



## **Report of the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) of the Secretariat for Strengthening Democracy of the OAS on the presidential elections in Venezuela for Secretary General Luis Almagro**

July 30, 2024

The Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) of the Secretariat for Strengthening Democracy (SSD) of the Organization of American States (OAS) considers that, under the current circumstances, the results announced by the National Electoral Council (CNE) proclaiming Nicolás Maduro the winner in the presidential election of Sunday, July 28 in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela cannot be recognized.

More than six hours after the closing of the polls, the CNE made a single announcement in a press conference, indicating that it had processed the results of 80% of the polling stations and declaring the pro-government candidate as the winner without providing the details of the polling stations processed, without publishing the official tally sheets and providing only the aggregate percentages of the votes received by the main political groups. The CNE falsely characterized these data as "irreversible." The figures published on the official channel also contained arithmetical errors.

The events of election night confirm the existence of a coordinated strategy, which has been unfolding over the last few months, to undermine the integrity of the electoral process. From a democratic point of view, a series of factors make it impossible to recognize the official figures: the opacity of the CNE and its refusal to allow national and international observation; extreme inequity in the contest; intimidation and political persecution; the banning of certain candidates; attacks on the press and on the right to information; the delay in the opening of voting centers and in the disclosure of results; the reluctance to allow witnesses from opposition groups to enter the polling stations and centers or to provide them with a copy of the tally sheets; the suspension of the transmission of results from a number of voting centers; the interruption of the CNE web page service since Sunday night; the announcement of an alleged hacking of the transmission system without providing any evidence; and, above all, the contradiction between the announced percentages and those of citizen-led verification findings made public at the conclusion of the vote count, which also coincided with the sampling and exit polls that applied technical methodologies.

Since before Election Day, the presidential election had been characterized by a succession of arbitrary obstructions to the exercise of active and passive suffrage, in the form of illegal contrivances, intimidation, violence, detentions, expulsions, disqualifications, bureaucratic obstacles, electoral use of the state apparatus, and a long list of further obstacles to the free manifestation of the will of the people. These actions sought to tip the balance in favor of the ruling party, discourage and intimidate the opposition, deceive and confuse the electorate, and, in general, circumvent the electoral regulations and the agreements reached in a comprehensive negotiation process with international support. Unfortunately, the efforts of the ruling party to control the electoral process did not cease on July 28, but rather intensified at the close of voting.



From the eve of the election and throughout the day, millions of Venezuelan men and women went to the polls peacefully and en masse, both inside the country and in cities abroad. Despite the fact that less than 70 thousand people were eligible to vote abroad,<sup>1</sup> out of a potential electorate of around five million, emigrants from Venezuela gathered in demonstrations and rallies in various parts of the world. Although they were unable to exercise their vote, they made their views known with conviction. The questionable behavior of the government and the CNE is especially lamentable in view of the enthusiasm demonstrated by the country's citizens in this election.

In recent decades, the OAS has deployed Electoral Observation Missions (EOM) at the service of the democracies of the inter-American system, based on a rigorous methodology that seeks to ensure compliance with the electoral legislation of each country and to issue recommendations for continuous improvement of electoral processes. In Venezuela, the OAS deployed 11 EOMs from 1992 until 2006, when the Organization received the last invitation to observe in Venezuelan territory.

Nevertheless, the Organization has continued to monitor Venezuelan politics and elections and has issued a series of pronouncements on the progressive weakening of the country's democratic institutions. In the context of the current electoral process, the OAS General Secretariat condemned<sup>2</sup> the political persecution of opposition leaders and in particular the disqualification of the candidacy of María Corina Machado, winner of the primaries of the main opposition alliance and leading candidate in the polls.

In compliance with the OAS mandate to protect and promote democracy and human rights, the following is a report on the July 28, 2024 process, based, inter alia, on primary and secondary sources that include direct conversations with key figures in the process, analysis of electoral regulations, incidents and findings gathered by national observation initiatives and civil society organizations, public communications from political and institutional actors, and information disseminated through the media and social networks.

Although this document is not the equivalent of an election observation report-as the OAS was not present in Venezuelan territory, nor was it able to implement the corresponding methodologies-the analysis is based on technical criteria and international standards and best practices, as well as on the experience accumulated in observing hundreds of elections throughout the Western Hemisphere. The document covers the pre-electoral period and election day, including the vote count and dissemination of the results. In addition, this document lists the technical and legal irregularities evidenced in those phases of the process.

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<sup>1</sup> CEPAZ, REDAC, and REC. 2024. "Derechos limitados: vulneraciones a la participación electoral de las personas venezolanas en el exterior" ("*Rights curtailed: violations to the electoral participation of Venezuelan citizens abroad.*") See: <https://cepaz.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Derechos-limitados.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Statement by the OAS General Secretariat regarding recent events in Venezuela. January 28, 2024 (C-003/ 24). See: [https://www.oas.org/en/media\\_center/press\\_release.asp?sCodigo=E-003/24](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-003/24)



Due to the context of repression, arbitrary detentions, censorship, and intimidation in Venezuela, some of the associations that provided verifiable and valuable information and data to the OAS have requested anonymity. The OAS Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) wishes to thank those associations that, in an environment of repression and hostility, have decided to continue fighting for Venezuelan democracy and congratulates them for maintaining their democratic convictions. DECO has cross-referenced the information provided to verify its reliability and veracity.

This report was prepared by the technical area of the General Secretariat specializing in electoral matters in order to inform the Secretary General regarding what occurred during the electoral process carried out in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

## I. PRE-ELECTORAL PHASE

On March 5, 2024, Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE) announced that presidential elections would be held on July 28, 2024.<sup>3</sup> After numerous complications detailed in the following pages, 10 candidates participated in the race.<sup>4</sup> In the end, no woman candidate succeeded in competing for the presidency.

The presidential electoral process took place in a climate of intense polarization and distrust of the electoral system. The disappearance of distinctions between the State, the government, and the ruling party has translated into government control of all public institutions, including the legislative branch, the judicial system, the army, the police, the intelligence service, the CNE, and various media outlets. This is compounded by the presence of paramilitary armed groups linked to the government, as documented by various national and international organizations.<sup>5</sup>

As background, it is necessary to recall the 2018 presidential election, which was widely rejected by the international community due to the arbitrary manipulation of electoral deadlines, the banning of several contenders, and the absence of minimum guarantees of transparency, which led most of the opposition

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<sup>3</sup> CNE Venezuela. 2024. Electoral timetable. See:

[http://www.cne.gob.ve/web/normativa\\_electoral/elecciones/2024/eleccion\\_presidencial/cronograma/CRONOGRAMA\\_ELECCION PRESIDENCIAL\\_2024.pdf](http://www.cne.gob.ve/web/normativa_electoral/elecciones/2024/eleccion_presidencial/cronograma/CRONOGRAMA_ELECCION PRESIDENCIAL_2024.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Nicolás Maduro, for the Gran Polo Democrático; Edmundo González, for the Plataforma Unitaria Democrática (PUD); Daniel Ceballos, for AREPA and Voluntad Popular; Bejamín Rausseao, for the Confederación Nacional Demócrata (CONDE); Claudio Fermín, for Soluciones por Venezuela; Enrique Márquez, for Centrados en la Gente; Luis Eduardo Martínez, for Acción Democrática, Bandera Roja, Movimiento Republicano, and Unión Nacional Electoral; Javier Bertucci, for El Cambio; Antonio Ecarri, for Alianza del Lápiz; José Britto, for Primero Venezuela, Primero Justicia, Unidad Visión Venezuela, and Venezuela Unidad.

<sup>5</sup> Efecto Cucuyo. June 30, 2023. "Informe del CDH Ucab revela cómo los colectivos armados son una de las causas de la migración forzada" ("CDH Ucab report reveals how armed collectives are one of the causes of forced migration".) See: <https://efectocucuyo.com/venezuela-migrante/informe-del-cdh-ucab-revela-como-los-colectivos-armados-son-una-de-las-causas-de-la-migracion-forzada/>



to abstain from participating<sup>6</sup> and dozens of countries to disavow the result and, thus, the legitimacy of Nicolás Maduro to continue governing.<sup>7</sup>

As was the case six years ago, the 2024 presidential election was an extremely unfair contest. The excessive concentration of power and the elimination of checks and balances had, once again, clear electoral consequences, including: the detention and persecution of members of the opposition and their collaborators, the creation of an atmosphere of intimidation and threats, the application of legal subterfuges to neutralize rival forces and marginalize segments of the electorate, the use of public resources and clientelist networks for proselytizing purposes, the lack of transparency, and restrictions on the right to information.

