

U.S. Sanctions Against Venezuelan Officials: Legal and Economic Implications

By Holland & Knight

The sanctions imposed by the United States on Venezuelan officials have been a key element in the international pressure strategy against Nicolás Maduro's government. In recent months, the U.S. administration has intensified these measures, expanding the list of sanctioned individuals and reinforcing economic and legal restrictions on the Venezuelan regime. The U.S. administration has justified these actions by arguing that the sanctioned officials have engaged in acts of political repression, corruption and electoral manipulation, thereby undermining the country's democratic stability.

On May 27, 2025, the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced sanctions against 21 high-ranking Venezuelan officials accused of facilitating political repression and manipulating the results of the presidential election held on July 28, 2024, in which Maduro was declared the winner. Among those sanctioned are key government figures, including Aníbal Coronado, minister of the presidential office; Freddy Nájuez, minister of communications; and Julio García Zepa, minister of penitentiary services. Also included are senior officials from security forces such as the Bolivarian National Guard, Bolivarian National Police, Bolivarian National Intelligence Service and General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence.

The sanctions imposed by the U.S. freeze the assets of the affected individuals within U.S. jurisdiction and prohibit any financial transactions with them. Additionally, visa restrictions have been implemented, preventing these officials from entering the U.S.

From a legal standpoint, these sanctions are based on the Venezuela Democracy Responsibility Act and executive orders issued by the White House, which authorize the Treasury Department to take action against individuals and entities involved in human rights violations and corruption. The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has enforced these measures, progressively expanding the list of sanctioned individuals. More than 150 individuals and 100 Venezuelan entities have been subjected to U.S. sanctions.

The impact of these sanctions has been significant, affecting not only the sanctioned individuals but also the economic structure of the Venezuelan government. The exclusion of key officials from the international financial system has hindered the regime's ability to access resources and conduct transactions in U.S. dollars. Furthermore, pressure on the energy sector has limited Venezuela's ability to negotiate commercial agreements with foreign companies, particularly in the oil industry.

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In response, Maduro's government has denounced these sanctions as an "imperialist aggression" and has sought alternatives to circumvent the restrictions. In recent months, Venezuela has strengthened its relations with Russia, China and Iran, exploring financial mechanisms that could allow it to evade U.S. sanctions. However, the effectiveness of these strategies has been limited, and the country's economic crisis continues to deepen.

In conclusion, the sanctions imposed by the U.S. on Venezuelan officials in May and June 2025 reflect a sustained pressure strategy against Maduro's government. The expansion of the list of sanctioned individuals and tightening of financial restrictions have increased the regime's isolation, although their impact on Venezuela's political stability remains uncertain. In the coming months, the evolution of these measures will depend on the internal political dynamics in Washington, D.C., and the Venezuelan government's ability to find alternatives to circumvent the sanctions.

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