

**Testimony of Amb. Kevin Sullivan
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Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
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, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today at this critical moment in Venezuela’s history.

The U.S. government has remained steadfast in our commitment to support the people of Venezuela in their democratic aspirations. Last October, the Venezuelan democratic opposition and representatives of Nicolás Maduro signed the Barbados Agreement, a roadmap for resolving Venezuela’s political, economic, and humanitarian crisis by creating the conditions needed to hold competitive and inclusive elections in Venezuela. Soon thereafter, María Corina Machado won the opposition parties’ primary election to run as their consensus presidential candidate with more than 90 percent of the votes.

The U.S. government took steps to incentivize a competitive election. In October 2023, the Department of the Treasury issued a temporary general license authorizing transactions in Venezuela’s oil and natural gas sector for six months.

However, in January, the Maduro-backed Supreme Justice Tribunal (TSJ) unjustly barred María Corina Machado from holding office, and her chosen replacement was also prevented from registering to run for president. In response to this anti-democratic behavior and repression by Maduro and his representatives, Treasury announced the end of its general license for oil and gas activities, but we continued to push for a competitive presidential election. Just prior to the

deadline, Maduro's National Electoral Commission (CNE) allowed Edmundo González Urrutia to register as the opposition's consensus candidate. Gonzalez campaigned throughout the country with María Corina Machado beside him and remained on the ballot through election day. On July 28, the Venezuelan people turned out to vote in historic numbers. More than 12 million Venezuelans voted in the face of threats, arrests, arbitrary rules, and intimidation; they voted to express their will for the democratic future of Venezuela.

Pre-election opinion polls, election day exit polls, and precinct-level results collected by the democratic opposition parties' poll watchers all pointed toward a clear victory for Edmundo González. Yet hours later, the Maduro-controlled CNE declared Nicolás Maduro the winner. To this day, the CNE has not published precinct-level results or presented any other evidence to substantiate its baseless claim of a Maduro victory. By contrast, shortly after the election, the democratic opposition posted online official precinct-level tally sheets representing more than 80 percent of all voting tables nationwide. These tally sheets, which have been corroborated by independent observers and electoral experts, show that Edmundo González won 67 percent of the vote to Maduro's 30 percent. The opposition's impressive effort to collect this polling station information is a testament to their organization and tenacity, and to the people of Venezuela, who at great risk came out to demand their voices be heard.

The Carter Center and the UN Panel of Experts, who had been invited by Maduro representatives to observe the election, each published independent assessments noting the tally sheets collected and released by the Opposition appeared genuine, while the CNE announcement of election results claiming Maduro won lacked transparency and integrity and failed to meet basic democratic standards.

Maduro and his allies have continued to refuse to recognize the will of the Venezuelan people, or to heed the repeated call of the international community to release detailed election results and have instead launched widespread repression in an attempt to cling to power. My colleague from DRL can provide additional details. Winning candidate Edmundo González Urrutia is now in Spain because Maduro representatives issued a warrant for his arrest on baseless, politically motivated charges.

The United States and international partners have clearly signaled to Maduro and his representatives that their actions and fraudulent claims to have won the election are unacceptable. Few governments have recognized Maduro's shameless attempt to claim victory. On September 12, the Departments of Treasury and State announced sanctions and visa restrictions on Maduro-aligned officials for their role in the election manipulation and the repressive aftermath. We are working with our partners in the international community to coordinate additional efforts to hold Maduro and his representatives accountable.

Democratic governments in the region and beyond are unified in pressing Maduro for transparency and an end to repression, with strong U.S. leadership and support. The Organization of American States, for example, adopted a U.S.-led resolution by consensus. More than 50 countries supported Panama's statement of concern in New York outside the UN Security Council. With the UN General Assembly approaching, we are leading additional lines of effort with our partners to continue applying pressure.

Distinguished members of the Committee: if we had said two years ago that Venezuela would hold competitive elections resulting in clear evidence of a victory by a consensus candidate representing democratic change, few would have believed it. But that's where we are today, thanks to the Venezuelan people's bravery and resilience, the organizational capacity and

resourcefulness of Venezuela's democratic opposition, and steadfast support from the United States and many other partners in the international community. A sizable majority of Venezuelans chose Edmundo González Urrutia and peaceful democratic change – not six more years of Nicolás Maduro -- and the world sees that more clearly than ever after the July 28 election.

We will continue to advocate for Venezuelan-led discussions that lead to a peaceful resolution of this crisis, a return to democratic norms, and an end to repression and violence. The people of Venezuela deserve nothing less. Thank you for this opportunity and I am prepared to take your questions.