

Transcript: Venezuela in Washington's Crosshairs, Webinar 2: Geopolitics & Double Standards – Caracas to Gaza: Global solidarity and the politics of impunity

This is the transcript of the second of three webinars presented jointly in early January 2026 by Just World Educational and the Task Force on the Americas, and co-sponsored by the U.S.

Peace Council, Code Pink, Veterans for Peace, and the Nicaragua Solidarity Coalition. Full multimedia records of all the webinars in this project can be found at [Bit.ly/VZ-learning-hub](https://bit.ly/VZ-learning-hub).

[Helena Cobban]

Hello everybody. I'm Helena Cobban, the president of Just World Educational. Welcome to today's webinar, which is the second in the three-part series Venezuela in Washington's Crosshairs that Just World Ed is presenting jointly with the US-based organization Task Force on the Americas with a wonderful list of co-sponsors.

We are delighted that we'll have three fabulous speakers with us today, Jesús Rodríguez Espinosa, Professor Richard Falk, and Corinna Mullen. They are all behind the scenes right here and will get duly introduced when each comes on air. Thanks so much to all of you for being with us.

Throughout this series, Roger Harris of the Task Force on the Americas and I will be co-moderating the webinars. A couple of quick housekeeping notes from me. One is that, as you probably know, I think I've already mentioned this, this is the second in a three-webinar series.

And we're presenting the multimedia records of all these webinars on a dedicated learning hub on our website, www.justworldeducational.org. We already have the records of last Tuesday's webinar up on the hub. And the ones from today will soon be there too.

Visit the hub here. OK, that is [Bit.ly/VZ-learning-hub](https://bit.ly/VZ-learning-hub). Today's session will have a bit of a different format from the one we did on Tuesday, with more interactivity among all of us.

And with you attendees, we hope too. Please send in your questions written as succinctly as possible via the Q&A box at the bottom of your screen. Just one quick note from here, from me, before I hand over to Roger.

As many of you know, Just World Educational and I personally have done a huge amount of work over the years to analyze the horrendous situation in Palestine and the rest of West Asia, and to provide educational resources that help build the movement for a just and durable ceasefire, for just and durable ceasefires throughout the whole region, for an end to Israeli impunity and colonial expansionism, and to oppose the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza. As we know, that genocide is still ongoing, even though the corporate media seems to have forgotten about it. Our work at Just World Educational on these issues is continuing.

I urge you to visit our website if you have not done so recently, and in particular, to look at the projects we are still pursuing to de-demonize the Hamas resistance movement, to document the suffering in Gaza through our Palcast podcast, and to explore the many links

between the Gaza issue and the big shifts in today's global balance. We see our current project on Venezuela as part of this latter effort. So now, over to you, Roger.

[Roger Harris]

Thank you, Helena, and thank you everybody for attending today. In addition to the two co-sponsors that was already mentioned, I want to thank the other co-sponsors, Nicaragua Solidarity Coalition, Code Pink, U.S. Peace Council, and Veterans for Peace. Now, the latter group, their slogan is end the wars at home and abroad, and that's a slogan we can all embrace.

Recent events highlight this interconnection between the national and the international. Just yesterday, on the National Front, Renee Nicole Goode, a 37-year-old mother of three children, was martyred by the U.S. federal agents in Minneapolis. Also yesterday, the United States announced its intention to withdraw out of 66 international organizations, treaties, and bodies.

This terminal unilateralism by the United States contrasts with the internationalism of Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution, a revolution that has fostered regional integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, has developed deep ties abroad, particularly with Iran, Russia, and China, and has been a leader in solidarity with Palestine. We'll be addressing all those things. But to kick off our discussion today, I am so happy to introduce Jesús Rodríguez Espinosa.

He joins us from Caracas, Venezuela, and I know Jesús has had very, very little sleep since our late Friday night, early Saturday morning, when the U.S. imperialists decapitated and tried to destroy the Bolivarian Revolution leadership, but instead, the leadership has remained strong and united, and the people as well. Jesús is an expert in international relations, Venezuelan politics, and communications. He served for several years as Consul General for Venezuela in Chicago in the U.S., and before that, he was part of the foundational editorial team of aporia.org.

And today, he is the founder and editor of the go-to source on English language information from Venezuela on Venezuela, and that is the Anti-Imperialist Orinoco Tribune. So, Jesús, thank you so much for joining us. Tell us what's going on right now, please.

[Jesús Rodríguez-Espinoza]

Thank you for the invitation, Roger and Helena. Before jumping into the issue that we agreed to discuss today, which is the geopolitical nature of what is happening in Venezuela and the hypocrisy of the U.S. rule-based order, I wanted to say a few things related to what just happened on Saturday and has been happening in Venezuela lately, and you say part of it, Roger. And the first thing that I want to say is that Donald Trump did not achieve regime change in Venezuela.

Chavismo is still in control of the country in a very monolithic way, and that's extremely important. Another thing that I wanted to highlight, and I want to highlight also within that point, that Chavismo is bigger than its leadership, and we have been talking about that for several months or years already. And what I try to say when I say that is that despite the

U.S. decapitating the Chavista leadership, endlessly, if they decide to do so, there will be Chavistas ready to take the leadership and keep pushing for the Bolivarian Revolution and Chavismo to move on. So that's extremely important for people outside Venezuela to know. Another issue that I wanted to raise is that Trump is making statements right now. And in my opinion, those statements are to appease his MAGA base that is very fractured, and also to portray himself as the victorious leader and whatever.

Of course, he achieved a terrible thing for us in Venezuela, which is the kidnapping of President Maduro and the violation of our sovereignty. But in no way, he is in control of Venezuela. Another issue that I wanted to highlight is that Venezuela will possibly be attacked again in the coming weeks.

I'm pretty sure that our authorities are not going to dodge so easily the U.S. dictates. Of course, our authorities will try to negotiate and balance in these extremely complicated waters that we have been put by U.S. imperialist and colonialist aggression. But at some point that will break, and I'm not happy to say this, but I believe that there will be new attacks against Venezuela.

I hope that doesn't happen, but that's a possibility. Venezuela, another thing that I wanted to say is that Venezuela is not Syria. And I'm not trying to say that we are better or worse than Syria, I'm just trying to say that it's completely different what happened in Venezuela to what happened in Syria.

