



Sinn Féin

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International law must be observed in Latin America

-Sinn Féin National Chairperson Declan Kearney

THE Sinn Féin National Chairperson, Declan Kearney MLA, has called on the international community to assist in the resolution of the ongoing crisis in Venezuela.

Welcoming the latest negotiations initiative taken by the Norwegian government, Mr Kearney said:

BY
**DECLAN
KEARNEY**
Sinn Féin
National
Chairperson



“The crisis in Venezuela should be a cause of grave concern for the international community.

“Domestic political divisions, disagreements and instability within Venezuela should be resolved through proper dialogue and negotiation.

“Positive calls have been made for dialogue between all sides by the UN.

“Earlier this year, the Mexican, Uruguayan and Bolivian governments sought to play a constructive role in helping to facilitate a negotiated process without preconditions.

“The rest of the international community also has a duty to act responsibly.

“The current negotiations initiative sponsored by the Norwegian government in Oslo between the Venezuelan government and opposition is a very positive and significant development and should be supported by all within the international community who are committed to helping to achieve a negotiated democratic settlement in Venezuela.

“International law must be observed.”

OPINION

Hugo Ramos Milanés

Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba in Ireland

Latin America united, like silver at the core of the Andes

IN LATIN America and the Caribbean, perhaps in like no other region over the last 20 years, two contradictory positions have been in conflict over the way to administer the resources of the region for the benefit of our peoples.

On one hand, regional oligarchies, international corporations and imperialist forces have attempted to implement neoliberal policies which have been unable to address inequality, poverty and underdevelopment issues of this region. Our cities are falsely portrayed as beautiful European cities full of luxurious mansions and skyscrapers. Beyond this depiction, slums, unemployment, lack of health care and education and food poverty are a consequence of both, public expenditure cuts and privatizations.

On the other hand, progressive forces, along with their leadership, have stepped in to nationalize significant natural resources and essential services for the benefit of the people. As a result, millions have escaped food poverty, unemployment, and lack of education and housing. Health services have reached millions of people, including isolated indigenous communities that we need to protect. These communities inhabit jungles that are strategic reserves of biodiversity which are endangered by the devastating effects of profit-seeking multinational corporations.

These progressive forces have resisted internal and external aggression, and attempts to destabilize our legitimately elected governments, time and again.

Even if Lula's alleged crime is yet to be proven in an ongoing



Hugo Ramos Milanés, Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba in Ireland.

politically-motivated judicial process, he has already been imprisoned. Nicolás Maduro and Daniel Ortega have been branded dictators, not to mention the endless onslaught on the late Fidel and his brother Raul Castro.

Despite this, Fidel's worldwide recognition and political influence remain as strong as his undefeated legacy.

In spite of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean region as a Peace Area by their Heads of State and Government in the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC – Havana, 2014), the escalation of aggression against Our America is extremely concerning. Actions such as the threat of force against Venezuela represent a threat to our peace and security and contribute to destabilizing the region.

We advocate for non-intervention in internal affairs, sovereign equality of States

and peaceful conflict resolution as reflected in the Montevideo Mechanism, activated with the mediation of Mexico, Uruguay, Bolivia and other members of the Caribbean Community (Caricom) to safeguard peace in Venezuela.

We condemn the application of unilateral coercive measures contrary to the Purposes and Principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. These measures, repeatedly rejected by UN General Assembly resolutions, violate the freedom of trade and navigation, they threaten international peace and security, and interfere with the enjoyment of other human rights.

The international community has repeatedly called for the United States to lift the economic, commercial and financial blockade on Cuba. This blockade is a flagrant and systematic violation of human rights of the Cuban people. Moreover, the decision of the US government to activate Title III of the Helms-Burton Act to reinforce the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the blockade on Cuba is unacceptable and has also fuelled opposition. This decision will result in further deterioration of international economic and trade relations between Cuba and other states.