However, the main difference between this presidential process and that of 2018 was the participation of a united opposition, albeit one that was clearly disadvantaged. In part, this was due to the negotiation between the government and the opposition Plataforma Unitaria de Venezuela, with the support of several countries, which resulted in the "Partial Agreement on the Promotion of Political Rights and Electoral Guarantees for All", signed in October 2023. The document, known as the "Barbados Agreement",<sup>8</sup> reiterated the right of political forces to select their candidates, provided for the holding of presidential elections in the second semester of 2024,<sup>9</sup> and established a series of guarantees regarding the updating of the electoral registry, the performance of audits, the invitation of certain technical electoral observation missions, and the promotion of favorable conditions for the development of a peaceful, safe, equitable, and reliable process.

However, as described below, various actions taken by the government and the state apparatus under its control were aimed at contradicting both the letter and the spirit of the Barbados Agreement.

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<sup>6</sup> Report of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States. Presidential and Legislative Council elections in Venezuela. May 20, 2018. See: [Report-Presidential-Elections-in-Venezuela-20-of-May-2018-v1.pdf \(oas.org\)](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-001/19)

<sup>7</sup> Organization of American States. January 10, 2019. "OAS Permanent Council Agrees 'to not recognize the legitimacy of Nicolas Maduro's new term'." See: [https://www.oas.org/en/media\\_center/press\\_release.asp?sCodigo=E-001/19](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-001/19)

<sup>8</sup> Barbados Agreement. 2023. See: <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/ac03d5655a8448e0a9653cd95d5c7978/garantias-electorales.pdf> [See also: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbados\\_Agreement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbados_Agreement)]

<sup>9</sup> Historically, presidential elections have been held in December. In 2018, they were moved forward to May, drastically compressing the electoral calendar. Report of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States. Presidential and Legislative Council elections in Venezuela. May 20, 2018. See: [Report-presidential-elections-in-Venezuela-20-of-May-2018-v1.pdf \(oas.org\)](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-001/19) and Barbados Agreement. October 17, 2023. See: <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/ac03d5655a8448e0a9653cd95d5c7978/garantias-electorales.pdf> [See also: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbados\\_Agreement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbados_Agreement)]



## Disqualification of candidacies and elected authorities and removal from office

In May 2022, the Plataforma Unitaria announced a primary election process, scheduled for October 2023, to determine its presidential candidacy.<sup>10</sup> Former congresswoman María Corina Machado soon emerged as the pre-candidate with the best chances of obtaining the nomination. On October 22, 2023, Machado was elected by an overwhelming majority in the primaries of the opposition alliance, obtaining more than 90% of the votes cast.<sup>11</sup>

At the request of a pro-government congressman, in June 2023, the General Directorate of Special Procedures of the Comptroller General of the Republic issued an official notice<sup>12</sup> reiterating an administrative disqualification from holding public office imposed in 2015 against Mrs. Machado for alleged administrative irregularities, originally for 12 months and subsequently extended to 15 years. The time, tone, form, and substance of that notice<sup>13</sup> leave little doubt as to the political instrumentalization of the comptroller's office.

Since the turn of the century, but especially since 2018, the disqualification of political parties and candidacies has curtailed political plurality in Venezuela, essentially reducing electoral options to the governing party, figures akin to the ruling party, or opposition candidacies with little popular support. Civil society organizations have registered more than 1,400 citizens disqualified from public office since 2002.<sup>14</sup> Frequently, as in the case of Ms. Machado, the disqualifications have been carried out in administrative proceedings, instead of through judicial proceedings better suited to protect the human right to stand as a candidate (*sufragio pasivo*). As established by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (I/A Court H.R.), and as reiterated by various OAS Electoral Observation Missions in other countries, the requirements that apply to the exercise of political rights cannot be abusive or arbitrary and the conditions must be provided by law in a formal and material sense, pursue a legitimate purpose, and meet the criteria of suitability, necessity, and proportionality, in accordance with the sequence of parameters established in inter-American jurisprudence.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> La Patilla. May 16, 2022. Plataforma Unitario informó sobre últimas decisiones para detener el sufrimiento de los venezolanos (Comunicado) (Plataforma Unitario reported on latest decisions to stop the suffering of Venezuelans - Press release.) See:

<https://presidenciantvzla.com/presidencia/comunicado-de-la-plataforma-unitaria-sobre-las-ultimas-decisiones-para-avanzar-en-el-cambio-politico-y-detener-el-sufrimiento-de-millones-de-venezolanos/>

<sup>11</sup> Official X account of the National Primary VE Commission (@cnprimariave). October 23, 2023 See:

<https://x.com/cnprimariave/status/1716593781158420686>

<sup>12</sup> The resolution was issued five months before the legislative elections, in which Ms. Machado was expected to participate. Resolution No. 01-00-0000398 of July 13, 2014. See: <https://elcooperante.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Documento-de-la-Contratolia-de-la-Republica.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Supreme Court of Justice of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. August 14, 2023. Joint presentation. See:

[historico.tsj.gob.ve/decisiones/scon/agosto/328992-1243-14823-2023-23-0706.HTML](https://historico.tsj.gob.ve/decisiones/scon/agosto/328992-1243-14823-2023-23-0706.HTML) and Acceso a la Justicia. January 26, 2024. “La SPA declaró sin lugar la reclamación por vía de hecho intentada por María Corina Machado y ratifica que está inhabilitada” (“The SPA [Sala Político-Administrativa] declared that the claim filed by María Corina Machado was dismissed and ratifies that she is disqualified.”) See: <https://accesoalajusticia.org/la-spa-declaro-sin-lugar-la-reclamacion-por-via-de-hecho-intentada-por-maria-corina-machado-y-ratifica-que-esta-inhabilitada/>

<sup>14</sup> Acceso a la Justicia. November 22, 2017. “13 años de inhabilitaciones políticas en una imagen” (“13 years of political disqualifications in one image.”) See:

<https://accesoalajusticia.org/13-anos-de-inhabilitaciones-politicas-en-una-imagen/>

<sup>15</sup> Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-28/21 of June 7, 2021. See: [https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_28\\_eng.pdf](https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_28_eng.pdf)





The 2024 electoral process itself also led to the imposition of political disqualifications: at least 12 mayors were disqualified for supporting the opposition candidate Edmundo González (two from Miranda, eight from Trujillo, and two from Nueva Esparta).<sup>16</sup>

The electoral motivation of the disqualifications was also evidenced in the obstacles to substitutions. In March 2024, Corina Yoris, the leader chosen by *Plataforma Unitaria* to replace Machado, was unable to register her candidacy because she lacked access to the digital codes required for the procedure.<sup>17</sup> She denounced that the passwords granted to the PUD were rejected by the system, a situation that was not faced by other political groups. After claims of abuse of power, the CNE extended the registration deadline for a few hours and *Plataforma Unitaria* was able to register Ambassador Edmundo González as a candidate.

Finally, in connection with the presidential election process there were also several dismissals of elected officials, including an opposition mayor dismissed by the Municipal Council of Ortiz, in Guarico, and two opposition councilors who were de facto dismissed by the Municipal Council of Tucupita, in Delta Amacuro.<sup>18</sup>

### Detentions, disappearances, and acts of intimidation

In a further indication of the persecution and repression characterizing the election, by July 25, 2024 the non-governmental organization *Foro Penal* registered 135 arbitrary, politically motivated arrests with forced disappearances in connection with the electoral process.<sup>19</sup> That number increased by 48 between July 26 and 28, in addition to one murder. 102 of the detainees in the pre-electoral stage were linked to opposition leader María Corina Machado,<sup>20</sup> including her security chief,<sup>21</sup> although there were also

<sup>16</sup> Acceso a la Justicia. July 19, 2024. "Cifras de persecución política durante giras de la oposición venezolana.

Julio 2024" ("Political persecution statistics during Venezuelan opposition tours. July 2024.") See: <https://accesoalajusticia.org/cifras-persecucion-politica-durante-giras-oposicion-venezolana-julio-2024/>

<sup>17</sup> CNN en Español. March 25, 2024. Corina Yoris no pudo inscribir su candidatura: (Corina Yoris was unable to register her candidacy:) "Están cercenando el derecho a millones de venezolanos; son horas muy oscuras" ("They are cutting off the rights of millions of Venezuelans; these are very dark hours.") See: <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2024/03/25/corina-yoris-conclusiones-entrevista-orix/>

<sup>18</sup> Acceso a la Justicia. July 19, 2024. "Cifras de persecución política durante giras de la oposición venezolana.