And a lot of people are talking about that and I want to clarify that that's not the case. And that also I wanted to highlight that Elsa Rodríguez is supported by the vast majority of Venezuelans in Chavismo. There is, I already said, but it's important to highlight that there is unity around her, not only among the leadership of Chavismo, but among the Venezuelan people.

And I want to highlight that President Maduro is not a dictator, that's a big lie that has been running for decades already, and that he is a prisoner of war and that he should be released. And for constitutionally talking, he is still the president of Venezuela. And also it's important to highlight that he is protected by immunity as sitting head of state.

And this is the first time in history, you know, people talk about Noriega and other cases. This is the first time in history that a sitting head of state is being taken to, is being kidnapped and taken to US courts. And another important thing that some people might believe that is a commonplace, but I really believe that it happens, is that you don't have to trust mainstream media or the White House.

Mainstream media is a tool for the US war secretary, is a tool for the CIA. You don't have to trust them. And you don't have to even read them, but if you cannot avoid reading them, at least read them knowing that half of what they write and say are lies.

So it's extremely important to highlight that because I see people, even friends of Venezuela, believe in too much. And actually some Chavistas believe in too much in what mainstream media says. So that's what I wanted to highlight to begin my words.

And now I will jump to the issue of the discussion and is the one related to the geopolitical nature of what is happening. I want to say that a lot of people talk about the US decline and that has been happening for decades and the US doesn't decline. And I don't want to talk about that, but I really believe that something in that matter is happening.

And maybe it's not being seen and it's not happening clearly or it's being seen clearly in the US, but when you analyze the world as it is right now, it's clear that the US do not have the same weight in the war scenario as when it has like 30 or 40 or 50 years ago. And that happened because China, Russia, India, Turkey, Iran and other countries, Brazil has been slowly but steadily rising as alternative to the US. And that has put the imperial control of the US over the world in jeopardy.

And for that reason, we are seeing what has been seen since President Trump took office. Another important thing to say in this sense is that the US felt and feels reinvigorated and entitled to do whatever it wants after the war allowed the Israel-US genocide on Gaza. And we need to, on that issue, it's important to say that protests are good and are important and street demonstration and all this solidarity is extremely important, but we need to do something more.

More disruptive actions are needed to change the status quo because today that is happening to us and yesterday it happened to the Palestinians, but this will explode in the face of the US citizens if they don't do something to stop it. And we are actually seeing it right now. So I just wanted to mention that because that's important.

So I also wanted to say that when I hear, and that is part of the issue of these webinars, when I hear about geopolitical hypocrisy, I think about President Maduro being kidnapped but not Zelensky being kidnapped. And despite that, we hear in mainstream media that the Russians are the bad guys and the gringos are the good guys. And that is Latin hypocrisy.

When I also think about Venezuela being seized for months, but Taiwan being treated by the US as the victim of the Chinese aggression or whatever they want to say about China and Taiwan. I also think about the US delivery of all kind of weapon to Taiwan, but mainstream in Washington questioning that Russia sent a few years ago weapons to Venezuela to defend itself. So that's what comes to my mind when I read about geopolitical order and hypocrisy.

Now I want to ask a question. I want to ask the people in the audience what they saw, what you saw when Trump began early this year to talk about Greenland, Canada, the Gulf of Mexico, Panagama, the control of the Panama Canal, the Patagonia in Argentina. What do you saw?

I mean, what just came to your minds when you began hearing President Trump talking about that? In my case, I saw that he was crazy. And I believe that a lot of people saw the same thing.

But right now we are realizing that there's a pattern here. And that pattern is evident and was confirmed by the recent national security strategy document that was released a few days ago by the US. And in that document, they clearly state that they want to regain control of the American continent, which is from Canada to Argentina.

So it's important to understand that. And it's important also to understand that that's something that was not designed by Trump or Biden, that's something that has been designed by the oligarchies that control the US. Those are the ones running the show.

And it's important for us to understand that. Because if we still believe at this point in history that it is the US or it is Trump or Biden or the Democrats or Republicans running the show, that's a big lie. So I believe that it's extremely important to highlight that and that takes me to the...

And also it's important to say that besides what we have seen in Venezuela recently since President Trump and even before President Trump took office, the US has been retaking militarily Latin America. There are clear actions taken by the US and some puppet governments in Latin America that point in the direction of US regaining military control of the Latin American and Caribbean region. I'm talking about Ecuador, I'm talking about Peru, Paraguay, Panama, Guyana, Argentina, and several islands in the Caribbean.

And we have to understand that that is happening and that's part of the geopolitical analysis that we need to do. And now I go to what I have been explaining in other webinars, but I believe that it's important to reiterate is that I see the geopolitical context of what is happening as in three levels. The global level that is related to what I just say about the national strategy document in which the US is losing relevance in the world order and because of that is trying to secure the place that it considers its background, which is Latin America and the Caribbean.

And that's the first level of the geostrategical analysis or context or causes behind the attacks against Venezuela. So the US is trying to secure the only place on earth where they believe that they can control. And it's important to remark that it is they believe because the US do not have the financial muscle to regain control of the region.

And the only way they can do it is how they have been doing, which is militarily. So it's extremely important to highlight that. And so that's the first level of the geopolitical analysis of the situation in Venezuela.

The second level is related to natural resources. And for that reason, the first objective of this new US re-approaching and re-controlling the region is Venezuela because of our lower oil reserves. But we don't only have oil, we have a lot of very strategic minerals that the US wants.

So that's the other part of the geopolitical analysis. This is the other level, the way I see it of the geopolitical analysis about what happened in Venezuela. And the last level is the one related to the getting rid of the black sample.

So it's important to say also that the US wants to decapitate Venezuela in order to decapitate Cuba and Nicaragua and any other government in the region that might represent a threat to the domination strategy. So that's basically what I wanted to say. I know that I might be running out of time.

And I just want to add letting you know that despite us in Venezuela feeling disgusted and outraged and even still shocked by what happened last weekend, we are translating those sentiments into unity, into strength to defend our country, to defend our country even more or better. So I just wanted to let you know that we are ready to defend the country until our last drop of blood and that we will win. We are best at it most.

Thank you.

