



Venezuelan opposition group criticizes talks with Maduro

Josh Aaron Siegel and Victoria Scott

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Members of a Venezuelan opposition party criticized ongoing talks with the government and called for greater international pressure on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro at a Cato Institute event on Friday.

María Corina Machado, the leader of Vente Venezuela, sent a video statement to the event because she has been barred from leaving the country by the Maduro government. She called on “a coalition of our closest allies” in the region, including the United States and Colombia, to put more pressure on the government.

Pedro Urruchurtu, the national coordinator for political development of Vente Venezuela and a professor at the Universidad Central de Venezuela, said that his party didn’t support the current talks between the government and the opposition.

Urruchurtu said he did not believe Maduro can be part of a peaceful transition of power.

“There can be no free elections in Venezuela if Maduro is still in power,” Urruchurtu said at the event. “We are not dealing with politicians, but with criminals.”

The small center-right Vente Venezuela and Juan Guaidó’s progressive social democratic party Popular Will are both part of the opposition coalition Democratic Unity Roundtable in the Venezuelan National Assembly. The coalition won a majority of seats in 2015 running against Maduro's party.

On Monday, representatives of the Venezuelan government and the opposition arrived in Barbados to resume talks aimed at resolving the country’s political and humanitarian crisis.

The negotiations are being mediated by Norway, which hosted talks in May that failed to produce an agreement between Maduro and opposition leader Guaidó.

In January, Guaidó declared himself the interim president of Venezuela and called for new elections in response to Maduro’s victory in a 2018 election that international observers described as illegitimate. The opposition leader has received support from a host of neighboring nations as well as the United States. Russia and China, though, have continued to back Maduro.

The Trump administration expanded sanctions on top officials in the Venezuelan government Friday in response to the death of a Venezuelan navy captain and has indicated in the past that military force is being considered as an "option" to remove Maduro from power.

At the event, the two party members said they did not support a military invasion and that the party supports Guaidó.

“The failure of president Juan Guaidó as interim president is the failure of all our country,” Urruchurtu said.

In addition to the political crisis, millions of Venezuelans suffer from hyperinflation and oppression from the government.

“There is only one option to move ahead. There is only one option: victory,” said Machado.