Julio 2024" ("Statistics on political persecution during Venezuelan opposition tours. July 2024.") See: <https://accesoalajusticia.org/cifras-persecucion-politica-durante-giras-oposicion-venezolana-julio-2024/>

<sup>19</sup> Foro Penal's Instagram account. July 29, 2024. See: <https://www.instagram.com/p/C-Bc3ddOKC8/>

<sup>20</sup> Acceso a la Justicia. July 19, 2024. "Cifras de persecución política durante giras de la oposición venezolana. ("Statistics on political persecution during Venezuelan opposition tours.) July 2024":

<https://accesoalajusticia.org/cifras-persecucion-politica-durante-giras-oposicion-venezolana-julio-2024/> and Tal Cual. 2024. "Cada tres días, en promedio, un activista político opositor fue perseguido o encarcelado en 2024" ("Every three days, on average, an opposition political activist was persecuted or imprisoned in 2024.") See: <https://talcualdigital.com/cada-tres-dias-en-promedio-un-activista-politico-opositor-fue-perseguido-o-encarcelado/>

<sup>21</sup> On July 17, María Corina Machado denounced in a press conference the arrest of her campaign partner and security chief, Milciades Ávila, who was released the following day and must appear in court every 30 days. Comando ConVzla's official X account (@ConVzlaComando). July 17, 2024. See: <https://twitter.com/ConVzlaComando/status/1813633674598097031> and Voice of America. July 18, 2024. "Venezuela: liberan a jefe de seguridad de la



arrests of persons linked to other opposition parties. In addition, arrest warrants were issued for six Machado campaign executives, who have been taking refuge in the Argentine Embassy since April. On the day of the vote, the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) apprehended a member of Machado's national campaign command, who was carrying out logistical activities in a municipality in Miranda state, according to the opposition.<sup>22</sup> According to monitoring by the web-portal Tal Cual, on average, every three days a person linked to the opposition was threatened because of his or her political activity.<sup>23</sup>

Several of the arrests were aimed at preventing campaign events: at least 46 people were arrested for providing services or selling goods to the opposition during their tour of the country or at political rallies.<sup>24</sup>

On July 3, 2024, a group of 62 Venezuelan civil society organizations sent a letter to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressing concern about the possible increase in human rights abuses and violations during the electoral campaign in Venezuela. They denounced arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, political persecution, censorship, and obstacles to political participation, and therefore requested monitoring and actions to guarantee free and fair elections.<sup>25</sup>

During the months and days prior to the election, there were other acts of violence and intimidation aimed at disrupting the electoral process. On July 18, María Corina Machado denounced an attack against her and her team, when she realized that during the early morning hours the vehicles in which they were traveling were "vandalized" and "their brake cables were cut."<sup>26</sup>

The atmosphere of intimidation was echoed at the highest levels of power. Despite the fact that the Barbados Agreement included the commitment to promote "a public discourse and a political and social climate conducive to the carrying out of a peaceful electoral process", on July 17 Nicolás Maduro made public statements affirming that, if he did not win reelection, the country could "fall into a bloodbath,

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líder opositora María Corina Machado" ("Venezuela: security chief of opposition leader María Corina Machado released.") See:

<https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/venezuela-liberan-a-jefe-de-proteccion-de-la-lider-opositora-maria-corina-machado/7704371.html>

<sup>22</sup> Infobae, July 27, 2024. "Represión en Venezuela: el régimen chavista detuvo a un dirigente del partido de María Corina Machado en el estado Miranda". ("Repression in Venezuela: the Chavista regime arrested a leader of María Corina Machado's party in Miranda state.") See:

<https://www.infobae.com/venezuela/2024/07/27/represion-en-venezuela-el-regimen-chavista-detuvo-a-un-dirigente-del-partido-de-maria-corina-machado-en-el-estado-miranda/>

<sup>23</sup> Tal Cual. 2024. "Cada tres días, en promedio, un activista político opositor fue perseguido o encarcelado en 2024" ("Every three days, on average, an opposition political activist was persecuted or imprisoned in 2024.") See: <https://talcualdigital.com/cada-tres-dias-en-promedio-un-activista-politico-opositor-fue-perseguido-o-encarcelado/>

<sup>24</sup> Acceso a la Justicia. July 19, 2024. "Cifras de persecución política durante giras de la oposición venezolana. ("Statistics on political persecution during Venezuelan opposition tours.) July 2024." See:

<https://accesoalajusticia.org/cifras-persecucion-politica-durante-giras-oposicion-venezolana-julio-2024/>

<sup>25</sup> Foro Penal. July 3, 2024. ONG expresan preocupación al Alto Comisionado debido al posible aumento de abusos en escenario electoral. (NGOs express concern to the High Commissioner due to the possible increase of abuses in the context of the elections.) See:

<https://foropenal.com/ong-expresan-preocupacion-al-alto-comisionado-debido-al-posible-aumento-de-abusos-en-escenario-electoral/>

<sup>26</sup> Voz de América. July 18, 2024. "María Corina Machado denuncia atentado en su contra a 10 días de elecciones presidenciales en Venezuela". ("María Corina Machado denounces attack against her 10 days before the presidential elections in Venezuela.") See: <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/venezuela-maria-corina-machado-denuncia-atentado-en-su-contra-a-diez-dias-de-las-elecciones-presidenciales-/7703181.html>



into a civil war." According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and its Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (SRFOE/RELE), that kind of speech by the highest State authority and the security forces has the effect of intimidating and restricting the political freedom of the electorate, casting doubt on the possibility of a transfer of power in the event of a favorable outcome for the opposition.<sup>27</sup>

### Opacity, obstruction of witnesses, and rejection of national and international observation

Transparency and openness to national and international observation are fundamental pillars of any democratic electoral process. The legitimacy of the results derives not only from the investiture of the electoral bodies, but also from the scrutiny of the process and the capacity of the political forces themselves and the citizenry in general to verify that the process is conducted in accordance with clear, stable, fair, and the same rules for all actors. Trust in an electoral system is not decreed or declared but, rather, is built through impartial and transparent work.

In the Venezuelan system, witnesses act as overseers of the electoral process, representing the parties, movements, and citizen groups that register candidacies. The participation of witnesses is assured by Article 157 the Organic Law of Electoral Processes (LOPRE)<sup>28</sup> and its enabling regulations from Article 446 onwards. Although the persons organizing voting tables are the main authorities at polling stations, the law establishes that the activities of witnesses cannot be limited by the officials of the subordinate electoral bodies. This means that each witness has the right to observe the electoral process and to demand that any observations on possible irregularities be recorded in the corresponding minutes. Witnesses are responsible for ensuring and strengthening citizen verification at the end of the vote, by reviewing and certifying the voting receipts in relation to the data recorded in the tally of the vote count.

In the democratic systems of the region, a pro-supervision criterion operates, under which conditions are created to maximize political and citizen oversight of the process, for example, by allowing party monitors (witnesses in the Venezuelan system) to vote at the table they are supervising even if they are not registered there, with this situation being duly recorded in the minutes. On the other hand, in this electoral process, the CNE modified the rules governing the role of the electoral witnesses, imposing on them the requirement that they be registered to vote in the center where they exercised supervision.

In addition, as detailed below in the section on Election Day, on the day of the election there were several incidents of witnesses being prevented from accessing the precincts, polling stations, and electoral bodies. Despite these obstructions, domestic observers reported that opposition witnesses were present in around 90% of the polling stations.

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<sup>27</sup> IACHR. July 19, 2024. "CIDH y RELE alertan sobre persecución política en Venezuela en el contexto electoral" ("IACHR and RELE warn about political persecution in Venezuela in the electoral context") See: [https://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media\\_center/PReleases/2024/166.asp](https://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2024/166.asp)

<sup>28</sup> Organic Law of Electoral Processes of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. See: [http://www4.cne.gob.ve/onpc/web/documentos/Leyes/Ley\\_Organica\\_de\\_los\\_Procesos\\_Electorales.pdf](http://www4.cne.gob.ve/onpc/web/documentos/Leyes/Ley_Organica_de_los_Procesos_Electorales.pdf)





For these elections, the CNE accredited four civil society organizations as national observers: the *Red de Observación Electoral Asamblea de Educación* (ROAE), the *Fundación Proyecto Social*, the *Asociación Venezolana de Juristas*, and the *Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores*. The CNE did not accredit the Venezuelan Electoral Observatory (OEV), and failed to respond to its request for accreditation.<sup>29</sup>

The work of international observers, who have been recognized by the IACHR as human rights defenders,<sup>30</sup> was also hindered. The Barbados Agreement provided for a commitment to invite technical electoral observation missions from selected agencies, including the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN) Panel of Electoral Experts, the African Union, *Unión Interamericana de Organismos Electorales* (the Inter-American Union of Electoral Bodies -UNIORE), and the Carter Center, "without precluding the right of political actors to invite national and international observers." Of these organizations, only the UN Panel of Electoral Experts and the Carter Center effectively deployed limited missions in Venezuelan territory, albeit with considerable restrictions on the free exercise of their functions.