[Roger Harris]

Thank you so much, Jesús. And thank you for giving us both the immediate information on the ground and some of the big picture. Our next speaker is a long time collaborator with Helena.

And so I'm going to turn it over to Helena to introduce our next speaker.

[Helena Cobban]

Well, first I want to just really thank Jesús for giving us that view from the ground. I want to invite Professor Richard Falk to turn on your camera and your audio so that I can introduce you properly. You know, just listening to Jesús speaking, it's like when I hear my friends from Gaza on the Electronic Intifada talking about how hard things are but how united people are.

Are we going to have Richard? Yes. So while he's figuring out the techniques, the technological aspects, which is we are so lucky to have Richard Falk with us.

Richard is a very deeply valued colleague and mentor for me. He's a member of the Just World Educational Board. He probably doesn't need much introduction.

He has written so many wonderful books about international law and its relevance in West Asia and in other global issues. From 2008 to 2014, he served as UN special rapporteur on the rights of the Palestinians and played a really important role. During that time, he was the first UN person to accuse Israel of war crimes in a very systematic way in the 2008, 2009 aggression that the Israelis committed against Gaza.

And then in 2010, he analyzed Israel's general attitude and policy toward Palestinians as one of apartheid. So Richard, it's just great to have your expertise with us and thank you.

[Richard Falk]

Well, thank you so much, Helena, for those affirming, gracious words. And I'm glad to be on this panel, which I think is a needed response to what has been happening in the world and particularly in the past days in Venezuela. I believe, I also want to express gratitude to Jesús Espinoza for an illuminating analysis from the perspective of Venezuela, which is very, very much needed as an authoritative way of sharing the experience from the angle of the victim and the victimized and to express this deep seated commitment to resistance and the presence of a surge of political unity in the country.

That needs to be heard and probably won't be very much disseminated by the corporate media that so many of us are forced to depend upon for news. I wanted to begin by contextualizing what's going on in Venezuela these past days with what Mr. Espinoza referred to by calling attention to the national security strategy document of the US that was released in December of last year. I'm not sure I agree that it is a reaction to decline as much as it is a repositioning of the way in which the US pursues its strategic interests on those three levels that he discussed.

In my view, even in the first Trump administration between 2016 and 20, there was a geopolitical impulse to restore the geopolitical management of global security on a sort of sphere of influence foundation that had been operative during the Cold War when the Soviet Union was quite careful to respect the various interferences with the sovereignty of West European countries and the CIA's effort to destroy Communist Party influence and the West's willingness to constrain its counter-interventionary impulses when the Soviet Union intervened to repress East European uprisings. In other words, this was a sphere of influence sacrifice of national sovereignty and security of bordering countries in the face of the importance of avoiding a third world war.

I think Trump's underlying idea, and you have to put his narcissistic mercurial personality and narcissism into the picture, that he didn't regard the Cold War structures as beneficial to the US and preferred a combination of retreat from internationalism of the positive kind, of the cooperative kind, which is evidenced by the withdrawal from the 66 international institutions, including the Climate Change Framework Institution, and his focus on regaining a sphere of influence hegemony over Latin America, and most grandiosely over all of Western Hemisphere. And this is consistent, it seems to me, with a post-Cold War managerial approach to global security that allocates to China, Russia, and the US a meta-legal control over any kind of peace and security or human rights issue.

In this sense, Israel is part of the sphere of influence that is accorded to the US, and it partly explains the Russian and Chinese forbearance from opposing what has been taking place in Gaza, and endorsing this horrifying Trump plan for the future of the Palestinian territories, which essentially rewards genocide and punishes the victims of genocide. It's almost unbelievable perversion of law and morality that goes beyond mere violation. It is the celebration, almost, of a genocidal process that is combined with apartheid and has frequent crimes against humanity in its combat tactics.

To reward that is really to place the UN and the US in a shameful position, and the fact that it was endorsed by a unanimous Security Council vote is a low point, in my view, in UN performance. But why the national security strategy of the US is important in this sphere of influence view of the reimagining of the United States geopolitics is that it accords primacy to the Western Hemisphere in the US global outlook, and that is coupled explicitly with a revival of the Monroe Doctrine and its accentuation by what is called immodestly the Trump corollary. What that means is a pledge to intervene as necessary.

Venezuela, in that sense, is in on one level a instance of, the revival of economic imperialism and the death, the attempted death of the UN milestone of permanent sovereignty over natural resources, and that shouldn't be overlooked, that this is an attempt to appropriate the wealth of weaker countries as categorized by hard power calculations of military

capabilities, and this is put so clearly in the national security strategy document that it should be studied carefully because I think it does suggest what to expect, and Venezuela is, in that sense, a first step in this re-prioritizing the Western Hemisphere as the primary and most significant area of what is called in the document America's preeminence, and that word is used over and over again in the document.

And no mention of the UN, no mention of international law. This is a world to be governed by geopolitics, and geopolitics means the discretionary use of force as perceived by the political realists that are hard power oriented and in charge of US foreign policy. I think the other way of understanding what is going on is to say that this kind of revival of the Monroe Doctrine in a kind of steroid form is a way of retreating from internationalism.

It is, in one sense, a regionalization under hegemonic control of the Western Hemisphere. Oh, I'll stop.

[Helena Cobban]

Well, you've given us so many wonderful things to think about, and we're going to have some time to interact on many of these issues that you and Jesús have raised, but I do want to bring on our next speaker. So if Corinna Mullin could come in, and Richard, if you could briefly turn off your camera and your audio. Corinna, it's so great to have you with us.

If you could turn on your audio. Corinna is an anti-imperialist scholar who's a member of the Anti-Imperialist Scholars Collective. She serves on the Secretariat of the US Peace Council and is a national convener of Labor for Palestine.

She's been an active member of her union at CUNY, serving as Delegate Assembly Representative and on the Steering Committee of the Union's International Committee. So that's great to have your energy here. You're also an Associate Editor of *Middle East Critical Studies* and also separately *Science and Society*.

So Corinna, what can you add to what we've heard?

[Corinna Mullin]

That's going to be tough. Those are tough acts to follow. And I've learned so much just listening to all the presentations.