Although I hesitated whether or not to mention a discredited organization like the OAS, I cannot fail to denounce the fact that it's General Secretary has betrayed Our America's highest ideals. He has knelt before those intending to reinstate the Monroe Doctrine, an old expression of the USA's imperialist ambition over America that represents the most serious threat to peace in the hemisphere.

Bogus human rights concerns are being used selectively for political reasons as a pretext

for destabilizing legitimate governments, justifying interference in domestic affairs and imposing different political regimes.

We hold Caribbean people in our hearts, not only in the face of climate adversity but also in the face of discriminatory restrictions to access international aid and finance. The demand for compensation to be given to the Caribbean people for the genocide of the indigenous population, and the atrocities of the slave trade, is only fair.

Haiti, the first nation to achieve independence within this region, has been abandoned to its fate after being devastated by earthquakes, hurricanes and epidemic outbreaks. No international aid or major investment pledged to regenerate the country ever materialized. This constitutes clear evidence of the double standards inherent in some diplomatic services.

Cuba has reaffirmed its commitment to peace and cooperation and stressed the need to reinforce the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), a mechanism for regional political consultation which strictly adheres to International Law. CELAC advocates for peaceful resolution of conflicts, self-determination, territorial integrity and sovereignty whilst rejecting the use of force and interference in the domestic affairs of independent nations.

We extend our profound gratitude to all those, in Europe and elsewhere in the world, who raise their voices in solidarity with the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean. The struggle to achieve the vision of independence, held dear by our national heroes, goes on.

Title taken from the essay of Jose Martí "Our America" (1/1/1891) "It is time to get together and march in close ranks, like silver at the core of the Andes [...]"

OPINION

Rocío Maneiro

Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to Ireland



Rocío Maneiro, Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to Ireland

Venezuela will withstand attacks on its sovereignty

“There have been already four sessions of the United Nations Security Council dedicated to Venezuela, and while all this is happening, systematic violation of International Law and attacks on the country are taking place...”

SINCE 2015, when former US President Barack Obama presented Venezuela to the International Community as “an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States”, Venezuela is under siege. A set of unilateral coercive measures are breaking down the social and economic functioning of the country and the capacity of the State to control its energy and financial assets abroad.

This blockade is escalating in the face of the international community. From January - May 2019, because of US President Trump's Executive Order 3850 that blocked the operations of PDVSA, the state owned oil company; prohibited private US oil companies to buy Venezuelan

oil, and obstructed the operations of the Venezuelan Central Bank (BCV), specifically its dollar accounts abroad, the country has lost an estimated \$30 billion. If we count the losses since 2015 up to now, they rocket to \$130 billion.

Alongside this strategy, International Law is suffering greatly. In order to destroy Bolivarian Venezuela, the US is destroying the law that rules the international community and these principles, embedded in the United Nations Charter: non-intervention in internal affairs, equality among states before the International Law, and respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity, among others. These Principles must be in full force for all of us, because the contrary would be chaos.

At this very moment Venezuela is being aired permanently, not only in the media and political statements, but in the United Nations, as if it were a threat to world peace. There have been already four sessions of the United Nations Security Council dedicated to Venezuela, and while all this is happening, systematic violation of International Law and attacks on the country are taking place, as the blockade continues non-stop, along with threats of military intervention.

The Venezuelan People do not accept threats. On the contrary, history shows that their response to threats has never been submission, but bravery and unity in the face of adversity. Let us see what the future holds.

OPINION

Guisell Morales-Echaverry

Ambassador of Nicaragua to the U.K., Ireland and Iceland

Nicaragua and Latin America under attack

PEOPLE from Nicaragua, Cuba, Venezuela and all over the world are living in very difficult times which are exacerbated by the rise of right-wing nationalism, fascism, interventionism, imperialism and neo-liberalism.

The combined effect of these forces represents a systematic attack on International Law, and also against progressive governments because of their committed defence of national sovereignty, independence and right to self-determination.

