Venezuela Solidarity Campaign

Web: ***www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk***
E-mail: ***info@venezuelasolidarity.co.uk***
Address: ***VSC, c/o Unite, 33-37 Moreland Street, London, EC1V 8BB***
Twitter: ***@vensolidarity***
Facebook: ***www.facebook.com/VenSolidarity***

November 2026

Factsheet: Trump's show trial of President Maduro and Cilia Flores

On January 3 2026, the US launched a military assault against Venezuela, bombing four cities, killing over 100 people and brutally kidnapping Venezuela's president, Nicolás Maduro, and first lady Cilia Flores.

The US bombing of Venezuela and kidnapping of President Maduro and Cilia Flores marked another dangerous step in the dismantling of international law and a return to a world where might is right and powerful countries act with impunity. It is part of a pattern from the Trump administration, which has even threatened to dismantle the International Criminal Court "brick by brick".

As the UN Human Rights Office warned, the attack violated the UN Charter and "damages the architecture of international security, making every country less safe". It also warned that this "sends a signal that the powerful can do whatever they like".

The illegality of the bombing and kidnapping of a head of state drew widespread criticism for their violation of Venezuela's sovereignty. The European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights, for example, issued this condemnation: "These actions constitute a grave and flagrant violation of international law, undermine the international legal order, and pose a serious threat to international peace and security."

The US assault was the climax of a three month-long naval blockade of Venezuela and attacks on small boats claimed by the US to be engaged in drug trafficking. The US aim was to support trumped-up charges of drug trafficking and narco-terrorism against Maduro.

An Early Day Motion in Parliament, however, pinpointed the real reasons for the US's actions, noting that "this military aggression is aimed primarily at securing control over Venezuela's oil resources, the largest proven reserves in the world" and that the attack "forms part of a wider attempt by the United States to reassert colonial-style domination over Latin America, as set out in recent US National Security Strategy and reinforced by subsequent statements from the US State Department."

Detained in prison

After being kidnapped, President Maduro and Cilia Flores (who were both injured in the assault) were forcibly transferred to the US and detained in Brooklyn Federal Detention Center. They first appeared in court on January 5, pleading not guilty to charges that included alleged crimes related to drug trafficking and arms trafficking.

From the very beginning, President Maduro questioned the legality of the kidnapping and invoked sovereign immunity. "I am the president of Venezuela, I am a prisoner of war," he stated during the first hearing. Cilia Flores similarly claimed immunity as first lady.

As well as questioning the legality of the kidnapping and the territorial jurisdiction of US courts, Maduro's and Flores' defence team challenged a US government agency decision to block the Venezuelan government's financing of their legal fees. A week later, the decision was reversed.

In July, the prosecution and defence agreed that the trial would begin on June 1 2027, with a preliminary hearing on November 17 2026.

Cilia Flores' health has deteriorated in prison

Cilia Flores, who is 70 years old, is currently suffering from a serious and deteriorating heart condition. On July 29, she experienced severe chest pains and difficulty in breathing – possibly a minor heart attack, say medical experts consulted by her defence.

In addition to losing more than 11 kilos, Cilia's symptoms include ongoing dizziness, shortness of breath and extreme fatigue. Doctors have recommended a procedure to assess how well her heart is working and what kind of treatment she might need. Her lawyers have argued for her to be moved from jail to home detention, under restrictive conditions to satisfy the court, to receive the medical care she needs.

However, US District Judge Alvin Hellerstein denied this request, arguing in a bail hearing on October 8 that Cilia Flores posed a "substantial flight risk", dismissing all assurances from defence lawyer Mark Donnelly that she would not flee.

New charges added

On the same day that Judge Hellerstein denied the bail request, the US Attorney General's Office presented a new charge against the defendants of conspiracy to commit torture. At a hearing on October 15 where the Attorney General presented this additional charge, Maduro (shackled at the ankles) and Flores both pleaded not guilty. Maduro also criticised the indictment, saying it contained "false accusations and false testimony".

The updated indictment also added "narco-terrorism" to the accusations against Flores. It also widened the case by also naming Nicolás Maduro Guerra, the president's son; current Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello; former minister Ramón Rodríguez Chacín; and Héctor Guerrero Flores, alias "Niño Guerrero," the leader of the Tren de Aragua gang, who was reportedly killed in a US military operation inside Venezuela in June.

The judge accepted a joint request from the prosecution and the defence to postpone the start of the trial by two weeks, which has been rescheduled for June 14, 2027, with the next hearing to be held on December 17, 2026.

Campaigning against the US's illegal actions

Campaigning against the US's illegal actions has been worldwide. In Britain, VSC was quick to respond. With various partners, we organised a well-attended emergency online rally on January 4, then a protest at Downing Street supported by prominent trade unionists and anti-war figures in Britain, and then another protest a week later calling on the British Government to speak out against these clear breaches of international law. We additionally co-ordinated a major international forum against the war online in January and supported numerous local actions and events.

VSC also:

- coordinated a broad-based 'No War on Venezuela' statement signed by TU General Secretaries, parliamentarians, a broad range of peace and social movements, writers, academics and cultural figures and over 4,000 members of the public.
- worked with Richard Burgon MP on an Early Day Motion (EDM) that received 42 signatures from a broad range of parties, condemning the US attack on Venezuela.
- joined in an international day of action, holding a protest on March 26 opposite the US Embassy on the day of a crucial hearing in Trump's show trial.

Next year, VSC is planning to intensify its current campaign calling for the unconditional release and safe return of President Maduro and Cilia Flores. Please sign the VSC campaign petition on Action Network at https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/defend-international-law-no-to-the-show-trial-of-nicolas-maduro