Thank you so much, Jesús and Richard. And thank you, Helena and Roger for organizing this important event and the series of webinars. So the title of this event, *Geopolitics and Double Standards, Caracas to Gaza, Global Solidarity and the Politics of Impunity*, I think really perfectly frames the urgent connections we must make and that have already been made in these presentations.

The events of January 3rd were a brazen act of imperialist assault and international piracy, a grave violation as we've heard of international law. This included, of course, the kidnapping of the constitutionally elected President of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro and the First Lady, Celia Flores, who also herself is a veteran lawyer and revolutionary politician. The assault claimed the lives of at least 100 people, among them much of President Maduro's security

detail, who were killed in cold blood along with really devastating as well, all of the human losses.

But I think a special blow for many of us and really just highlights the beauty of solidarity, the fact that 32 Cuban military and intelligence personnel who served honorably in defense of Venezuela sovereignty were also killed. This escalation did not materialize as we know out of nowhere. Many of us on the anti-imperialist left have been anticipating and organizing to resist a direct military intervention for months as the US intensified its imperialist aggression, which included the bombing of boats off of the Venezuelan coast and murder of over 100 people leading up to the January 3rd assault.

However, the attack on January 3rd was the violent kinetic climax of really a quarter century of bipartisan US war on the Bolivarian Revolution, a war that began the moment Hugo Chavez dared to harness Venezuela's surplus value, its oil wealth for its own people. And this is something we've already heard from their two presenters, this redirection of wealth towards funding rather than draining that wealth to go to the capitalist core, funding historic social missions that slashed poverty, provided universal healthcare, virtually eliminated illiteracy and built grassroots communal power, thereby challenging really the foundational logic of US hemispheric dominance and setting the stage for decades of imperialist intervention. The official pretext we know for this accelerated assault over the last few months was Trump's fabricated narco-terrorism charge, but the legal runway for this invasion was paved over the years by both Democratic and Republican administrations.

And really, we can go back to the 2015 President Obama's executive order, 13-692, which absurdly declared Venezuela as an unusual and extraordinary threat to US national security. This foundational legal fiction then paved the way for the genocidal sanctions regime and was a first step really, or part of that step really, in switching from failed coups to brutal economic siege. This imperialist assault though on the third lays bare the true brutal nature, as has been discussed already, of the Trump corollary that animates the 2025 US national security strategy.

So it does represent an escalation, but I think it's important to recognize that this war has been ongoing. So to understand the violent invasion, we must go back to and think about the sanctions and their purpose. This economic warfare, as UN Special Rapporteur Elena Dujan referred to it as collective punishment, was a deliberate policy that devastated Venezuela's economy and its people.

It caused the country's GDP to contract by over 80% between 2013 and 2020. It blocked 99% of governmental revenue, led to really crazy levels of inflation and starved the country of funds, the state of funds for medicine and food, and led directly to an estimated 40,000 deaths in just two years. So really due to the inability to import essential medicines and medical equipment.

So really the sanctions were also genocidal in nature. Like the siege on Gaza, like the actual military assault and genocide over the past two years. So this humanitarian crisis was not a side effect.

It was the intended policy, like all of the sanctions regimes, including the blockade against Cuba. And a 2017 Brookings Institution report explicitly outlined the goal to drive seven to 8

million people to emigrate, to create a refugee crisis, a social crisis, to collapse the government. And this is a reminder, of course, thinking about the immigration dimension in particular, that we can't separate the discussion of US imperialism from the discussion of the fascist assault on our immigrant communities here in the belly of the beast.

But of course, when this economic warfare failed to collapse Venezuela's revolution, it escalated to blatant imperialist gangsterism. And we know about all of the bounties that were on Maduro's head. 15 million in 2020 under Trump, then it increased to 25 million under Biden just at the end of his term, and then 50 million under Trump again.

So to understand this, we really, and going back to what was argued earlier by Jose, is that I think we do need to think about this as part of a desperate attempt on the part of the imperialist core's ruling class to shore up their ability to continue accumulating wealth at levels sustained through centuries of global domination as a result of capitalist imperialism. This aggression is a reaction to this imperialist crisis, a crisis, which is a crisis of accumulation. And it's directly caused this crisis by the rise of a multipolar world order, which of course Venezuela is very key to building.

And this multipolar world order threatens to, it directly threatens the exploitative system upon which their power and profit depend. So this is why in addition to being a war in the Bolivarian revolution, this is also a war on multipolarity. And I just want to consider very quickly three pillars.

First, Venezuela represents a direct challenge to US hemispheric hegemony through sovereign development. By reclaiming its oil and mineral wealth for its people and building towards what Chavez described as communal socialism, Venezuela disrupts the imperialist pipeline that extracts surplus value from the global South to enrich the core. This model alone is intolerable to US imperialism, just as Palestine's national liberation is, and the national liberation of all global majority states ultimately, which is one of the many ways that Palestine and Venezuela are connected and something we can come back to later.

Second, and critically, Venezuela is a cornerstone of South-South cooperation and the emerging multipolar world order, or in Samir Amin's terms, polycentric world order. Venezuela plays an important role as a leader in regional integration efforts through formations like ALBA and CILAC. In addition, its survival despite the blockade is not an accident.

It is a direct result of the strategic material alliances that it formed with other global South states or global majority states, and that the US of course is desperate to sever. So let's think about some of them, and I want to shout out a really great episode that Ben Norton did on Breakthrough News yesterday, which covered some, you know, I urge everyone to go into look in more depth at this Venezuela's relationship to the rising multipolar world order. And firstly, I want to think about its relationships with China, which became really Venezuela's lifeline through the China-Venezuela joint fund, which provided billions in development financing that sustained social spending when Western capital fled.

As China has become Latin America's largest trading partner, the US strategy explicitly aims to cut China out, reroute resource flows, and seize control of strategic infrastructure like ports in Peru, and to create US-controlled supply chains across the Western hemisphere.

With Iran, Venezuela's partnership of shared sanctions, you know, its relationship with Iran is one of shared sanction survival. Iran is a fellow target of course of maximum pressure provided, and it has provided Venezuela with vital technical expertise, refinery parts, and catalysts necessary to maintain its heavily sanctioned oil industry.

So this was not just trade, it was the transfer of knowledge and how to survive and operate under a financial blockade. And that shared knowledge goes both ways. And with Russia, this is a key political, military, and economic partnership.