A renewed aggression against Nicaragua materialised during an attempted coup d'état between April and July of 2018, with waves of violent protests and social media warfare planned and executed by radical political opposition groups disguised as NGO's, with links to organised crime, and financed by foreign organisations, led to assassinations, burning of people alive, kidnappings, torture, extortion, looting, obstruction of public roads, arson and destruction of hospitals, schools and public buildings.

This phase of violence resulted in a death toll of 198 people, the majority of whom were bystanders and government supporters, and included 22 police officers, eight government workers, five higher education and four secondary education students. 1,240 people were injured, of which 401 were police wounded by firearms.

An orchestrated political hostility has continued in the period since and, following petitions and lobbying by members of this opposition group, the US administration approved the 'Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act' (NICA), to impose a financial blockade preventing Nicaragua from accessing funds from multilateral financial organisations to help finance development, as they have done in Venezuela and Cuba.



Guisell Morales-Echaverry, Ambassador of Nicaragua to the UK, Ireland and Iceland

The current aggression seeks to overthrow by force the legitimate government and institutions of Nicaragua, which were democratically elected in 2016 with 72% of the vote and the participation of over 60% of eligible citizens, in an electoral process monitored by international observers recognised by the European Union, Organisation of American States and United Nations. This followed by the electoral victories of the present Sandinista government in 2006 (38% of votes) and 2011 (62% of votes).

Since taking power after the 2006 election and following the previous 16 years of rule by a neo liberal government, the Sandinista government under President Ortega has brought about huge positive economic and social change. In just over a decade, it has been able to introduce transformational social programmes and achievements; such as:

- Reducing general poverty from 48.3% to 24.9%, and extreme poverty from 17.2% to 6.9%.

- Becoming the 5th most gender equal country in the world.
- Changing the energy matrix from 25% to over 60% of renewables.
- Becoming the 2nd fastest growing economy in the region, with an average growth of 5.2% for the past 6 years to 2018.
- Having the best indicators of human security in the region, being the safest country in Central America and Caribbean.
- Reinstating free education and health for all.
- Introducing of the highest levels of workers' rights protection and participation in trade unions in the world.

Earlier this year, the Nicaraguan Government, led by President Ortega, initiated a process of political dialogue with the opposition, which was mediated by the Papal Nuncio and a delegate from the Organisation of American States.

The ongoing discussions started in March 2019 and thanks to the goodwill of the Government, some of the important progress includes the releasing of prisoners involved in crimes committed in the failed coup attempt. This release programme will conclude by June 18.

Whilst the Government continues to comply with the signed agreements and participate in the negotiation process, the opposition forces continue to call for foreign intervention and sanctions that affect the majority of Nicaraguans. In a negative development they have recently withdrawn from the negotiations.

The Sandinista Government is undeterred. We will continue moving forward with dignity, inspired by our national spirit and sovereignty.

We are resolved to consolidating freedom, and fraternity for the common good of all our people.

The Sandinista revolution remains dedicated, strong and proud of our democratic process.

Venezuela and Latin America today:

A 'new doctrine' of peaceful co-existence and co-operation is required

BY
**DECLAN
KEARNEY**
Sinn Féin
National
Chairperson



“The context of today’s internal political instability in Venezuela is directly linked to what has been described as a radicalisation of US foreign policy...”

FOR over one hundred years political and economic events in Latin America have been intertwined with the foreign policy objectives and interests of successive United States (US) administrations, and the influence of wider geo-political factors, such as the cold war.

In 1823 President James Monroe made a unilateral declaration to the US Congress that America would not interfere in European affairs, and that any European attempt to colonise a nation in the Western hemisphere would be viewed as an act of aggression against the US.

As a result, the Monroe Doctrine was borne.

America’s naval and military significance grew throughout the 19th century as its economic, industrial and maritime power increased.

