

Hands Off Venezuela: US, Canada Go Home!

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What is happening to Venezuela is a coup d'état and it has nothing to do with democracy, human rights, free and fair elections or international law. The US and Canada represent the antithesis of those values; defying the United Nations Charter and international law by interfering in the internal affairs of Venezuela. Their hands are not clean, and their motives are not pure, because their foreign policy objectives everywhere are to promote the interests of their domestic corporations, oligarchs and war profiteers.

In 2017 the US and Canada formed a posse of vigilantes that they named the Lima Group. The members of the Lima Group are Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Saint Lucia. Mexico's newly elected liberal government of **Andrés Manuel López Obrador** (AMLO) has withdrawn from the Lima Group, saying that Mexico follows the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention, and self-determination in foreign policy. Viva AMLO! The Lima Group makes a mockery out of the United Nations and international law.

The US, which is the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism, handpicked the gang members of the Lima Group. [Most are rightwing governments, and politically dominated by business-centric oligarchs](#), and wealthy families just like those that are trying to take control in Venezuela. Fascism, supported by corporations, elites and imperialists are on the march. There is a new wave of anti-immigrant, xenophobic, [evangelical, homophobic, and social conservatives](#) gaining power in Latin America, as elsewhere.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, **Idriss Jazairy** specifically condemned the US and Canada for imposing economic sanctions on Venezuela. Jazairy stressed that the economic sanctions are immoral on humanitarian grounds, and they are an illegal attempt to overthrow the internationally recognized sovereign government of Venezuela. On January 31, 2019 the UN released a report [that quoted him as saying](#):

"I am especially concerned to hear reports that these sanctions are aimed at changing the government of Venezuela... Coercion, whether military or economic, must never be used to seek a change in 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.... Economic sanctions are effectively compounding the grave crisis affecting the Venezuelan economy, adding to the damage caused by hyperinflation and the fall in oil prices."

Former UN Special Rapporteur **Alfred de Zayas**, who is also an international expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, [said on his website on](#)

[February 7th](#) the following about the current situation in Venezuela:

“Members of the United Nations are bound by the Charter, articles one and two of which affirm the right of all peoples to determine themselves, the sovereign equality of states, the prohibition of the use of force and of economic or political interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states..... the enormous suffering inflicted on the Venezuelan people by the United States is nothing less than appalling. The economic war against Venezuela, carried out not only by the United States, but also by the Grupo de Lima in clear violation of Chapter 4, Article 19 of the OAS Charter, the financial blockade and the sanctions have demonstrably caused hundreds of deaths directly related to the scarcity of food and medicines resulting from the blockade.”

Zayas also said that what the US, Canada and the mainstream media are doing to Venezuela reminds him of the deliberate disinformation campaign that led to the US, and the “coalitions of the willing” that included Canada anonymously, illegally invading Iraq in 2003, and their destruction of Libya in 2011.

In the case of Libya in 2011, the so-called “no-fly zone” authorized by [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973](#) was for the intended purpose of bringing about a ceasefire. It specifically forbade any “boots on the ground”, which the US is known to have violated.

The US, Canada and other NATO forces illegally exceeded their UN mandate, and used it as a cover to completely destroy Libya and regime change. It later was learned that the supposed Gaddafi genocide, which the no-fly zone was intended to stop was a hoax. The point is that the US and its junior partners can never be trusted to tell the truth when a lie serves their purposes much better.

Whenever the US and its junior imperial partners resort to pleas of democracy and human rights, an ulterior motive should be assumed. For instance, the little the US and Canada care about democracy, human rights and free elections is shown by their long history of supporting non-democratic governments.

Canada has supported every US regime change project, and the overthrow of democratic governments, which did not conform to their mutual foreign policy objectives. Both countries’ foreign policies prefer corrupt business-centric rightwing repressive governments. Democracy and human rights conflict with the interests and profits of their exploitative and extractive corporations.

Both the US and Canada [supported the apartheid government of South Africa](#) right up until the very end; they support the apartheid government of Israel, which is the number one violator of human rights in the world; and they both sell arms and support the most repressive government in the world, Saudi Arabia. Human rights have not been an issue.

The US overthrew the democratically elected Salvador Allende of Chile, [with Canada’s support](#). Both countries supported the junta regime of Augusto Pinochet, whom was later arrested for crimes against humanity. Both the US and Canada supported the illegitimate coup governments of Haiti in 2004, and in Honduras in 2009. By some estimates, the US (and Canada) **support 73%** of the dictators in the world. Human rights have not been an issue.