Russian state oil company, Rosneft, provided essential investment to sustain Venezuela's oil sector. Russia has also been a primary source of diplomatic support and military cooperation, fortifying Venezuela's defense capabilities. So this tripartite cooperation exemplifies the South-South solidarity that the US seeks to dismantle.

The recent US seizure of a Russian flagged oil tanker linked to Venezuela exports is not an isolated event, it's the direct confrontation with these other major powers, proving this attack on Venezuela is a flashpoint in this wider struggle of the US imperialism to defeat multipolarity in the emergence of the polycentric world order. And third, and I think I'm running out of time, so I'll try and finish up quickly. This attack is furthering the politics of impunity described in the webinar title, where the US and its allies claim the right to violate sovereignty through blockade, economic strangulation, or direct bombardment, while labeling any resistance as terrorism.

It is the same doctrine we see, and Richard Falk discussed it earlier, applied to Gaza, we've seen it applied to Iran, Yemen, and across the global South, that kind of victim blaming, right, the people who are fighting back and resisting US imperialism or Zionism, they're the ones who are guilty of the violence, they're the ones who are guilty of terrorism, rather than defending their right under international law to resist what is in fact illegal imperialist violence that they are being subjected to. And so I think that's really important to remember, and that's also part of how we counter the ideological, the inf, you know, the PSYOPs, the info wars as well, because they will try to demonize any form of resistance, including, you know, demonizing, you know, the really beautiful scenes, I think, of the mass mobilization in Venezuela, the Bolivarian Venezuelan militia, the millions of people who have joined and are standing up and proudly there to defend Venezuela's sovereignty.

So I just want to end by saying, linking it back, and I know it was mentioned earlier that, you know, about the brutal killing of Renee Nicole Good in Minneapolis, and I think we see at play there as well, the use of this framing of terrorism, you know, to demonize and the victim blaming that we've seen with Venezuela as well. You know, that she somehow weaponized her vehicle, this is an act of domestic terrorism, you know, similar to the way that the narco-terrorist label got used against Maduro. This is just a way to demonize and justify state violence, you know, the racist, fascist violence of ICE, the fascist violence of US imperialism.

And we need to fight back against these narratives as well as the kinds of violence that they are enabling. So confronting this politics of impunity, ultimately I want to say requires a politics of unbreakable global solidarity and organized resistance. Our solidarity must be active and material.

We take our lead from the Venezuelan people, from the Palestinian people, the Iranian people, the Yemeni people who are resisting this brutal system of imperialism. And I just want to shout out, I'm happy to be part of a national network of over 160 anti-imperialist and anti-war organizations that have signed on to the Stop the War on Venezuela and Defend Venezuela Sovereignty and Right to Resist Statement. Hopefully we can share that in the chat.

Our demands are non-negotiable, stop the war on Venezuela, free President Maduro and Celia Flores, no US wars for regime change, down with US imperialism.

[Helena Cobban]

So let's, you know, continue to organize that includes- Corrina, maybe you could put that into the chat because we really, we want to have this be as interactive as possible. So if I could invite the other panelists to come on because we, you know, it's the interaction amongst everybody that really is wonderful. Just to note that at Just World Educational, we are actually planning a project on the right to resist, which is, you know, obviously both domestic and international.

So Roger, over to you to handle, to throw out the first question to all of the panelists and see how it's going.

[Roger Harris]

Yes, I was charged with throwing out the first question but I've been just so impressed by the brilliance of the three presentations and the succinctness, the ability to encapsulate that, that I'm going to just throw it out to the panel for this first interaction and have you comment on each other. So I'm going to ask Jésus, compe, if you could make the first comment and then we'll just, we'll go around the table.

[Jesús Rodríguez-Espinoza]

That's fine. That's fine. You want me to comment on the general overview?

What inspires you? I mean, what inspires me the most is to see people from outside Venezuela being so knowledgeable of our reality, being so knowledgeable of the reality of the world, you know, geopolitical reality of the world. And also that we are, when we hear that in Venezuela, especially those of us that are here in Venezuela, we feel happy and replenished and that's extremely important, especially under these circumstances.

However, I already mentioned it, I believe that we need to move beyond these solidarity activities and try to design something, try to find out a way to really create disruption because the system is not going to disappear with protests or webinars. We need to do something more. And I believe that it's time to begin really thinking about doing something more.

I don't know if someone wanted to add something else.

[Helena Cobban]

Well, I have a question of you, Jesús, given that you've worked as a diplomat for Venezuela in the past. And if you could just tell us how useful Venezuela has found it to appeal to international law, to stave off the hybrid warfare waged against it by Washington. And how much use can international law be for you today to help defend Venezuelan sovereignty?

[Jesús Rodríguez-Espinoza]

Yes, we are especially thinking about the United Nations systems. We don't have any kind of hope, if you ask me. And after seeing what happened in Palestine, in Gaza, we are convinced that they are not going to do anything.

But that doesn't mean that we can shoot and use that space to set the record straight, to let the world know what we think, what are our values. But we don't expect the UN Security Council to do anything regarding US atrocities, not only in Venezuela, but around the world. And that's a terrible situation.

And that is another thing that needs to be addressed sooner or later, because if we keep moving on into this path, we might soon be overwhelmed by a new world war. I'm pretty sure that with President Trump and his friends, we are moving in a fast track into that direction.

[Roger Harris]

We're in this era where there's no longer effective guardrails, something that's a new era. So Professor Falk, what do you think?

[Richard Falk]

Well, I share this outlook that this is a very nihilistic period, so far as internationalism and any kind of serious observance of law and justice goals is pursued by these countries that have backed Gaza during the genocide, and at the same time present themselves as the champions of liberal democratic constitutionalism. And the media, of course, polishes that connection in a way that it doesn't seem like a contradiction. And so there's a lot of ideological confusion deliberately accompanying this kind of Venezuelan operation, where the claim absurdly is put forward that this is to rescue democracy, whereas it is to appropriate oil and to reassert the prerogatives of economic imperialism, economically and ideologically shaped imperialism.

And I would add that it's important to give some consideration to this fear of influence, reordering of international relations around these three geopolitical actors. Bypassing Europe, essentially, and giving the world's global security to the tender mercies of Washington, Moscow, and Beijing.

