

Trudeau Should Withdraw from the Lima Group, Rescind Sanctions on Venezuela

By [Arnold August](#)

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On June 17, the Trudeau government suffered a humiliating defeat by losing its bid for a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) seat to Ireland and Norway. It was a strong rebuttal of Trudeau's policy of "colonialism at home, imperialism abroad." It should be obvious by now that serious questions need to be asked about Trudeau's foreign policy, especially with regard to Venezuela and the Lima Group.

Over the last several months, and in the lead up to the UNSC vote, an open democratic and critical discussion of Canada's colonial heritage and its treatment of Indigenous peoples—along with Ottawa's Trump-aligned foreign policy—has been largely absent from the mainstream media.

During the last federal election, Trudeau had to deal with challenges from the grassroots. In a mocking and insulting manner, he [fended off](#) interruptions from Indigenous complainants suffering from mercury poisoning. He also skated around peace activists questioning him and then Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland about their double standards with respect to sanctioning Russia for its annexation of Crimea, but ignoring Israel's ongoing and illegal settlement building in the West Bank.

Canada quickly recognized the fraudulent election of **Jair Bolsonaro** in Brazil (after the judiciary imprisoned front-runner Lula da Silva on spurious charges), while at the same time refusing to recognize constitutionally elected Venezuelan **President Nicolás Maduro**. Trudeau and his cabinet also faced protests by activists opposing Canada's weapons sales to notorious human rights violator Saudi Arabia and Ottawa's unconditional support for Israel at the expense of Palestinian self-determination. While corporate media outlets had no choice but to show these disruptions, it soon went back to business as usual by obediently keeping all these critical issues away from public scrutiny.

For those of us in Canada involved in the #NoUNSC4Canada campaign, including [Canadian Dimension](#), it is clear we managed to break through the virtual corporate media blackout. This censorship was mainly directed at putting a lid on the much-needed debate on both Canada's foreign policy and its notorious colonial practices at home against Indigenous peoples.



President Maduro among other Latin American leaders participating in a 2017 ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) gathering. Photo from [Wikimedia Commons](#).

The #NoUSNC4Canada campaign takes shape

On May 19, this media posturing was forced to shift. That day, an open letter signed by hundreds of international, Canadian, Québécois and Indigenous figures was published in the [Toronto Star](#), criticizing the Canadian government's foreign policy and its continued encroachment onto unceded Indigenous territory to push through new oil and gas pipelines. The letter argued that Canada does not deserve a UNSC seat due to its US-oriented foreign policy on Venezuela, Haiti, Bolivia and other countries in Latin America, along with its neocolonial ambitions in Africa, its open contempt for Palestinian rights, and so much more.

Following the publication of the letter in the Star, Trudeau was asked during his daily COVID-19 presser about the divided public opinion surrounding his UNSC bid. Instead of discussing the issue, Trudeau arrogantly dismissed it, saying there was no division whatsoever, and then took a snipe at Maduro to distract attention from the question.

Seemingly from that point forward, additional criticism of the Trudeau government's UNSC bid continued to mount.

On June 11, the Canadian organization [Just Peace Advocates](#), published an open letter on Palestine which was then sent to all 193 UN ambassadors and signed by 100 organizations and dozens of prominent individuals. It immediately impacted the Canadian political scene, forcing Canadian Ambassador to the UN, Marc-André Blanchard, to write a reply to all UN ambassadors, defending Canada's one-sided Israel policy. This obviously desperate move did not go unnoticed, even by mainstream media outlets, fuelling further doubts about the credibility of Canada's UNSC bid.

Canadian Dimension columnist and author Yves Engler [appealed](#) to the CARICOM nations to vote against Canada. This was followed up by a similar appeal I made that was sent to each

of the UN ambassadors of CARICOM nations. The Canadian Foreign Policy Institute published my YouTube appeal in English, Spanish and French. It consisted of a widely-disseminated call to many UN ambassadors to vote against Canada because of its violation of international law based on its pro-US regime change policy for Venezuela, a clear violation of UN principles.

There are many other examples. Did our campaign within Canada and internationally contribute to Trudeau's UNSC defeat? We may never know for sure. However, we do know that Trudeau had been calling and meeting with international leaders on every continent since 2017 on the issue of Venezuela. He had been exhorting them to side with Trump and his hand-picked "interim president" Juan Guaidó. Trudeau went out of his way to give Guaidó an official reception in Ottawa in February. In fact, an embarrassing selfie shared between the two at that meeting (since taken down from the Canadian government website but made immortal by activists) is emblematic of Canada's servile foreign policy.

Ties to Trump cost Trudeau dearly

Since the [June 17 vote](#), it is generally accepted within progressive circles, and even grudgingly now by some corporate media, that Trudeau lost as a result of being too closely and openly tied to Trump. Perhaps the #NoUNSC4Canada campaign provided added impetus to the anti-Trudeau sentiment already brewing as part of growing worldwide resistance to Western liberal hypocrisy, spurred on by such issues as Trudeau's support for Israel and disdain for Palestinian rights.

It has also been noted, and justifiably so, that Trudeau's support for Israel was a key factor in his defeat. However, one should not underestimate Venezuela. Trudeau fell prey to his own mythical belief that the "world is against Maduro." In fact, one only has to point to the 120-member Non-Aligned Movement, which does recognize Maduro. The influence and esteem that Venezuela and its leaders enjoy all over the Third World should not be underestimated. Former president Hugo Chávez is respected in many corners to a degree Trudeau cannot even begin to imagine.

In many ways, Maduro is following in the footsteps of his predecessor. In May, Maduro struck a deal with Iran to have the Middle Eastern nation send fuel vessels to Venezuela to mitigate a refinery operations collapse caused by the tightening of punitive US sanctions. Defying the Americans, five Iranian tankers brought 1.5 million barrels of fuel to Venezuelan ports. On June 22, Iran's ambassador to Venezuela, Hojjatollah Soltani, confirmed the arrival of the ship "[Golsan](#)" in Venezuelan waters with a load of foodstuffs destined for the Islamic Republic's first supermarket in Venezuela.

Venezuela's international diplomatic efforts are also impressive. It skilfully combines revolutionary defense of its sovereignty based on a civic-military alliance backed by a dizzying, globetrotting corps of young diplomats. They have developed a tradition of battling on every stage that the international community affords, and they are holding their own against all odds.

Some additional truths were highlighted in a June 17 tweet by Carlos Ron, Venezuela's Vice-Minister for North America. The message was retweeted by Venezuela's Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza:

Not surprised with UN Security Council election results today. A subservient

foreign policy may win you Trump's favor, but the peoples of the world expect an independent voice that will stand for diplomacy, respect for self-determination, and peace.

— Carlos Ron (@CarlosJRonVE) [June 17, 2020](#)

To achieve a positive result from Trudeau's UNSC election defeat, Canadians must demand a public debate on foreign policy. The Canadian Foreign Policy Institute, which initiated the #NoUNSC4Canada petition, is continuing this discussion by publishing pieces in the mainstream media and hosting webinars during the pandemic.

Although progressives may be happy with the result of the vote on June 17, it is necessary that this rejection of Trudeau's foreign policy translates into Canada exiting from the Lima group, rescinding its sanctions against Venezuela and pressuring Trump to do the same.

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