The US and Canada have been trying to overthrow the democratically elected *reformist*

government of Venezuela, known as the Bolivarian Revolution, since 1999. Hugo Chavez's elections were all certified by the Carter Foundation, the OAS and other legitimate observers. Chavez was elected in free, fair and democratic elections, but that did not matter to the US and Canada. They wanted to overthrow him anyway. Human rights were not an issue.

Democracy, human rights, the right-to-protect, humanitarian interventions and all the other righteous soundbites are just talking points for the US and Canada. They are only used against governments that get in their way, and never used against corrupt business-friendly governments, no matter how oppressive. Paul Jay, a Canadian, who is the editor-in-chief of The Real News Network says that he personally became aware in 2005 of Canada's involvement in the conspiracy of regime change in Venezuela:

The hypocrisy of US concerns over human rights is on full display in a leaked US State Department memo from Brian Hook to then Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. The memo is titled "[Balancing Interests and Values](#)". The memo does not mince words about human rights concerns being only a tactic to use against adversaries:

"America's allies should be supported rather than badgered.... allies should be treated differently — and better — than adversaries.... We do not look to bolster America's adversaries overseas; we look to pressure, compete with, and outmaneuver them.... pressing those regimes [adversaries] on human rights is one way to impose costs, apply counter-pressure, and regain the initiative from them strategically."

Hook continues his memo by giving Tillerson a history lesson on the art of US hypocrisy from 1940 to 2017.

In other words, rightwing dictators, military juntas, ethnic cleansing, fraudulent elections, human rights violations, political prisoners, torture and murder should be treated differently, and better, with compliant allies. Even when adversaries are democratically elected, they should be roasted in order to "extract costs", according to Hook.... but not because the US cares about people.

There is no serious doubt about the legitimacy of the more than a dozen elections in Venezuela between 1998 to 2013. That did not prevent the US and Canada from "extracting costs", and trying to overthrow Hugo Chavez anyway. Given the examples of the US and Canada overthrowing the democratically elected governments in Chile, Haiti and Honduras, the objections to Maduro are unbelievable.

In the past few years, there have been a half-dozen certified democratic elections in Venezuela. The real motives for opposing Maduro must be something else. It is obvious what that something else is. The real motives behind the US and Canada are Venezuela's massive wealth in oil, gas, and other natural resources, such as gold, copper and coltan.

There are also tremendous profits to be had by bringing Venezuela into the [Washington Consensus](#). US and Canadian banks profit from IMF and World Bank loans. The corrupt politicians and oligarchs steal the loans, and then it is the poor that have to repay them, through higher prices for life's necessities, reduced wages and government-imposed

austerity. The privatization of state-owned enterprises at corrupt fire-sale prices enrich oligarchs and corporations tremendously.

The Washington Consensus also forces unequal trade agreements and currency devaluation on poor countries. The resulting lower prices are used to extract natural resources, monocrops and sweatshop produced products for export. Small farmers are driven off the land because they cannot compete with dumped US and Canadian tax-payer highly-subsidized agricultural products, such as corn and wheat. Those that suffer are the local farmers, the poor, landless and indigenous people, who go from subsistence, to poverty, to wage slavery.

The chaotic political situation in Venezuela has been purposely made worse by the US and Canada. Since Venezuela is “cursed” with natural resources, especially oil, its economy has historically gone from boom to bust depending on international oil prices.

It was low oil prices, endemic poverty, gross inequality, and neoliberal economic policies that favored the rich in the 1990’s, which swept Chavez into power in the 1998 election. A majority of the Venezuelan people elected Hugo Chavez and his “Bolivarian Revolution” of rewriting the constitution, increasing participatory democracy, frequent elections, and implementing social programs for the poor. The [Carter Center \(as well as the OAS\) certified the election](#), and praised Venezuela’s modern voting systems as one of the best in the world:

“Venezuelans voted peacefully, but definitively for change. With more than 96 percent voting for the two candidates who promised to overhaul the system, Venezuelans carried out a peaceful revolution through the ballot box”, said Jimmy Carter’s Foundation upon Chavez’s victory.

The US opposed Chavez regardless of fair and democratic elections. A surprisingly honest 2005 article in the [Professional Journal of the US Army](#) explained why the US opposed Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution for economic and geopolitical reasons:

“Since he was elected president in 1998, Chávez has transformed Venezuelan Government and society in what he has termed a Bolivarian revolution. Based on Chávez’s interpretation of the thinking of Venezuelan founding fathers Simón Bolívar and Simón Rodríguez, this revolution brings together a set of ideas that justifies a populist and sometimes authoritarian approach to government, the integration of the military into domestic politics, and a focus on using the state’s resources to serve the poor—the president’s main constituency.”