[Helena Cobban]

Interesting. I actually want to shift a little bit and come to Corinna and Jesús to ask what you can tell us as quickly and as clearly as possible about Israel's role in supporting the terrible action against President Maduro.

[Corinna Mullin]

Yeah, I'm glad you raised that question because I think it's a really, really important one. And I'm sure Jesús can bring in a lot more than I can, but I would just say quickly that I know when I was there for the last elections, I was there as a part of the National Lawyers Guild delegation as an election observer. And of course we know there was an attempt to violently destabilize the country in the aftermath.

And I remember Maduro referring to the role of international Zionism at that time. And of course it was unearthed and people who know of course knew longer than that, but it came to my knowledge at that point in time that Corinna Machado, this ridiculous astroturfed so-called opposition who's just a tool of US imperialism like Juan Guaidó had signed this deal with the Likud party, the Zionist entity basically calling for support for a coup against, I believe it was earlier during Chavez's time, but then also asked for all kinds of help and intervention in the country. And then again, last year, a vice president, now interim president, Delcy Rodríguez convened this global, this anti-fascism Congress in the country, which also she urged people to look up. She had a really brilliant and powerful statement at that conference where she talked about the direct connections between Zionism and imperialist intervention in Venezuela and across the Americas and the global South more generally.

We know that there's a history of that. This isn't new. Israel has served as a sort of mercenary force allowing for plausible deniability for US imperialist interventions, supporting reactionary regimes from the apartheid state of South Africa to the coup against Pinochet's coup in Chile, across Honduras, across Latin America and Colombia.

That's the role they've played, providing weapons, training, financial support. So really when we say to be anti-Zionist is to be anti-imperialist, and we've made that point, the movement in solidarity with Palestine, it really becomes clear now. So the fight against Zionism is a fight against imperialism and vice versa, because they're really one and the same entity.

And I think it's really important to make those connections. So, yeah, thank you.

[Jesús Rodríguez-Espinoza]

I agree with Corina 100%. And it's important to highlight that acting president Delcy Rodríguez in her first appearance as acting president of Venezuela just a few hours after the US strikes, the first thing she said that this is a Zionist, that there is a Zionist connection. I'm rephrasing her, but she says something of the sorts in her first speech as acting president.

So that to give you an idea on how those things are interconnected. And I can number and explain countless events over the last 20 years where we clearly see the hands of Zionism trying to get rid of the Bolivarian revolution and Chavismo. And one of the most recent ones is the seizure of a 747 Boeing jet that happened a couple of years ago in Argentina and Zionism was clearly there because Zionism has a strong role in the Argentine judicial system.

And again, Corina already said, Maria Corina Machado, the Alec Best, most important far-right politician in Venezuela supported by the US has been saying, posting, writing over

decades how fan she is of Zionism, of Netanyahu, of Likud, of the genocide in Gaza. It's, I mean, it's absurd to try to say, to try to convince people because the easiest way to do it is to go to her Twitter account, Twitter account and look for all the crazy things that she has been saying, writing, signing that goes into that direction. Besides that they are the ones that has been claiming from time to time that Hezbollah, I don't know, you name all the satanized, demonized West Asian organizations, entities, political institutions has been used to demonize Venezuela and connected with war terrorism or whatever, which is the narrative that they always try to launch when someone or something do not play into their plans.

So it's completely visible the hands of the Zionism and one something that Corina say that I believe that is extremely important is to realize that Zionism is not only Israel. Zionism goes beyond Israel and Zionism is within the US oligarchy and it's important to understand that. So the connection is evident.

And I say that because some people believe that it is and talk a lot about the Israel controlling the US, but in reality is that US imperialism is infiltrated or a part of the US imperialism is Zionist itself. So I believe that it's important to see that thing clearly to understand what happened.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, Roger, do you want to ask the next question?

[Roger Harris]

Yes, we're getting some very good Q&A questions and a number of them have to do with the role of the mass media and slandering Delcy Rodríguez and stuff like that. That interesting asks about the UK Daily Telegraph which talks about that Delcy was perhaps behind the decapitation and stuff like that. And so I think this really calls for a more general discussion of the role of the fourth estate as a partner of imperialism.

And in fact, worse than ever, particularly against Venezuela and then the psychological warfare on Venezuela. But I'll leave it there and then ask the panelists to elaborate on that. Would someone like to elaborate?

[Jesús Rodríguez-Espinoza]

Yes, I want to, I can say something, but I don't want to take time from the other speakers neither. I'm not sure if Richard or Corina want to add something before me.

[Corinna Mullin]

Please, you should go.

[Jesús Rodríguez-Espinoza]

Okay, okay. I mean, I say it at the beginning, I mean, mainstream media is part of the US imperial apparatus and if you don't realize that you are in big trouble because you

eventually are going to fall into their lies. Because if you keep reading them, they keep convincing you that they are, you know, showing you the truth.

And those are the ones that has been spreading this fake narrative about Delcy Rodríguez being, you know, a traitor that was in backdoor negotiations with the CIA or the US government to oust President Maduro. And that's, I mean, I don't have the truth in my hands, but that's evidently not the reality that we are seeing on the ground here in Venezuela. And it's not the reality that we have seen over the years with the behavior of Delcy Rodríguez.

Delcy Rodríguez is not someone that just appeared yesterday and became president of Venezuela. I mean, she has been there since the very beginning. Actually, those reports and those biographies that has been printed in recent days about her hide like half of her career.

I mean, she has been there since President Chavez took office. So it's important to highlight that because she is not a newcomer and she has been president already for several years. And while being vice president, she was also minister of economy and the economy in Venezuela has been reshaping, especially during her time as a minister of economy.

And then she was tasked with the incredible responsibility of running PDVSA, our oil company. So she is a woman that is capable of doing everything. And I believe that for that reason, President Maduro keep her hair as vice president, knowing because we already knew that something like this might happen.

We have been talking about the possibility of a decapitation strike for months. So it's a big lie. I believe that there are a few things that needs to be clarified on the factual reality behind the kidnapping of President Maduro.

There might have been mistakes. I actually have to tell you that a few hours ago, I hear an interview by Jorge Arreaza and he clearly stated that they were just surprised by the US electronic warfare that neutralized and shut down everything. And they did not expect that level of shutdown.

