



[The Concern with a Venezuelan Judge's Issuing of an Arrest Warrant for Opposition Leader Gonzalez](#)

After widespread reports of a sham July election in Venezuela, and a claimed victory for incumbent President Nicolas Maduro, Venezuelan authorities have now issued an arrest warrant for opposition party leader [Edmundo González Urrutia](#). Other nations, including the United States' own [Secretary of State Antony Blinken](#), have recognized Gonzalez as the rightful winner of the country's recent election. Maduro's government has accused him of "crimes associated with terrorism," – charges that most agree are trumped up in order to try and quell the growing opposition and political unrest surrounding the controversial presidential election. Additionally, Brazil and Colombia have condemned the arrest warrant in a joint statement issued to Maduro. Brazilian foreign policy advisor Celso Amorim stated [in an interview with Reuters](#) that if Venezuelan authorities do go through with Gonzalez's arrest, it would clearly be a political arrest. Amorim expressed that "There is no denying that there is an authoritarian escalation in Venezuela...We do not feel openness to dialogue, there is a very strong reaction to any comment."

According to Reuters, the summons were based on a related case investigating a website where [members of the opposition posted copies of vote tallies from the contested election](#). One of these members is Maria Machado, the original face of the opposition before Maduro's regime barred her from running. Citing exit polls, she said that Gonzalez won by an [indisputable majority](#). While Maduro's government calls the opposition fascist, blaming them for the deaths incurred thus far, many others have criticized the regime for repression. International human rights monitor [Human Rights Watch](#) says the government has carried out several abuses of power on its citizens following the onset of protests in the aftermath of the contested election. Maduro and his allies have been [reportedly](#) encouraging people to report on their relatives, neighbors, coworkers, and anyone else who may oppose his government. Since the disputed election results were announced on July 28th, some 2,400 protesters have been detained and at least 23 have been killed. Those taken into custody have included children, journalists, and political leaders – among others.

Maduro is widely criticized across Venezuela – and many places around the world – for manufacturing Venezuela's worst economic crisis in years, resulting in the highest inflation rate of any country globally and an estimated 8 million Venezuelans fleeing the country since Maduro took power. He has been indicted by the U.S. on drug trafficking and terrorism charges, as well as being investigated by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity. Furthermore, recently, the United States has seized the president's primary aircraft, with The Justice Department (DOJ) alleging that the Dassault Falcon 900EX aircraft – Venezuela's equivalent to Air Force One – was purchased illegally and smuggled out of the United States, according to U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland. The plane is now in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and Maduro was not on the plane at the time of its seizure. In a statement from Maduro's government earlier this week on Monday, the seizure was called "piracy" and an act of U.S. aggression, per the American government's position on the disputed presidential election that Maduro claimed that he won [in July](#). Matthew Axelrod, an assistant secretary for export enforcement in the U.S. Commerce Department commented that "Let this seizure send a clear message: aircraft illegally acquired from the United States for the benefit of sanctioned Venezuelan officials cannot just fly off into the sunset." According to [NPR](#), the

seizure comes after a violation of U.S. ordered sanctions on Venezuelan companies and individuals, including Maduro, for alleged corruption and human rights abuses.

While U.S. President Biden himself has not taken a hard stance thus far on the highly questionable Venezuelan election results, it is surmised that he inevitably will, given that the U.S. has now seized Maduro's plane – which will undeniably grow tensions between the two countries. Undoubtedly, actions will continue to be taken against the opposition party domestically, and the ruling regime internationally. Protests and violence have reached a fever pitch, with Maduro scrambling for a distraction and recently [declaring Christmas in October](#). It may be a joke to him, but it's certainly not amusing to the families whose loved ones won't be home for the holidays, as their lives were taken by the brutality of Maduro's oppressive government – not to mention the millions of others whose sons, daughters, cousins, and more had to flee the country they love since Maduro's ascension to power, or risk being detained for merely speaking out.