

Canada: A Stakeholder in the Venezuelan Coup

By [Collectif Échec à la guerre](#)

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On the occasion of the emergency meeting of the Lima Group, held in Ottawa on February 4, we denounce the role of the Government of Canada in what is nothing less than a coup d'état.

A coup d'état under way

Since Wednesday the 23rd of January, events have unfolded in a blatant choreography:

- 1) self-proclaimed president of the National Assembly, **Juan Guaidó**, has immediately been recognized by the US, Canada and those Latin American countries close to the US;
- 2) France, Germany and the United Kingdom, as well as the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal have all threatened to recognize Guaidó unless elections are called within eight days;
- 3) the US has pressured members of the Organization of American States to “choose sides” while trying, without success, to have Guaidó recognized by the UN Security Council;
- 4) the National Assembly of Venezuela has appointed new ambassadors, a prerogative outside its jurisdiction;
- 5) the Bank of England has refused a withdrawal of Venezuelan gold reserves by Venezuelan officials;
- 6) billions of dollars in new sanctions have been levied by the White House against the oil company PDVSA, followed by the professed intention to transfer Venezuelan bank accounts and assets held in the United States to Juan Guaidó.

All these mechanisms to suffocate the Maduro government were planned in-advance. From mid-December – a while before he was elected president of the National Assembly – Juan Guaidó visited Washington, Brazil and Colombia to present his plan for mass protests on 10th of January and his self-proclamation on the 23rd.

The threat of military intervention completes the panoply of destabilizing measures: “We do not exclude any option,” says **Donald Trump** and **John Bolton**, his National Security Advisor. As early as August 2017, Trump spoke of “a possible military option, if necessary.” The same year, **Mike Pompeo**, then Director of the CIA, spoke of a possible role for Colombia in this regard. As an echo, at a press briefing on January 29, John Bolton’s notebook read “5,000 troops in Colombia.” **Elliott Abrams**’ appointment as special envoy

to Venezuela – known for his support for mass killings by the armies and death squads of El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1980s – is cause for fearing the worst.

The stakes: oil, neoliberalism and hegemony

In an interview with Fox News, John Bolton clarified one of the crucial issues of the Coup:

“It will make a big difference to the United States economically if we could have American oil companies really invest in and produce the oil capabilities in Venezuela.”

However, beyond the oil, the current coup aims to restore the hegemony of the United States in Latin America. Since the beginning of the 21st century, its domination has been mitigated by the left turn taken by several countries, moving away from neoliberalism and adopting progressive social policies. In the same period, the rise of China and Russia has increased their presence on the South American continent. The establishment of a right-wing government in Venezuela, favorable and indebted to foreign investment, would therefore benefit the United States and its allies.

And Canada in all of this?

Involved in the current coup, Canada was one of the first countries to recognize Juan Guaidó’s self-proclamation. Since September 2017, it has imposed economic sanctions against Venezuela in close consultation with the United States. Despite the absence of the US in the Lima Group, the latter includes countries that advocate the same hard line against Venezuela. Presumably, Canada is the liaison in this regard. In its article on the preparations for the coup, AP News reports that Canada played an important role behind the scenes and that **Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland** offered Canada’s support to Guaidó as early as January 9th.

The website, Global Affairs Canada, indicates that the February 4th emergency meeting “will bring together the Foreign Ministers of the Lima Group countries as well as participants from across the international community. They will meet to discuss support for Juan Guaidó, interim president of Venezuela, and to explore ways in which the international community can further support the people of Venezuela. Does this mean that for Canada, those countries that do not recognize Guaidó’s self-proclamation – namely the majority of the OAS countries and most other countries in the world – are not part of the international community?

The political maneuvering, repression and authoritarianism of the Maduro government are reprehensible. But that is not the question here. As the UN Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights urgently recalls: “Coercion, whether military or economic, must never be used to secure a change of government in a sovereign state. The use of sanctions by outside powers to overthrow an elected government is in violation of all norms of international law.” Not to mention the bloodshed that might be provoked by a foreign military intervention or clashes between a fractured Venezuelan army.

For a negotiated end of the crisis

The only responsible and legitimate international approach to the crisis in Venezuela is the immediate lifting of foreign economic sanctions and the search for a genuine Venezuelan political solution through negotiation, under the auspices of independent mediators.

Uruguay and Mexico have pledged to take this path, and have announced the organization of a conference of neutral countries in Montevideo on February 7th. Canada has chosen foreign interference, which is dangerous and reprehensible.

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