There was not capacity to communicate, to activate air defenses to planes. Everything was affected by this. And that says something good, but it's also something bad.

That says that we maybe need to prepare ourselves better for the next round of attacks that I don't hope to happen, but I already say that I believe that are going to happen. So that's everything I want to say. I want to talk like forever, but it's a big lie.

Those are trends launched to try to divide Chavismo, try to divide the support of Chavismo around the world. So I ask you not to fall into that trap because eventually I'm pretty sure we will have more details about what happened. And if there were treasons or mistakes, we will address them.

[Helena Cobban]

Yes, I'm sure that there are huge psychological operations underway to try to split the leadership in Caracas as we have also seen with the Palestinian resistance movement.

[Roger Harris]

And we should-- I would just add to that, Helena, that for us in North America, when we echo those doubts, it creates disunity. And we should be very patient because we're in a wartime situation and there's a fog of war and we don't know all the facts. And jumping to conclusions that are channeled by the imperialist press is aiding and abetting them.

So I think we have to be very careful. And I'm sorry I took my prerogative as a moderator to jump in, but I didn't want to mention that.

[Helena Cobban]

No, I think it's an important point. I want to come back a little bit to the global as well. After all the attacks that Trump and his allies have launched against the UN and its norms and institutions, basic tenets of international law, institutions like the ICC, Richard, maybe, or all the panelists, how much is it worth defending and trying to shore up these institutions?

Or would it be better to try to build and strengthen alternative institutions? And if so, which ones?

[Richard Falk]

That's a big question. And I think it's hard to know at this point which strategy of anti-imperialism will be most effective. Because so far, the effort to create resistance to this reassertion of Western norms and dominance has not proved to be very effective.

And one needs to support it and hope to build it into a stronger movement of resistance. But if one looks at the material reality, it hasn't posed a meaningful challenge to the policies of these geopolitical actors above all the U.S. And so I'm a little bit worried about a kind of false confidence in this path. If it were to be combined with internal resistance in the imperial core of this geopolitical order, then I think it maybe could create enough pressure to transform the imperial core, which would play out as a way of at least accommodating the resistance and the return to a anti-Monroe doctrine posture for the Western hemisphere.

See, I think that that's not out of the question, though both of these paths are not easy because of the willingness of the U.S. to use its hard power superiority if challenged and to use it in a very lawless and really state terrorist modality. So it's a very precarious time and none of us should be too sure of what we should do.

[Helena Cobban]

So Corinna, what do you think? Do we try to shore up the United Nations and the existing institutions or do we try and build new institutions?

[Corinna Mullin]

Yeah, I mean, it's a difficult one because of course, the UN itself, I mean, international law itself is rooted in colonialism and imperialism. I definitely recommend in addition to

Professor Richard Fox's work, Anthony Enge, who's written a great book on this history. And that makes it difficult, but that doesn't mean that it hasn't been a terrain of struggle, international law, right?

It has, and I think, Richard, you mentioned earlier the, what was it, the 1962, I think, UN resolution, permanent sovereignty over natural resources that came out of the anti-colonial struggles and the decolonization of states in that period across Asia and Africa and the national liberation, socialist struggles in Latin America. So I think that at this moment in time, and given what Richard said about the severity of the moment that we're facing, I do believe our side is winning. I do believe our side will win.

There will be a multipolar or polycentric world order. There will be the success of our national liberation struggles. But as Gramsci said, right, this is the time of monsters.

This is that period between the old order and the new order. And a dying beast we know is a violent beast. So we need to mobilize all of the spaces that we can to fight this.

And so I definitely would say that I don't think it's worth giving, ceding that space to the imperialists alone. But as I think Richard was saying too, that we need to combine that with all forms of resistance and struggle. And that includes the resistance that we have in West Asia, the Palestinian resistance, Iran, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, and the brave resistance that we see in Venezuela, all different forms of resistance.

It includes in the diplomatic level, in the international legal level. It includes here especially. We have a huge responsibility in this country.

We have to shut down the war machine. And we can, we need to mobilize our labor. The same way that people have been talking, and this is great, the Movement in Solidarity with Palestinian Liberation over the past few years has really started to build that power within our labor movements and knowledge as well, and the political education that we should, we can, we must shut down the supply chains of genocide.

And that includes these supply chains, the supply chains that are funding the weapons for the imperialist assault on Venezuela and across our America. So I think combining methods and tactics and strategies is what's necessary right now. Here, again, the labor struggle, I think the student movement, the mass, you know, we need to build a mass anti-war movement here, a united front.

And I do urge everyone to sign on, to get their organizations to sign on to the statement I mentioned earlier, because that's precisely what we're trying to do. And there are a couple of important actions coming up. I would just like to plug too, that one on the 25th and one on February 6th as well, there's an international call from trade unions in Italy, Morocco, Greece, Turkey, that I hope folks are working on already to take up here too, to support that call, which is to close down the ports.

But, you know, here as well, I think we need to, we can and need to do more. But, you know, as I said, let's mobilize our resistance in every way we can.

[Jesús Rodríguez-Espinoza]

I just want to add something. I believe that what is going to happen, I agree with what Richard and Corina said 100%, but I believe that what was going to happen is that the war system at some point are going to over, is going to overpass the United Nations systems and something new is going to be built over the United Nations system, sadly, but that's what I think.

[Helena Cobban]

Thank you. Oh, so Roger, you've got one last question.

[Roger Harris]

Yeah, right. So I've been looking through the Q&A questions and I'm sorry we can't get to all of them. But one of the questions that comes up a few times, and it's not, it's a question that really is one of the ones that, for those of us who read the mass media, expose the mass media and do organizing come up against all the time.

And that is, is Maduro a dictator? And the, and where that comes into play is that there'll be a lot of people who sort of are kind of weak on opposing US imperialism. And they say, well, it's just too bad that Trump is such a unpleasant individual and he does such unpleasant things.

But in the end, it'll be better off if Maduro was gone. So I'm going to ask the three panelists to go around the table. How do you respond to that?

I know you've heard that, and I can anticipate that you don't agree with it, but what are the talking points that you use? And who would like to start off with that?