On May 28, the CNE revoked the invitation to the European Union observation mission. The president of the CNE justified the decision by the economic sanctions of the 27-country bloc, stating that EU representatives were not welcome as long as these sanctions existed.<sup>31</sup>

It is important to note that the Union of Electoral Bodies itself declined the invitation to observe the process. The refusal of the CNE's peers reflects the serious deficiencies of the Venezuelan electoral system, which have been consistently pointed out by several actors of the international community, including the European Union and the OAS. These elections demonstrated that the myth of the excellence of the Venezuelan electoral system must be abandoned. Not only is it a system that is manipulated by the current government; it also has clear weaknesses that facilitate this manipulation and allow for opacity that undermines true scrutiny of the process.

Finally, during the days prior to the election, the participation of various international guests of the political organizations was prevented.<sup>32</sup> The actions included withdrawal of invitations, blocking of

<sup>29</sup> Efecto Cocuyo. July 22, 2024. "¿Cómo será la observación nacional para las elecciones presidenciales?" ("What will domestic observation for the presidential election look like?") See: <https://efectococuyo.com/politica/como-sera-observacion-nacional-elecciones-presidenciales/>

<sup>30</sup> The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). Resolution No. 01/2024. See: <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/decisiones/pdf/2024/Res-1-24-Personas-Observadoras.pdf> [See also: [https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm?File=/en/iachr/media\\_center/preleases/2024/112.asp](https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm?File=/en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2024/112.asp)]

<sup>31</sup> France 24. May 29, 2024. "Venezuela retira invitación a la Unión Europea para observar elecciones presidenciales". ("Venezuela withdraws invitation to the European Union to observe presidential elections.") See: <https://www.france24.com/es/minuto-a-minuto/20240528-venezuela-retira-invitaci%C3%B3n-a-la-uni%C3%B3n-europea-para-observar-elecciones-presidenciales>

<sup>32</sup> Withdrawal of invitation: Former President Alberto Fernández (Argentina). BBC World. July 25, 2024. "Elections in Venezuela: Brazil cancels sending observers and former Argentinean President Alberto Fernandez says they withdrew his invitation." See: <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/articulos/c03522v49lyo>

Airspace blockage: Former governors Mireya Moscoso (Panama), Miguel Ángel Rodríguez (Costa Rica), Jorge Quiroga (Bolivia), and Vicente Fox (Mexico). Former Vice President Marta Lucía Ramírez (Colombia). July 26, 2024. "Maduro bloquea el espacio aéreo venezolano; expresidentes no pueden viajar". ("Maduro blocks Venezuelan airspace; former presidents cannot travel.") La Estrella de Panamá. July 26, 2024. See: <https://www.laestrella.com.pa/panama/nacional/maduro-bloquea-el-espacio-aereo-venezolano-expresidentes-no-pueden-viajar-GN8069932>

Deportations of international guests, including: Senator Francisco Paoltroni (Argentina), Member of the House of Representatives, Alejandro Bongiovanni (Argentina), Former Senatorial Candidate María Eugenia Talerico (Argentina), Senator José Manuel Rojo Edwards (Chile), Senator Felipe Kast (Chile),



airspace to enter Venezuelan territory, deportation, and expulsion from the country. Particularly notorious and reprehensible was the case of a delegation of former presidents of the region, whose plane was detained in Panama and who were not allowed to travel to Venezuela, along with legislators and other elected authorities from a number of countries.

### Attacks on the media, the right to expression, and the right to information

According to the Rapporteurship for Freedom of Expression of the IACHR, severe restrictions on the right to freedom of expression in Venezuela were documented in 2024. In particular, there were reports of judicial harassment, arbitrary detentions, restrictions on access to information, closure of media outlets, and stigmatizing remarks by high-ranking government officials against those who investigate and actively participate in matters of public and political interest. According to public information, between January and April 2024, at least 128 attacks were perpetrated against journalists, activists, human rights defenders, media, and civil society organizations, as well as 18 arrests of people for exercising their freedom of expression.<sup>33</sup>

Of the 112 cases and 267 complaints of violations of freedom of expression documented in 2024 by the NGO *Espacio Público*, at least 29 cases and 98 complaints<sup>34</sup> were related to the elections. The majority involved impediments or restrictions to journalistic coverage, threats and accusations through speeches by high-ranking officials, as well as arbitrary arrests and the initiation of legal proceedings in retaliation for the dissemination of information, content, or opinions of public interest.<sup>35</sup>

When presenting his candidacy at CNE headquarters, Nicolás Maduro attacked several news agencies, accusing them of lacking morals and hiding the real situation in Venezuela.<sup>36</sup> He also singled out two

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Senador Angélica Lozano Correa (Colombia), Former Mayor of Bogotá, Claudia López (Colombia), Former Deputy Foreign Minister Adriana Mejía (Colombia), Former Minister Ángela María Orozco (Colombia), Former Ombudsperson Gissela Arias (Colombia), Member of the Ecuadorian Assembly Ana Galarza, ten congressmen and MEPs from the Popular Party (PP) (Spain), Member of the House of Representatives, Pablo Viana (Uruguay). Infobae. July 28, 2024. "La oposición venezolana denunció la deportación de 51 invitados internacionales por parte del régimen de Maduro". ("The Venezuelan opposition denounced the deportation of 51 international guests by the Maduro regime.") See: <https://www.infobae.com/venezuela/2024/07/28/la-oposicion-venezolana-denuncio-la-deportacion-de-51-invitados-internacionales-por-parte-del-regimen-de-maduro/>  
Expulsion from the country of three international guests who were staying at his hotel, including former congressman Víctor González (Spain). Infobae. July 28, 2024. "La oposición venezolana denunció la deportación de 51 invitados internacionales por parte del régimen de Maduro". ("The Venezuelan opposition denounced the deportation of 51 international guests by the Maduro regime.") See: <https://www.infobae.com/venezuela/2024/07/28/la-oposicion-venezolana-denuncio-la-deportacion-de-51-invitados-internacionales-por-parte-del-regimen-de-maduro/>

<sup>33</sup> OAS. May 16, 2024. SRFOE/RELE expresses concern about repression against journalists and deterioration of civic space in Venezuela. See: [https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/expression/media\\_center/preleases/2024/106.asp](https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/expression/media_center/preleases/2024/106.asp)

<sup>34</sup> Of the 98 complaints, 35 are related to intimidation, 21 to verbal harassment, 14 to judicial harassment, 11 to aggression, nine to censorship, six to administrative restriction, and two concerned threats. Espacio Público. 2024. Bloqueos, censura y detenciones de cara al 28J Reporte sobre situación de libertad de expresión en Venezuela. (Blockades, censorship, and arrests related to the 28J Report on the situation of freedom of expression in Venezuela) See: <https://espaciopublico.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/INFORME-28J-1.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Espacio Público. 2024. Bloqueos, censura y detenciones de cara al 28J Reporte sobre situación de libertad de expresión en Venezuela. (Blockades, censorship, and arrests related to the 28J Report on the situation of freedom of expression in Venezuela) See: <https://espaciopublico.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/INFORME-28J-1.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Espacio Público. March 26, 2024. "Nicolás Maduro intimidó a agencias EFE, AFP y AP". ("Nicolás Maduro bullied EFE, AFP, and AP agencies.") See: <https://espaciopublico.org/nicolas-maduro-intimido-a-agencias-efe-afp-y-ap/>



journalists for their comments on social networks, urging the Public Prosecutor's Office to take action against what he considered "fascist and racist expressions."<sup>37</sup>

The last week of the campaign was marked by an onslaught against the media, especially international agencies, whom Maduro called "paid liars" (*sicarios de la mentira*) and accused of orchestrating a media campaign that, he said, is part of a plan to destabilize his administration and justify foreign interventions.<sup>38</sup> These statements were condemned by journalists' associations in Venezuela.<sup>39</sup>

On July 22, the Venezuelan government blocked six web portals following the orders of the National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL). This blockage is in addition to seven other sites that have been restricted since the beginning of the electoral campaign on July 4, taking the total number of restricted sites to 13. Organizations defending the right to freedom of expression denounced that access to more than 50 media outlets in Venezuela was denied.<sup>40</sup> In addition, in the electoral context, two radio stations were closed: *La Vernácula* 88.3 FM,<sup>41</sup> in retaliation for reporting on María Corina Machado's visit to Guárico state, and *Deportiva* 98.3 FM,<sup>42</sup> ostensibly for not having the requisite permits. Since the beginning of the campaign, access to various fact-checking platforms has also been blocked.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, it was learned that at least one international journalist who planned to travel to cover the election was detained in the days prior to the election<sup>44</sup> and another one the day after the elections.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Espacio Público. July 17, 2024. "Nicolás Maduro vuelve a hostigar al periodista Orlando Avendaño por publicaciones en X". ("Nicolás Maduro again harasses journalist Orlando Avendaño for publications in X.") See: <https://espaciopublico.org/nicolas-maduro-vuelve-a-hostigar-al-periodista-orlando-avendano-por-publicaciones-en-x/>