“Although the Bolivarian revolution is mostly oriented toward domestic politics, it also has an important foreign policy component. Bolivarian foreign policy seeks to defend the revolution in Venezuela; promote a sovereign, autonomous leadership role for Venezuela in Latin America; oppose globalization and neoliberal economic policies; and work toward the emergence of a multipolar world in which U.S. hegemony is checked. The revolution also opposes the war in Iraq and is skeptical of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The United States has worked fruitfully in the past with Venezuela when the country pursued an independent foreign policy, but the last three policies run directly contrary to U.S. foreign policy preferences and inevitably have generated friction between the two countries.” [Emphasis added.] [See Appendix]

Whether it is Chavez or Maduro, the US, Canada and the oligarchs in Venezuela have been trying to kill the Bolivarian Revolution from when it was an infant in the cradle.

The opposition with the support of imperialists have been trying to get rid of the Bolivarian Revolution with every means imaginable. They have tried a US supported military coup against Hugo Chavez in 2002. It failed. They tried strikes by the management of the Venezuelan oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela. It failed. They tried a recall election in 2004. It failed. Obama tried economic sanctions in 2015. It failed. The US and Canada tried an economic blockade in 2017. It has failed, as of this article. They tried to assassinate Maduro with a drone. It failed.

In 2018 the opposition boycotted the election. Maduro won by a landslide. He had invited the United Nations to be election observers, but the opposition kept the UN away. Other international observers certified the election. Now the opposition complains about the integrity of the election observers. The opposition is making a circus out of elections. The objections by the oligarchs, the US and Canada that the 2018 elections in Venezuela where fraudulent is itself a fraud. Their objectives are to knowingly “extract costs” that Venezuela can ill afford.

The US chose Canada to be the mouthpiece for the Lima Group, but the coup is being directed by imperial powers in Washington. Canadian politeness is not working, and its imperialism is out of the closet where it has been hiding. As Canadian historian Yves Engler puts it, the US carries the big stick in Latin America, and Canada comes along afterwards with the billy club. Engler is referring to Canadian peacekeeping missions, which he exposes as actually policing and counter insurgency missions. Yves Engler has written dozens of books and articles on Canadian imperialism.

Canada’s Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** may be fooling some of the people, some of the time. But he is now under attack at home for [corruption](#). His accusers say that he has obstructed justice in the world-wide corruption scandal involving the powerful international [Canadian conglomerate SNC-Lavalin](#). SNC-Lavalin is a mining, energy and engineering company that is typical of the corrupt face of Canadian imperialism.

Trudeau’s conspiracy with Trump to overthrow the internationally recognized government of Venezuela has unmasked Canada as a second-rate imperial power. Upon closer look, Canada has been protecting its oil and mining companies that have been raping Latin American countries, [destroying their environment and poisoning their people for decades](#). Canadian imperialism has to obey its “deep state” too, as Canadian journalist Bruce Livesey puts it:

“Those who believe the oil industry has become a deep state point to how the political elites, whether Liberal, Conservative or NDP — from Justin Trudeau to Stephen Harper to Rachel Notley — go to bat for the industry....”.

Mining companies as well as oil and gas are a big part of Canada’s “deep state”. They control approximately [50 to 70%](#) of the mines in Latin America, and [they are not held accountable in Canadian courts](#) for their destruction to the environment and harm to human beings in foreign countries. They dispossess the indigenous people and poor of their land. They [hire goons to threaten, attack and murder](#) those that try to form labor unions, or demonstrate about land confiscation and human rights abuses. Honduras is just one

example of what happens when a democratically elected leader is overthrow by a US and Canadian-backed coup; Canadian mining companies move in. It is all exposed in the book “Ottawa and Empire: Canada and the Military Coup in Honduras”, by [Tyler Shipley](#).



All extractive industries wound the planet. That happens with relatively more impunity abroad, but capitalism inflicts severe harm at home, too. [Canadian Mining Companies in Latin America. Photo [Council on Hemispheric Affairs](#).]