[Jesús Rodríguez-Espinoza]

Let me do it. Because I'm one of the "victims of Maduro. Though that is propaganda, you know that. You know that I think that, I'm not saying that there are not issues of human rights in Venezuela. There are issues of human rights everywhere.

But a systematic repression of human rights in Venezuela is unexistent. And it's a big lie that has been spread over the years, not only over Maduro, but also against President Chavez before him. So this is part of the narrative to try to demonize us, to make us look like the monsters and the good guys in Washington are going to come to save us and save the Venezuelan people.

So it's important to highlight that. And I always try to say that. I mean, no country is exempt for human rights abuses.

There are human rights abuses everywhere. You just have to look at the US yesterday with the assassination of this woman in Minnesota, for example. And I believe that there are more systematic abuses of human rights in the US than in Venezuela.

They talk about the death of people under custody in Venezuela. And when you look at the statistic about death of people under custody in other countries of the world, you notice that Venezuela is among the countries with the lowest rate of death of people under custody, for example.

[Richard Falk]

Thank you.

[Jesús Rodríguez-Espinoza]

So that's it.

[Richard Falk]

Yes, I mean, I think that's a really important issue that no country in this world order system has the authority to intervene in another country on its own unilateral basis. I mean, the prohibition on the use of aggressive force is applicable even to the United States.

The veto powers in the Security Council. And the UN can play some important roles still as the special rapporteurs, especially Francesca Albanese, has shown in relation to making the world aware of the reality of genocide and embarrassing most of the media as well into a more balanced, I wouldn't say balanced, but more balanced treatment of the way in which Israel has acted and the way in which Zionism has tried to create a, this linkage between antisemitism and criticism of Israel. So I do believe that it is important at this stage to understand that it's, the world order is basically a matter of state sovereignty as augmented by this design of the UN which gave these winners of the war special prerogatives. And until we realize that and get rid of that, you know, 80 years later, and one of the things that the West has been very clever about is hiding the degree to which the UN was designed to give primacy to the geopolitical actors when it comes to the management of global security issues, including intervention in foreign societies.

And- Thank you very much.

[Roger Harris]

And because we're running out of time now, I'm going to ask Corinna if she might want to come in, please.

[Corinna Mullin]

Yeah, thank you. And I agree with everything that's been said by Jesús and Richard. Yeah, I mean, going back to the point about, you know, if we want to start talking about human rights violations, let's look at this country.

You know, this country, the US was built on settler colonialism and continues to be a settler colonial state and slavery, and it continues to be a racist capitalist state. It was built on genocide and has perpetuated genocide, both here and abroad. You know, I just would say

in terms of, you know, Maduro, you know, yeah, this brings me always back to Malcolm X's quote, right?

He said, if you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed and loving the people who are doing the oppressing. You know, we need to constantly remind people about the role of the media, not just the media. I'm an academic, academia plays a really important role in this counterinsurgency as well, producing all kinds of false information and narratives that delegitimize every form of national liberation, you know, socialism, but any really anti-systemic global majority project.

And it's also linked to racism. You know, this is a white world order, a white world imperialist order. And, you know, it's about maintaining that order and the ability to continue, you know, for the ruling classes in the capitalist court to continue accumulating.

So we have to continue to point that out. And I just want to make one last point about the elections, because I, you know, I was there as an observer. And one of the things in our National Lawyers Guild report we pointed out is about the media distortions.

And if you recall, if you look at the way that the media represented, you know, like Edmundo Gonzalez, for example, they said, oh, you know, first they would talk about in the Western press, you know, preparing people for some form of intervention. They always talked about Maduro as a dictator, military, you know, regime, all of this, you know, without ever, you know, providing any information to substantiate that. And then Edmundo Gonzalez, oh, he was a former diplomat, not pointing out that he was responsible and involved in Central American death squads, right?

Or, you know, not ever sharing the fact that they both were opposed to the Bolivarian socialist model and the communes and wanted to impose extreme neoliberal austerity. You know, so there were just blatant lies after lies. Maduro has upheld the, in such difficult circumstances of US imperialist aggression and sanctions, he upheld the Bolivarian socialist project.

No leader would arm their people if they feared they didn't have their support. Millions of people, we have to remember that. And it's our duty here to continue defending Maduro, continue defending Celia Flores, you know, continue defending the Bolivarian revolution, the state, not just the people.

The people, of course, are part of the state. We defend all of it. The right to sovereignty and the right to resistance.

Thank you.

[Roger Harris]

Thank you, it's an excellent way to end this, the second of a third, the three part series webinar. I want to thank the panelists. Their presentations were brilliant at many levels, political, personal, emotional, and moral, legal.

Thank you so much. Thank you for everybody who came. The struggle will continue.

The Bolivarian revolution has been under constant attack by the United States for a quarter of a century, for its entire lifetime. And the United States has tried diplomatic isolation and intensive propaganda, and that failed. And when that failed, the United States tried coups and economic strangulation, and that has failed.

And when that failed, most recently, the United States has been forced to resort by the very success and strength of the revolution to go into outright acts of war. And still that has failed. Even decapitation of the president and the first lady, which they call the first combatant, even the decapitation has not destroyed the Bolivarian revolution.

And revolutions continue to stand unified in resistance, and we must support them. So join us next Tuesday for the third of this webinar series. And that will sort of try to pull all this together and discuss the broader geopolitical implications of the Bolivarian revolution.

And we have an incredible number of incredible speakers that will be addressing that. Michelle Ellner will be the kickoff speaker, a Venezuelan American, followed by Dan Kovalik, and anchored by Ajamu Baraka. So Ajamu Baraka.

So please join us next Tuesday for the third of our series. And thank you so much for joining us this evening.

[Helena Cobban]

And just before people go, I want to echo what Roger said. First of all, it's been a huge pleasure and a privilege to have three such great panelists today. And it will be again, I'm sure, next Tuesday.

I just want to remind you two things. One is that we do have our online learning hub up, and it's being developed with every one of these webinars. This is the QR code for it: bit.ly/VZ-learning-hub

And then as the attendees leave this session, they will be sent to an evaluation form. We really value your evaluations because they help us and they keep engagement with this important project. So, and Roger, it's just been such a pleasure dealing with you and co-organizing all this with you.

And thank you, Corinna and Richard and Jesús, and revolution until victory, huh?