<sup>38</sup> Meléndez, Jhoan. July 22, 2024. In El Cooperante. "Maduro acusó a medios internacionales de ser "sicarios de la mentira." See: <https://elcooperante.com/maduro-acuso-a-medios-internacionales-de-ser-sicarios-de-la-mentira/>

<sup>39</sup> NTN24, July 10, 2024. "Maduro llamó 'basura' a las agencias internacionales AFP, EFE, Reuters, AP, que hacen vida en Venezuela". ("Maduro used the term 'garbage' to describe the international agencies AFP, EFE, Reuters, AP, that make a living in Venezuela.") See: <https://www.ntn24.com/noticias-actualidad/maduro-llamo-basura-a-las-agencias-internacionales-afp-efe-reuters-ap-que-hacen-vida-en-venezuela-500887>

<sup>40</sup> La Nación. July 23, 2024. "Bloqueados seis portales web en un mismo día". ("Six web portals blocked in a single day.") See: ["Bloqueados seis portales web en un mismo día" \(Six web portals blocked in a single day\) - Diario La Nación \(lanacionweb.com\)](https://www.lanacion.com.ar/venezuela/bloqueados-seis-portales-web-en-un-mismo-dia-n1277777)

<sup>41</sup> Espacio Público. June 9, 2024. "Conatel cerró y confiscó equipos de La Vernácula 88.3 FM en Guárico". ("Conatel closed and confiscated equipment of La Vernácula 88.3 FM in Guárico.") See: <https://espaciopublico.org/conatel-cerro-y-consco-equipos-de-la-vernacula-88-3-fm-en-guarico/>

<sup>42</sup> Espacio Público. July 5, 2024. "Funcionarios de Conatel cerraron la emisora Deportiva 98.3 FM en Guárico". ("Conatel officials shut down Deportiva 98.3 FM radio station in Guárico.") See: <https://espaciopublico.org/funcionarios-de-la-conatel-cerraron-la-emisora-deportiva-98-3-fm-en-guarico/>

<sup>43</sup> Espacio Público. July 5, 2024. "Operadoras bloquean portales web de EsPaja y Cazadores de Fake News". ("Operators block EsPaja and Fake News Hunters web portals.") See: <https://espaciopublico.org/operadoras-bloquean-portales-web-de-espaja-y-cazadores-de-fake-news/>

<sup>44</sup> Infobae, July 25, 2024. "El régimen de Maduro impidió el ingreso de un periodista argentino a Venezuela: fue retenido, interrogado y será deportado". ("Maduro's regime prevented an Argentine journalist from entering Venezuela: he was detained, interrogated and will be deported.") See: <https://www.infobae.com/politica/2024/07/25/el-gobierno-de-maduro-impidio-el-ingreso-de-un-periodista-argentino-a-venezuela-fue-retenido-interrogado-y-sera-deportado/>

<sup>45</sup> X account of journalist Orlando Avendaño (@OrlvndoA). July 27, 2024. See: <https://x.com/OrlvndoA/status/1817209319475069034?t=JRoOXT2DnAkuOM7undkOLQ&s=08>



### Patronage (*Clientelismo*) and use of the state apparatus for proselytizing purposes

The absence of a specific law clearly defining the rules of the electoral campaign has been addressed through regulations such as the General Regulations of the Organic Law of Electoral Processes and various resolutions issued by the CNE in each event, including rules governing advertising and access to the media. However, these regulations are vague regarding the use of public resources to finance electoral campaigns and barely establish effective sanctions.<sup>46</sup>

One of the most frequent complaints of the opposition forces and various civil society initiatives was the severe inequity in the race, in particular the imbalance in media coverage-with hate speech against opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez-and the use of public resources for electoral purposes, along with the failure of the CNE to curb those abuses. Public agencies disseminated messages extolling Maduro's candidacy, while opposition propaganda was limited and censored, in violation of current electoral regulations.<sup>47</sup>

According to the NGO CEPAZ, the government of Nicolás Maduro continued its strategy of providing social assistance, in the form of food bags, economic bonuses, and other benefits, in exchange for political and electoral support. These practices were carried out through the "*Sistema Patria*", a virtual platform associated with the ruling party. Enrollment in this platform rendered the most vulnerable groups dependent on the State, limiting their autonomy by subjecting them to economic, food, and health benefits in exchange for support for the ruling party.<sup>48</sup>

### Lack of independence of the electoral body and other institutions linked to the process

Responsibility for organizing and directing the Venezuelan electoral process lies with the Electoral Authority. In spite of the fact that the National Constitution establishes its independence, in recent years the National Electoral Council (CNE), which embodies this authority, has been made up of persons associated with the National Executive.

The members of the Venezuelan CNE who took office in May 2021 for a seven-year term resigned in June 2023, in a context of widespread distrust in electoral institutions and pressure from a number of political sectors, which questioned the impartiality of the Council.<sup>49</sup> On August 24, 2023, the National Assembly,

<sup>46</sup> Acceso a la Justicia. 2024. "Venezuela se embarca en nueva campaña electoral sin vacuna legal contra el ventajismo". ("Venezuela embarks on a new electoral campaign without a legal vaccine against unfair advantages '*ventajismo*'.") See:

["Venezuela se embarca en nueva campaña electoral sin vacuna legal contra el ventajismo". Access to Justice](#)

<sup>47</sup> Efecto Cocuyo. July 20, 2024. "Ventajismo, desequilibrio y discurso de odio: faltas a la normativa que se observan en la campaña electoral". ("Unfair advantages, imbalance and hate speech: regulatory failures observed in the election campaign.") See: <https://efectococuyo.com/politica/ventajismo-desequilibrio-discurso-odio-faltas-normativa-observan-campana-electoral/>

<sup>48</sup> CEPAZ. 2024. Informe especial, 10 años de persecución en Venezuela. (Special report, 10 years of persecution in Venezuela.) La consolidación de un sistema represivo sofisticado. (The consolidation of a sophisticated repressive system.) See: <https://cepaz.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/10-ANOS-DE-PERSECUCION-.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> DW, June 20, 2023. "Renuncia el último rector de ente electoral de Venezuela". ("Resignation of the last member of Venezuela's electoral body.") See: <https://www.dw.com/es/renuncia-el-%C3%BAltimo-rector-principal-de-ente-electoral-de-venezuela-cercano-a-la-oposici%C3%B3n/a-65982882>



overwhelmingly controlled by the ruling party, appointed five principal members of the CNE and ten alternates for the 2023-2030 term.<sup>50</sup> Although Article 296 of the Constitution establishes that the National Electoral Council shall be composed of "persons not linked to organizations with political purposes", various actors have denounced the relationship between electoral officials and political parties.<sup>51</sup>

In June 2024, principal councilor Juan Carlos Delpino publicly stated that the president of the CNE, Elvis Amoroso, managed the CNE unilaterally, affirming that Amoroso "has been taking decisions without convening sessions since March."<sup>52</sup> As indicated below, on election day itself Amoroso used disparaging epithets to refer to the main opposition candidate.

In addition, apart from the aforementioned arbitrary detentions and acts of intimidation by security forces and criminal prosecution, serious questions persisted about the role of the armed forces in the framework of the elections. The security of the electoral process was entrusted to Plan República, an operation of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces (FANB) supposed to ensure the physical protection of voters, electoral personnel, and polling stations. It was also responsible for the custody and distribution of electoral material between the CNE warehouses and the polling stations, in addition to maintaining public order throughout the process.

