

Borrell ‘Interventionism’ Puts EU November Electoral Mission to Venezuela at Risk

Caracas has demanded an apology from the EU high commissioner after he admitted that Brussels’ team will not be impartial.

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Venezuela has slammed the European Union (EU) High Commissioner for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell’s recent statements as “interventionist.”

Speaking in Madrid last Friday, Borrell [doubled down](#) on the bloc’s regime change goals in Venezuela, telling reporters that he has “no less desire than the US” to see a change of government in the Caribbean country. In recent years, Washington has looked to oust the Nicolás Maduro government through [attempted coup d’états](#) and a wide-reaching economic [blockade](#) against the country deemed “illegal” and “devastating” by the United Nations, amongst other strategies.

Borrell’s comments at the New Economic Forum also sparked a diplomatic storm surrounding the [upcoming 11-member EU mission](#) to accompany Venezuela’s [November 21 regional and local elections](#). During his speech, the diplomat claimed that it will be the EU report and not Venezuelan votes which “will legitimize the Maduro government or not.”

Finally, the Spanish politician controversially admitted that the electoral mission looks to safeguard conditions for the rightwing forces instead of impartially accompanying the process.

The upcoming EU delegation is the first time the body has accepted Venezuela’s invitation to accompany elections since [2006](#). Its presence– alongside customary observation from other multilateral organizations including the [Council of Latin American Electoral Experts](#) (CEELA), Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and African Union – is seen as a major step forward in achieving both global recognition as well as forming part of efforts to lift the unilateral coercive measures. Venezuela’s hard-right had previously identified EU observation as a precondition for their participation. The United Nations has also been

invited, but it is unclear at the time of writing if it will be assisting.

Brussels' mission is, however, under threat following Borrell's latest comments, with Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE) [accusing](#) the diplomat of "violating" the agreement signed between the two organizations.

"We invited these organizations in good faith and strict adherence to the Constitution and legal principles," explained CNE President Pedro Calzadilla on Sunday. "The administrative agreement [between the CNE and EU] has been affected and violated by Borrell's recent declarations."

Calzadilla went on to inform that his office has formally requested that the EU operative issue an "explanation" and "apology" to the Venezuelan people. While the high commissioner is yet to respond to Caracas' demands, Borrell did state that he thought the EU should "make sure it is respected" on the global arena in an [interview](#) to El Pais on Monday.

CEELA President Nicanor Moscoso, who has been overseeing the buildup to Venezuela's elections, also criticized the European official's position, explaining that it is a "mistake for international observers to think of themselves as judges."

The Maduro government likewise hit back on Friday, with the foreign ministry "categorically rejecting" Borrell's "attempted interventionism" in a [statement](#).

The communiqué went on to state that the European bloc had "lost the opportunity to position itself as a respectable, impartial and independent actor and has rather positioned itself as a political pawn subordinated to US foreign policy."

Borrell's statements additionally drew cross-party criticism from organizations participating in the November 'mega-elections.'

For his part, United Socialist Party (PSUV) leading member and National Assembly President Jorge Rodríguez argued that "if [the EU] is not able to minimally respect the agreement signed with the CNE, then it might be best not to come at all."

Similarly, right wing Democratic Action leader Bernabé Gutiérrez told reporters that "EU observers can come to Venezuela, I hope they do, but not to play an interventionist role (...) They must respect Venezuela."

The diplomatic standoff comes as Venezuela moved forward with its electoral schedule on Sunday by holding a dry-run vote.

The non-obligatory event allows the electoral agency to fine-tune its logistical and technological capacity, as well as granting voters an opportunity to familiarize themselves with voting machines and candidates.

According to Calzadilla, the CNE was "extremely satisfied" with the dry-run, and turnout had "exceeded expectations," despite the organization not releasing participation levels.

Mass [migration](#), political disenchantment and right wing [boycotts](#) have caused participation in Venezuela's elections to decrease from over 80% in Hugo Chávez's 2012 reelection to

30% in the December 2020 [parliamentary elections](#).

Apart from the dry-run, the CNE is moving forward with its sixteen audits of the different components of the electoral process, including data transmission, the civil register and central results room. The fourth audit, which will review fingerprint databases, is due to begin on Monday in the presence of international observers and political party representatives.

This audit “is very important for those who have doubts or are confused about the possibility of identity fraud or that someone may vote twice,” explained Calzadilla, reinforcing that fingerprint technology renders these scenarios impossible.

Over 70,000 candidates from 111 political parties have signed up to contest the 3,082 governor, mayor, regional legislator and local councilor offices on offer in November, at an average of 23 candidates per post. While registrations [closed](#) in September, parties are currently able to make modifications to their electoral offer and campaigning formally begins on October 28.

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