



14 February 2019
Sydney, Australia

The Australia-Cuba Friendship Society (ACFS, Sydney Branch) denounces, as an affront to democracy and the rule of law, the ongoing attempt at coup d'état in Venezuela sponsored by the United States of America. We condemn the Australian Government's unlawful recognition of self-proclaimed 'interim president' Juan Guaidó, who has never been a candidate in an election for president. We condemn equally the irresponsible and unprincipled support for this recognition by the Australian Labor Party.

There is no doubt that President Nicolás Maduro Moros remains the legitimate, constitutionally elected president of Venezuela, re-elected in May 2018 by an overwhelming majority (of more than two-thirds of the vote) as recorded by the same electoral authorities that recognised the parliamentary victory of Guaidó's opposition in 2015.

The economic crisis in Venezuela is in large measure the result of US economic sabotage; the US holds over \$20 billion of Venezuelan funds – more than enough to rectify shortages in foodstuffs and medicines that are cynically portrayed as 'humanitarian crisis' to legitimise foreign intervention. Standard Oil, Texaco and other US-based multinationals have profited astronomically from Venezuelan oil since its discovery in the 1920s, and the current intervention is aimed at continuing these profits at the expense of the Venezuelan people.

The US has a long and contemptible history of fomenting coups and intervening militarily in Latin America in the interests of capital. Venezuela and its ally Cuba have both been targets. It is the interests of US-led capital that underlie the slander against both countries about 'human rights', and the cant about 'democracy'. Cuba and Venezuela are key examples of historic US imperial plunder: Washington has deprived Cuba of US\$877 billion (2019 values) through its unlawful blockade since 1960, while its failed 'regime change' policy in Cuba has been rejected in the UN by all but the US and Israel, whilst costing hundreds of thousands of Cuban lives. Venezuela's oil, exchanged for the work of Cuba's highly trained doctors and teachers, has been vital to Cuba's survival in the face of the ongoing blockade.

Australians should reject all foreign intervention in Venezuela and Cuba, whether as aid or weaponry or advisors or US bank freezes. The ACFS calls for a return to the diplomacy of peace and Latin American solidarity as practised by Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro.

Chela Weitzel
Treasurer
on behalf of the membership of ACFS Sydney