The head of *Plan República* was accountable to the Venezuelan Minister of Defense, FANB Chief General Vladimir Padrino López, for its actions. Although the Constitution prohibits the armed forces from having "any political militancy", General Padrino has frequently criticized the opposition and has stated that the armed forces are Chavistas. In 2020, he made a statement that was interpreted as a political warning to the opposition, stating: "They will not pass, they will never achieve political power as long as there is a Bolivarian National Armed Force."<sup>53</sup>

### Electoral registry and overseas voting

Data from the International Organization for Migration show that more than 7.7 million Venezuelan citizens have been forced by the regime to leave the country, and reside mainly in South America. Of

<sup>50</sup> National Assembly. August 24, 2023. "Asamblea Nacional designa y juramenta a nuevos rectores del CNE". ("National Assembly appoints and swears in new CNE councilors.") See: <https://www.asambleanacional.gob.ve/noticias/asamblea-nacional-designa-y-juramenta-a-nuevos-rectores-del-cne>

<sup>51</sup> Acceso a la Justicia. August 29, 2023. "Nuevo» CNE, exprés y con menor independencia". ("New, express delivery, and less independent CNE.") <https://accesoalajusticia.org/nuevo-cne-expres-con-menor-independencia/> and Espaja. September 15, 2023. "¿Rectores del CNE elegidos en 2023 son personas no vinculadas a organizaciones políticas?". ("Are CNE's councilors elected in 2023 people not linked to political organizations?") <https://espaja.com/explain/los-rectores-del-cne-elegidos-en-2023-son-personas-no-vinculadas-a-organizaciones-con-fines-politicos>

El País, July 25, 2024. "Quién es quién en el Consejo Nacional Electoral, la institución que organiza las elecciones en Venezuela". ("Who is who in the National Electoral Council, the institution that organizes elections in Venezuela.") See:

<https://elpais.com/america/2024-07-25/quien-es-quien-en-el-consejo-nacional-electoral-la-institucion-que-organiza-las-elecciones-en-venezuela.html>

<sup>52</sup> NTN24, July 22, 2024. "Rector Delpino rompe el silencio y denuncia irregularidades dentro del Poder Electoral en Venezuela". ("Rector Delpino breaks silence and denounces irregularities in Venezuela's electoral authority.") See: <https://www.dw.com/es/los-desaf%C3%ADos-del-28j-para-la-oposici%C3%B3n-democr%C3%A1tica-venezolana/a-69736554>

<sup>53</sup> Acceso a la Justicia. August 29, 2023. "Nuevo» CNE, exprés y con menor independencia". ("New, express delivery, and less independent CNE.") See: <https://accesoalajusticia.org/nuevo-cne-expres-con-menor-independencia/>





these, it is estimated that around five million would be of legal age, i.e., potential voters. However, for the 2023 primary elections, the Electoral Registry had a voter roll of only 107,000 Venezuelans registered and entitled to vote abroad. This left millions of people out of the electoral process, either because their registration was outdated in their place of residence or because they lacked registration, according to data from the Venezuelan Electoral Observatory (OEV).

In view of the huge gap between the Venezuelan migrant population and the percentage of people eligible to vote abroad, the Barbados Agreement incorporated guarantees for the updating of the electoral registry, including special days for the registration and updating of the electoral registry abroad. However, the definitive electoral registry published by the CNE for the 2024 presidential elections incorporated only 69,211 voters living abroad, that is, a lower number than that registered in last year's primaries, with loss of registration for thousands of people and only 508 new voters. This last fact reflects the CNE's total disinterest in enforcing the fundamental right to vote that the regulations grant to the Venezuelan diaspora and, on the contrary, raises suspicions about a systematic effort to exclude one of the largest segments of the electorate. Reports by civil society organizations documented various obstacles that prevented the effective incorporation of Venezuelans abroad, with obstacles ranging from legal barriers to operational limitations and arbitrary decisions.<sup>54</sup>

According to the platform *Mi Voto Cuenta*<sup>55</sup>, "the capacity planned for the registration process was designed with the intention of discriminating against Venezuelans." In the best scenario, the process was designed to allow the registration of only 3.5% of Venezuelans of voting age abroad, but in the end only 0.16% registered. As a result, one of the largest international diasporas represented less than one percentage point of the electorate.

### Quality of the information provided to the electorate

According to the rules of the Venezuelan electoral system, a candidate's face is repeated on the ballot in the boxes of all the organizations that support his or her candidacy. Thus, in the presidential election ballot, Nicolás Maduro appeared in 13 of the 38 ballot boxes, while his main opponent, Edmundo González, appeared in only three.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> CEPAZ, REDAC, and REC. 2024. "Derechos limitados: vulneraciones a la participación electoral de las personas venezolanas en el exterior" ("Rights curtailed: violations to the electoral participation of Venezuelan citizens abroad.") See:

<https://cepaz.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Derechos-limitados.pdf> and Alerta Venezuela. April 30, 2024. "Barreras al Registro Electoral en el exterior" ("Barriers to Electoral Registration abroad.") See: <https://alertavenezuela.org/blog/2024/04/30/bareras-al-registro-electoral-en-el-externor/>

<sup>55</sup> Mi Voto Cuenta. *Informe sobre proceso en el exterior de inscripción o actualización de datos ante el Registro Electoral.* (Report on the process abroad of registration or update of data before the Electoral Registry.) See: [+Report+MVC+registration+electoral+external+external+EN.pdf \(electoral-complaint-requests.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com\)](#)

<sup>56</sup> Maduro has the support of 13 political organizations, while Edmundo González Urrutia, despite being supported by at least 11, does not appear that number of times in the National Electoral Council (CNE) ballot due to the fact that several of those polling cards were intervened and assigned to politicians who are also in the race and whom the opposition accuses of being government collaborators. Voz de América. 2023. ¿Por qué Maduro aparece 13 veces en la boleta electoral en Venezuela? (Why does Maduro appear 13 times on the ballot in Venezuela?)

<https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/rostro-nicolas-maduro-aparece-trece-veces-boleta-electoral-venezuela-7613731.html>



**Image 1.** Example of the ballot for the 2024 presidential election in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Furthermore, some of the political organizations participating in the race had similar and not very distinctive names, which could generate confusion among the electorate given the large number of competing groups/parties. For example, this is the case of the organizations *Venezuela Unida*, *Unidad Visión Venezuela*, and *Futuro Venezuela*.<sup>57</sup>

## II. ELECTION DAY

As stipulated in the electoral regulations, on July 28 the polling stations began to open at 6:00 am. According to information released by CNE Rector Aime Nogal Méndez, at 6:30 a.m. 77.95% of polling stations nationwide were set up and 59.40% were open.<sup>58</sup> Two hours later, at 8:30 a.m., CNE President Elvis Amoroso announced at a press conference that 95% of the voting centers were operational and that all of the CNE's technical personnel had gone to the schools and high schools that had been designated as polling stations.<sup>59</sup> According to the Venezuelan Electoral Observatory, more than 90% of the polling stations were open in the morning hours.<sup>60</sup> This information roughly concurs with that provided by the CNE.

<sup>57</sup> Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo (MINEC). March 27, 2024. See: <http://www.minec.gob.ve/balance-del-cne-13-candidatos-y-37-organizaciones-se-registraron-para-el-28/>

<sup>58</sup> Official X account of Aimé Nogal Méndez (@anogal). July 28, 2024. See: <https://x.com/anogal/status/1817524680393113637>

<sup>59</sup> Globo Visión official Youtube account. July 28, 2024. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNP5T4TqrDc>

<sup>60</sup> X account of the Venezuelan Electoral Observatory. July 28, 2024. See: <https://x.com/OEVenezolano/status/1817675890329014736>



In the morning hours, there were long lines at the polling stations, which in some cases had been formed since the night before the election. Venezuelans waited patiently to exercise their right to vote. The presidential election took place in a calm and normal atmosphere throughout the country. Likewise, according to media reports, voting abroad was carried out in an orderly manner, despite the fact that, as mentioned, less than 1% of Venezuelans abroad were able to vote in the presidential elections.

The approach to the elections shown by Venezuelan people in the national territory and abroad demonstrates their democratic commitment and the unequivocal call for a return of democracy.

During the above-mentioned press conference on voting day, the president of the CNE made accusations against one of the opposition candidates, accusing that candidate, without evidence, of harboring conspiracy plans and of having attempted to prevent the elections from taking place. These kinds of statements by the highest electoral official, both on July 28 and in the run-up to the election, represented a departure from the standards required by the dignity of his office, denoted partiality, and further eroded the confidence of citizens in the electoral body, which as a matter of principle should be absolutely neutral.

Electoral monitors reported the presence of "red dots", stations for the monitoring and control of voters in a number of polling stations, some clearly identified with pro-government propaganda, which was also denounced by citizens through social networks.<sup>61</sup> In 22% of the polling stations observed by the OEV, the mobilization of voters using public resources was observed<sup>62</sup>.

When making the first assessment of the day, in the morning hours, the main witness of the PUD before the CNE, Delsa Solórzano, denounced that in some polling stations in the country "they have not allowed them [the witnesses] to enter the polling stations. This is a situation that has become less common over time but it is something that continues to happen."<sup>63</sup> There were also reports in the media and through social networks about the possible scanning of identity cards,<sup>64</sup> a mechanism that was not foreseen in the legislation or in the instructions.

Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino assured in a press conference that as of midday there were no incidents to report, except for minor upsets in the opening of the polling stations in the morning hours.<sup>65</sup> For their part, civil society organizations reported incidents that included delays in the opening of several polling stations and the slowness of the process<sup>66</sup>. Less frequently, it was also reported that

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<sup>61</sup> Transparencia Electoral. Informe de incidencias reportadas monitoreo electoral 28 de julio de 2024. (Report of incidents registered by electoral monitoring July 28, 2024.) See:

<https://transparenciaelectoral.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Informe-de-Transparencia-Electoral-28J-Venezuela-1.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> X account of the Venezuelan Electoral Observatory. July 28, 2024. See: <https://x.com/OEVenezolano/status/1817675890329014736>

<sup>63</sup> NTN24's official X account (@NTN24). July 28, 2024. See: <https://x.com/NTN24/status/1817560281549005014>

<sup>64</sup> Transparencia Venezuela website. July 28, 2024. See: <https://transparenciave.org/presidenciales-2024-72-denuncias-de-irregularidades-en-el-proceso-electoral-fueron-registradas-transparencia-venezuela-en-su-primer-reporte-de-este-domingo/>

<sup>65</sup> Telesur official Youtube account. July 28, 2024. See: <https://youtu.be/jcMw8EFAQcw?si=MhKGGQnrXJhI9hKpX>

<sup>66</sup> Transparencia Venezuela website. July 28, 2024. See: <https://transparenciave.org/presidenciales-2024-72-denuncias-de-irregularidades-en-el-proceso-electoral-fueron-registradas-transparencia-venezuela-en-su-primer-reporte-de-este-domingo/>



witnesses from political organizations were prevented from entering. Finally, there were isolated cases of intimidation.

Around 2:00 p.m., opposition leader María Corina Machado addressed the media after casting her vote and mentioned incidents related to the electoral witnesses of the United Front, assuring that in 1,300 tables there had been problems with the entry of witnesses during the morning, a situation that was largely resolved in the course of the afternoon. According to the data shared by Machado, the final total of polling stations that could not be installed was 18, out of more than 30 thousand throughout the country.<sup>67</sup>

Throughout the day, several exit polls were disseminated, despite the fact that the law prohibits the dissemination of polls from seven days before the voting. Some of these polls gave an advantage to the pro-government candidate, including a poll that was promptly identified as false information by the verification organizations.<sup>68</sup> Others, on the contrary, showed an advantage for Edmundo Gonzalez, in line with polls published in the days prior to the election. Worth acknowledging is the fact that the main opposition candidate refrained from releasing polls, even those that predicted his victory.<sup>69</sup>

At 6:00 p.m., as stipulated in the electoral regulations, polling stations where there were no people waiting in line to exercise their right to vote began to close. In accordance with Venezuelan legislation, the vote count is automated<sup>70</sup> and the electronic machine itself issues the corresponding tally. Members of the opposition denounced that more than 400 centers were identified in which these tally sheets were not delivered to the witnesses. In some cases, witnesses were even expelled from the precincts. It should be mentioned that the legislation explicitly provides for the delivery of this document to witnesses.<sup>71</sup> In addition to the above, representatives of *Plataforma Unitaria Democrática* were unable to enter the CNE facilities on Sunday night.<sup>72</sup>

Social networks showed scenes of Chavista *groups (colectivos chavistas)* in the vicinity of some polling stations, where groups of voters had gathered waiting for citizen verification, which, as mentioned, is a public act. In Táchira, it was reported that a young man died after being shot in the vicinity of a polling station, apparently by *colectivos*.<sup>73</sup>

The Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Pedro Vaca, stated that he received constant reports of aggressive acts against the press during the day. He reported that accredited journalists were banned from entering the country and press personnel were

<sup>67</sup> NTN24's official X account (@NTN24). July 28, 2024. See: <https://x.com/NTN24/status/1817649953222599085>

<sup>68</sup> Official Fake News Hunters X account (@cazamosfakenews). July 28, 2024. See: <https://x.com/cazamosfakenews/status/1817617080826662913>

<sup>69</sup> Edison Research Conducts Exit Poll in Venezuela. July 28, 2024. See: <https://www.edisonresearch.com/edison-research-conducts-exit-poll-in-venezuela/>

<sup>70</sup>Organic Law of Electoral Processes of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Art. 141. See:

[http://www4.cne.gob.ve/onpc/web/documentos/Leyes/Ley\\_Organica\\_de\\_los\\_Procesos\\_Electorales.pdf](http://www4.cne.gob.ve/onpc/web/documentos/Leyes/Ley_Organica_de_los_Procesos_Electorales.pdf)

<sup>71</sup> General Regulations of the Organic Law of Electoral Processes. January 18, 2023. Resolution No. 130118-0005. Article 337. See:

[https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/americas/VE/venezuela-reglamento-general-ley-procesos-electorales-2013/at\\_download/file](https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/americas/VE/venezuela-reglamento-general-ley-procesos-electorales-2013/at_download/file)

<sup>72</sup> Delsa Solorzano's official X account (@unidadvenezuela). July 28, 2024. See: <https://x.com/unidadvenezuela/status/1817698030566453722>

<sup>73</sup> Official X account of Comando Con Vzla Táchira (@TachiraConVzla). July 28, 2024. See: <https://x.com/TachiraConVzla/status/1817715930815701130>





arrested. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right that must be respected, especially in an electoral context.<sup>74</sup>

Tension and uncertainty on election night increased due to delays in the presentation of results and complaints made by opposition parties, which reported that in several polling stations the process of transmitting tally sheets to the CNE had been stopped.<sup>75</sup> This occurred after multiple images were widely circulated of the tallies that were made public as part of the citizen verification processes and which showed results that gave a comfortable lead to the opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez.<sup>76</sup>

Despite having an electronic voting system that should expedite the whole process of counting and totaling the election results, the CNE took more than six hours to disclose any data on the election results. It is worth mentioning that the presentation of these numbers was made through a press conference<sup>77</sup> after midnight, which did not provide any disaggregated data, but only the percentages and votes received by the two main candidates and an aggregate of the other candidates.<sup>78</sup>

It is extremely worrisome that the results were presented in this way, verbally and incompletely, without support and with a single bulletin that claimed to reflect 80% of the polling station votes, with no indications showing how tally sheets were entered and processed.

The CNE web page<sup>79</sup> remained out of service from the announcement of the first bulletin and during July 29, which further undermined public confidence in the CNE and the electoral process and generated a serious vacuum of official information. In other words, neither the citizenry nor the political forces were provided with any way to consult the tally sheets, analyze the numbers allocated by organization, candidacy, or geographic unit, or in general to carry out any form of study of the results. The president of the CNE simply stated that "in the next few hours the results will be available on the web page of the National Electoral Council table by table." Instead, transmission of the page was interrupted.

According to the data announced, Nicolás Maduro allegedly received 51.2% of the votes, compared to 44.2% for Edmundo González. The participation was said to have been 59%. Although the President of the CNE did not publicly announce the detailed results of all the candidacies, the pro-government Telesur channel published the results that the first five candidacies allegedly received, but their totals added up to more than 100% of the votes and the three least voted candidacies each received exactly 4.6% of the

<sup>74</sup> Pedro Vaca's official X account (@PVacaV). July 28, 2024. See: <https://x.com/PVacaV/status/1817696311669633255>

<sup>75</sup> El Salvador.com. July 28, 2024. "Oposición venezolana denuncia que ente electoral 'ha paralizado' transmisión de resultados" ("Venezuelan opposition denounces that the electoral body has 'paralyzed' the transmission of results.") See: <https://www.elsalvador.com/noticias/internacional/oposicion-venezolana-denuncia-que-ente-electoral-ha-paralizado-transmision-de-resultados/1158425/2024/>

<sup>76</sup> Edison Research Conducts Exit Poll in Venezuela. July 28, 2024. See: <https://www.edisonresearch.com/edison-research-conducts-exit-poll-in-venezuela/>

<sup>77</sup> Official Youtube account of France 24 English. July 29, 2024. With 80% of the votes counted, CNE confirms the reelection of Nicolás Maduro with 51.2% of the votes. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEyblPc6iaU>

<sup>78</sup> Nicolás Maduro's official X account (@NicolasMaduro). July 29, 2024 See: [https://x.com/NicolasMaduro/status/1817772882488897932?t=l\\_gCzLeChcuyRF8o-1N4w&s=19](https://x.com/NicolasMaduro/status/1817772882488897932?t=l_gCzLeChcuyRF8o-1N4w&s=19)

<sup>79</sup> Website of the National Electoral Council. See: <http://www.cne.gob.ve>





votes.<sup>80</sup> Even if one assumes that this was an error and that, instead, what was meant was that the minority forces together accumulated 4.6% of votes cast, it is also suspicious that the percentages add up to exactly 100%, with no margin for invalid or blank votes.

In the same press conference and without presenting any evidence, Amoroso blamed the delay in the delivery of results on an attack on the CNE's computer system, which he described as an "act of terrorism."<sup>81</sup> He then requested the Attorney General's Office to conduct an investigation into this alleged incident. Minutes after the announcement of the results, citizen protests were registered in the capital city, including demonstrations with pots and pans.