Dispossessing native people of their land and natural resources comes natural to Canada. After all, like the US it was a settler colonial outpost for the British Empire. Both the US and Canada committed genocide and ethnic cleansing of their mutual Indigenous People. They were even allies and coordinated the genocide. According [to historian Andrew Graybill](#):

“....the NorthWest Mounted Police were created and the Texas Rangers renewed and reorganized in the early 1870s specifically to address the pressing ‘native question’ confronting Texas and western Canada, among the few places where bison still roamed after 1870..... both Austin and Ottawa called on their rural police to manage indigenous populations facing societal collapse....by controlling or denying the Natives access to the bison.”

In other words, both the US and Canada collaborated in killing the buffalo to extinction. It was the coup de grâce for the starving “native question”. [This reminds us that the “settler” capitalist states have been morally despicable practically from inception, all propaganda to the contrary.—Ed]

Mining is one of Canada’s biggest and most powerful and politically influential industries. Canada has approximately 60% of all mining companies in the world. Canadian companies such as Ascendant Copper, Barrick Gold, Kinder Morgan, and TriMetals Mining have operations in Canada, Latin America and elsewhere. They are continuing the ethnic cleansing of the “native question” in Latin America, and at home. (See map and statistics of [Canadian Mining in Latin America.](#))

Canadian mining and natural resource companies are heavy handed when it comes to First Nations at home. TransCanada Corporation recently was in the news because of its pipeline route, which they are trying to put through First Nation’s land in the [Wet’suwet’en territory](#), in northern British Columbia. On a court order, a [militarized unit](#) of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police broke up a road blockade, which the tribal leaders had put up to keep the pipeline company out of their nation. The Mounties whom lacked jurisdiction arrested 14 tribal leaders on their sovereign land.

During the reign of the British Empire, Canada helped the British put down slave rebellions in the Caribbean. Canada was involved [in the slave trade, and slavery](#) was legal in Canada until 1834. The products of slavery, such as cotton and sugar were used for trade and to industrialize Canada. When the British conquered New France, the 1760 declaration of surrender signed in Montreal specifically said:

“The Negroes and panis [aborigines] of both sexes shall remain, in their quality of slaves, in the possession of the French and Canadians to whom they belong; they shall be at liberty to keep them in their service in the colony, or to sell them; and they may also continue to bring them up in the Roman Religion.”

In the 19th century Canadian banking and insurance companies, along with those of the British, monopolized finance in British controlled parts of Latin America. Canada is still financially powerful in the English-speaking Caribbean. [For example](#), the Bank of Nova Scotia, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, and the Royal Bank of Canada, as well as Sun Life Financial are dominate in the Bahamas, Belize, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Turks and Caicos, and Trinidad. After the decline of the British Empire, Canada assumed its natural role as a second-rate imperial power and junior partner for US imperialism.

In the Lima Group, Canada is the US’s junior partner. The US has the leading role from behind the curtain. To prove it, right on cue at the January 4th meeting of the Lima Group, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pulled the curtain back [in a video presentation to the group](#). Pompeo showed the members who they would have to answer to if they did not vote according to Washington’s wishes. The Lima group obeyed, and voted to politically isolate and economically blockade Venezuela, contrary to international law. Leaving nothing to chance, Pompeo again addressed the group from behind the video curtain at [their February 4th](#) meeting in Ottawa.

As Christopher Black wrote in New Eastern Outlook:

“The United States is the principal actor in all this but it has beside it among other flunkey nations, perhaps the worst of them all, Canada, which has been an enthusiastic partner in crime of the United States since the end of the Second World War. We cannot forget its role in the aggression against North Korea, the Soviet Union, China, its secret role in the American aggression against Vietnam, against Iraq, Rwanda, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Syria, Ukraine, Haiti, Iran, and the past several years Venezuela.”

Black left out many other imperial crimes of the partners in Panama, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Somalia, Sudan, the Congo, Palestine, Libya, Yemen, etc. The US and Canada are [“always there for each other”](#) and stand “shoulder to shoulder” in war and imperialism, in Justin Trudeau’s own words. [Even against Cuba!](#)

The current Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs **Chrystia Freeland** recently referred to Venezuela as being in “Canada’s backyard”. As the SNC-Lavalin case illustrates, the Canadian “backyard” of imperialism also extends to Africa, Asia, the Middle East and former Soviet Union republics, such as [Ukraine](#).

This is not the 19th century. Central America, South America and the Caribbean Islands are not anybody’s back yard. It is insulting, degrading and shows a colonial mentality for the US and Canada to even think about having a backyard.

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Featured image: A Hands Off Venezuela protest in London on January 28, 2018. (Socialist Appeal/Flickr).

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