United States, along with 50 other countries, joined Panama's Foreign Minister outside the UN Security Council to call on Venezuelans to begin constructive and inclusive discussions to restore democratic norms.

Despite these actions, the operating environment in Venezuela remains dire. NGOs and opposition figures struggle amidst violence, legal harassment, and censorship. The anti-NGO act criminalizes essential civil society activities, restricts international funding, imposes burdensome regulations, and threatens organizations challenging the regime's narrative.

Maduro's regime also controls the media landscape, making it difficult for the opposition to disseminate their message. Social media platforms, a critical tool for the opposition, have been targeted by regime surveillance and internet blackouts. Despite these challenges, the opposition continues to rally support.

Unfortunately, direct access to detained figures, such as opposition leaders or activists, remains extremely limited. Maduro has made it clear that international organizations and governments will face barriers to oversight, as demonstrated by the closure of the OHCHR office in Venezuela. Implementing programs is increasingly difficult with many activities revised or postponed given the ongoing repression. During the most intense digital repression wave the country has ever experienced, DRL programs have maintained uninterrupted access to blocked content. DRL programs have also been documenting cases of political prisoners and arbitrary detentions, informing the world on current patterns that have emerged post-election. Additionally, DRL programs have helped unify communities and networks that share the desire for a restoration of their country's democracy. DRL remains committed to continuing its essential support.

In closing, the human rights violations and abuses following the July 28th election in Venezuela are a direct attack on the country's democracy. Maduro's regime uses severe repression to systematically stifle dissent and cling to power. The United States remains steadfast in its support for Venezuelan civil society, opposition leaders, and the democratic aspirations of the Venezuelan people. We will continue to work tirelessly with the international community to apply pressure, demand accountability, and support those who are fighting for a free and democratic Venezuela. This is evident from our announcement on September 12, of sanctions and visa restrictions on individuals undermining the electoral process and suppressing the democratic opposition.

Chairwoman Salazar and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your queries and to working with this Committee in the future. Thank you.