

US Sanctions Are Still Strangling Venezuela

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*As tensions in the Persian Gulf are taking up most of the headlines, the Trump administration is still seeking regime change in Venezuela. Since coming into office President Trump has had an aggressive policy towards Venezuela's **President Nicolas Maduro**. The Center for Economic Policy and Research [determined in April](#) that US sanctions were responsible for 40,000 deaths in Venezuela since 2017.*

Well, those sanctions are still in full affect. A [report released last month by Torino Economics](#) concluded, "There is no logical reason why Chavez's irresponsibility, Maduro's incompetence and U.S. economic sanctions cannot all have contributed to worsening the plight of Venezuelans." **Francisco Rodriguez**, the economist who prepared the report, is no fan of Maduro. He served as an advisor to Henri Falcon, one of Maduro's opponents in the 2018 election. Yet Rodriguez still recognizes the damage US sanctions are inflicting.

The report focused on the effect sanctions have had on Venezuela's oil production. It makes the point that oil production had been slowly declining, but it decreased drastically once the August 2017 sanctions were imposed by the US and when more sanctions were added in January 2019.

[In an interview with Journalist Aaron Mate](#), Rodriguez warned US sanctions could lead to a famine in Venezuela. Rodriguez said,

"The most reasonable conclusion based on the data is that a famine is going to occur in Venezuela over the course of the next twelve months."

Since declaring himself President in January, opposition leader **Juan Guaido** has failed to actually take power from Maduro. In April, he called for the military to rise up and take out Maduro. But the coup was short lived. The military has overwhelmingly stood by Maduro, and there are [over a million militia members](#) willing to fight for him.

Even though there is plenty of opposition to Maduro in Venezuela, Guaido is seen as a US puppet. Just last week, the Trump Administration announced they would be [diverting over \\$40 million worth of aid](#) from Honduras and Guatemala to Guaido and his crew. This comes after members of Guaido's opposition party were [accused of embezzling money](#) that was for "humanitarian aid."

The idea of cutting aid to Honduras and Guatemala is to make the governments of those countries increase efforts to curb migration. But if Guaido's opposition starts a civil war in Venezuela with that money, the US will see a migration crisis similar to the one in Europe after the outbreak of the Syrian civil war. It shows how shortsighted Trump's foreign policy

is, or how blind he is to the neocon agenda.

Last week, [US Southern Command said](#) a Venezuelan plane made an “unsafe approach” and “aggressively shadowed” a US reconnaissance aircraft over the Caribbean Sea. Venezuelan officials said the US plane was in their airspace.

In another tweet US Southern Command said, “Russia’s irresponsible military support to Maduro’s illegitimate regime and underscores Maduro’s recklessness and irresponsible behavior, which undermines international rule of law and efforts to counter illicit trafficking.” An ironic statement, considering the Trump administration has been arming Saudi Arabia as they perpetuate a genocidal war on Yemen. Venezuela is not currently bombing any other countries, they just want to protect themselves from US imperialism.

National Security Advisor John Bolton has been tweeting away about Venezuela this week. [On Tuesday, he said](#),

“The United States is unwavering in its commitment to @jguaido (Juan Guaido) and Venezuelans in their fight for a peaceful democratic transition, freedom, and human rights.”

[Bolton tweeted out a Bloomberg article](#) Wednesday, about the IMF’s growth forecasts in Latin America. The article said in Venezuela, “the IMF forecasts a “devastating” economic contraction of 35% this year. That’s even worse than the expectation of a 25% plunge in its April report.”

Of course, Bolton does not take US sanctions into account when looking at Venezuela’s failing economy. [Bolton said of the article](#), “Maduro’s incompetence could not be more evident. His man-made crisis continues to plunge Venezuelans further into despair. The US stands ready to help Venezuelan people recover their freedom and democracy and chart a path towards economic growth and prosperity

Maduro’s “incompetence” could be largely to blame for the situation in Venezuela. But the simple truth is that US sanctions do nothing but make the suffering worse for the people. Just this week, Trump’s envoy to Venezuela, **Elliott Abrams**, [said new sanctions will be put into effect](#). “We keep rolling out additional sanctions to keep the pressure up. We are trying to cut off the funds flow to the regime, and I think we’re having a fairly dramatic impact on the regime,” Abrams said. Sanctions may have a dramatic impact on the regime, but research shows they have a devastating impact on the civilian population.

So, while certain members of the Trump administration are loudly clamoring for war with Iran, they are still quietly squeezing the people of Venezuela. These reports on sanctions go largely unnoticed in the mainstream media. But if US pressure leads to a famine or civil war in Venezuela, the American people will feel the blowback, whether it be another migration crisis or something worse.

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