At an event in the Miraflores square, Nicolás Maduro recognized himself as president-elect and claimed that there was an intention to "violate the peace of national life." He called for "respect for the Constitution, the authorities, and the sovereign life of Venezuela." He also assured that the CNE transmission system had suffered from hacking "because the devils did not want it to be completed and the results to be given today. We know where they did it from."<sup>82</sup>

In addition, and after the presentation of data by the CNE, the presidential candidate of the PUD, Edmundo Gonzalez, and leader Maria Corina Machado announced that the tally sheets collected by their witnesses reflected an overwhelming triumph for the opposition. In addition, they reported that four independent quick counts showed Edmundo González as the winner.<sup>83</sup> Gonzalez and Machado stated: "Venezuelans and the whole world know what happened on election day today. All the rules have been violated here, to the point that most of the tally sheets have not yet been delivered. Our message of reconciliation and change in peace is still valid and we are convinced that the vast majority of Venezuelans also aspire to it."<sup>84</sup>

At the close of election day, therefore, a disparity was evident: on the one hand, a regime that claimed to have won the elections but did not provide data or evidence to prove its victory. On the other hand, tally sheets and citizen verification processes disseminated by civil society in social networks, together with figures collected by election witnesses, which showed the triumph of the opposition.

On July 29, the Carter Center requested the CNE "to immediately publish all the tally sheets of the polling stations installed during the election day held last July 28," stating that "the information of the tally

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<sup>80</sup> X account of journalist Nacho Montes de Oca (@nachomdeo). July 28, 2024. See: <https://x.com/nachomdeo/status/1817783989232455825>

<sup>81</sup> Telesur. July 29, 2024. "CNE de Venezuela denuncia agresión contra el sistema de transmisión de datos electorales" ("CNE of Venezuela denounces aggression against the electoral data transmission system.") See: <https://www.telesurtv.net/cne-de-venezuela-denuncia-agresion-contra-el-sistema-de-trasmision-de-datos-electorales/>

<sup>82</sup> Nicolás Maduro ('s official X account @NicolasMaduro). July 29, 2024. See: <https://x.com/NicolasMaduro/status/1817772882488897932>

<sup>83</sup> NTN24 Venezuela's official X account (@NTN24ve). July 28, 2024. See: <https://x.com/NTN24ve/status/1817789643313611224>

<sup>84</sup> Official X account of Maria Corina Machado (@MariaCorinaYA) July 29, 2024. See: <https://x.com/MariaCorinaYA/status/1817788867493146770>



sheets transmitted to the CNE is indispensable for our evaluation and fundamental for the Venezuelan people."<sup>85</sup>

To date, the national NGOs have not published any report on the results of the tally sheets collected by the election witnesses at the polling stations, nor on the registration of irregularities. According to DECO, this is largely due to fear of reprisals by the government, which has generated an environment of self-censorship and fear, as indicated at the beginning of this report.

Within the context of repression and intimidation described above, the regime's attorney general announced the opening of an investigation against opposition leaders, including María Corina Machado and Leopoldo López, for allegedly intending to manipulate CNE data with a cyber-attack from North Macedonia.<sup>86</sup>

Likewise, exercising powers pertaining to the CNE, Attorney General Tarek William Saab announced that "in the next few hours, the results will be available on the website of the National Electoral Council table by table, as has historically been done thanks to the Automated Voting System. This is what counts."<sup>87</sup> These statements, which in no democratic regime would be made by a body responsible for criminal prosecution, reflect the usual confusion among authorities and institutions as a result of the concentration of power.

It does not explain why the CNE delays uploading the tally sheets or otherwise making them available to the political forces and the media, for example on external storage devices. The opacity and silence of the electoral authority generate legitimate doubts about the results, which are increased by the fact that the CNE rushed to proclaim Nicolás Maduro as the candidate reelected by a "relative majority of valid votes"<sup>88</sup> on the same afternoon of July 29, without the official data being properly disclosed or the audits required by the electoral calendar being carried out.

In response to the proclamation, citizen demonstrations took place in several Venezuelan states, which were repressed<sup>89</sup> by the National Guard and Chavista *colectivos*, according to images shared on social networks. At least one person was reportedly killed in clashes between protesters and armed groups, and several were injured.<sup>90</sup> It is essential that the regime fully guarantees the right of Venezuelans to demonstrate and that violent confrontation in the country is avoided.

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<sup>85</sup> The Carter Center. July 29, 2024. Carter Center Calls on Venezuelan Election Authorities to Release Detailed Results Immediately. See: <https://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/2024/venezuela-072924.html>

<sup>86</sup> Official X account of the Venezuelan Public Prosecutor's Office (@MinpublicoVEN). July 29, 2024. See: <https://x.com/MinpublicoVEN/status/1817952176309985600>

<sup>87</sup> Official X account of the Venezuelan Public Prosecutor's Office (@MinpublicoVEN). July 29, 2024. See: <https://x.com/MinpublicoVEN/status/1817953817977078206>

<sup>88</sup> Nicolás Maduro's official Twitter account (@NicolasMaduro). July 29, 2024. See: <https://x.com/NicolasMaduro/status/1817965665254281714>

<sup>89</sup> NTN24 official X account (@NTN24). July 29, 2024. See: <https://x.com/NTN24/status/1818035163076640953>

<sup>90</sup> Account official of X of journalist Carmen E. Pecorelli (@CarmenPecorelli). July 29, 2024. See: <https://x.com/CarmenPecorelli/status/1818061024127221774>



At the end of the afternoon of July 29, Edmundo Gonzalez and Maria Corina Machado gave a joint message<sup>91</sup> in which they stated that the opposition had more than 73% of the tally sheets and that, with the results they showed, it would be impossible for Nicolas Maduro to secure victory, even if he obtained 100% of the votes counted in the remaining tally sheets. Ambassador Gonzalez told the Venezuelan people that "the will expressed yesterday through their vote will be respected. That is the only way to peace. We have in our hands the tally sheets that demonstrate our categorical and mathematically irreversible triumph." Opposition leaders also announced the launch of a web portal (<https://resultadospresidencialesvenezuela2024.com/><sup>92</sup>) in which they would share the image of all the tally sheets and the digitized results, so that the citizenry could verify the accuracy of the data. The portal has already been activated to receive inquiries.

The OAS electoral specialists had access to four different data sources which, in general, agreed on the results. The first two are exit polls (*exit polls*) drawn up by recognized entities: in one, Edmundo González appears with 62.2% of the votes and Nicolás Maduro with 31.1%; in the second one, González obtains 64%, against 31% for Maduro.

It was also possible to consult a quick count, a statistical exercise with information gathered from on-site tally sheets, which shows an advantage for Edmundo Gonzalez of more than 30 percentage points over the pro-government candidate (67.37% González, 30.22% Maduro). Finally, OAS specialists had access to the digital minutes to which the PUD referred and which emanated from the automated system on the night of the election (67.59% Gonzalez, 30% Maduro).









The information from these four sources coincides and contrasts with the only official bulletin issued orally by the CNE. It is up to the electoral authority to explain, in a convincing manner, why the tally sheets of its own computer system contradict the announced and hastily proclaimed totals.



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<sup>91</sup> YouTube Channel of El País. July 29, 2024. See: <https://www.youtube.com/live/eBR-wlF13ZQ>

<sup>92</sup> Account of Maria Corina Machado (@MariaCorinaYA). July 29, 2024. Available at: <https://x.com/MariaCorinaYA/status/1818106763000102921>



Source	Result candidate Maduro	Result candidate González	Origin of information known	Methodology of information gathering known
Exit poll	31,1%	62,2%		
Exit poll	31%	64%		
Field information	30,22%	67,3%		
Tally sheets PUD	30%	67,59%		

Source	Result candidate Maduro	Result candidate González	Origin of information known	Methodology of information gathering known
Information provided by CNE	51,2%	44,2%		

**Image 2.** Summary of the results according to the different sources of information to which the team of electoral specialists of the OAS had access.

### III. CONCLUSION

This report contains an account of illegalities, flaws, and bad practices that occurred during this particular electoral process, but which were reiterated in recent electoral processes in Venezuela. The evidence denotes an attempt by the regime to disregard the will of the majority expressed at the ballot box by millions of Venezuelan men and women. What happened shows, once again, that the CNE, its authorities, and the Venezuelan electoral system is biased and is at the service of the National Executive Branch, and not of the citizens. The regime of Nicolás Maduro has once again betrayed the Venezuelan people, claiming to respect the will of the people while doing everything possible to manipulate and disregard that will.

In conclusion, given that there is no public documentary support for the data announced by the CNE, and that there instead exists information from various sources that contradict them, the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation reaches the technical conclusion that the official results are not trustworthy or deserving of democratic recognition.