In 1904 President Theodore Roosevelt expanded the remit of the doctrine with the corollary that the US could exercise the role of ‘international police power’ throughout the Americas.

By the 1930’s the US had annexed Puerto Rico, occupied Cuba, and encouraged a rebellion in Panama after the proposal for the inter-oceanic canal was rejected.

During the cold war the Monroe Doctrine assumed even greater importance as America’s justification for protecting its interests in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

In 1962 President John F Kennedy referenced the Monroe Doctrine to justify introducing the US economic blockade



against Cuba.

The doctrine has been used to legitimise US involvement in at least 18 attempts at regime change in Latin America since 1945, including Guatemala, Cuba, Chile, and Grenada; as well as direct military support for right wing forces during the political conflicts in Bolivia, El Salvador and Nicaragua, and elsewhere, during the 1960’s, 1970’s and 1980’s.

Today the Monroe Doctrine continues to permeate US foreign policy and influence the thinking of the most hawkish elements of the US military and political establishment.

The context of today’s internal political instability in Venezuela is directly linked to what has been described as a radicalisation of US foreign policy, resulting in deeper polarisation and tension in Venezuela itself, and more generally across Latin America and the Caribbean.

The immediate catalyst for the most recent instability in Venezuela has been the election of Nicolás Maduro as President in May 2018, followed by his inauguration in January this year.

However, the current US led efforts to isolate this Venezuelan government within the continent and internationally did not begin with President Maduro’s election or inauguration.

This political hostility stems back to the election of President Hugo Chavez in December 1998.

But in more recent years political divisions within Venezuela have also intensified.

In 2015 opposition political parties won the Assembly elections and since then have been in dispute with the Country’s Supreme court due to allegations that under their influence the Assembly acted at variance with the authority of the constitution.

A drift towards serious physical conflict was arrested



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with elections to the new Citizens National Assembly in 2017.

Moderate sections of the political opposition which had continued to participate in the democratic process recognise the legitimacy of the Maduro government. Others within the opposition which boycotted the Presidential elections in May 2018 now claim the result was rigged and that Nicolas Maduro has no democratic mandate.

This position was most sharply brought into focus with Juan Guaidó’s self-proclamation as Venezuelan President on 23 January.

The US immediately endorsed Guaidó and demanded that Nicolas Maduro resign.

Not since Fidel Castro’s early years in power has a Latin American head of State been so relentlessly demonised, and yet Venezuela

is a functioning multi party state.

In recent times the US has imposed new punitive sanctions on the Venezuelan oil industry, and refused to rule out military intervention unless its demands are met.

Before the current crisis ground breaking social achievements were implemented by the Venezuelan administrations under Presidents Chavez and Maduro, including extensive programmes to significantly reduce unemployment, expand free healthcare and education, and introduce an impressive house building programme.

In the last six years Venezuela’s ‘Great Housing Mission’ has succeeded in building 2.5 million new homes, with an overall target of 5 million by 2025. Each home is owned by the tenant: the poorest applicants receive a 100% subsidy on

their mortgage, while those on twice the minimum wage have a 50% subsidy. Banks have also been required to underpin the housing programme by allocating 20% of their funds for mortgages arrangements.

Now the country continues to be gripped by a combined political and economic crisis.

At its crux is America’s desire for regime change in Venezuela because of the continued existence of a Chavismo government which conflicts with current US foreign policy objectives in Latin America; and crucially, the issue of strategic control over Venezuelan oil reserves and revenues.

Earlier this year John Bolton, US National Security Advisor, was reported as having told Fox News that;

‘It will make a big difference to the US economically if we could have American oil



companies really invest in and produce oil capabilities in Venezuela.'

US political hostility towards Venezuela has had negative repercussions for the economy. These began with the introduction of trade restrictions in 2006; the subsequent imposition of international economic sanctions, and then the withdrawal of multinational corporate investments.

The new oil embargo is currently costing the Venezuelan economy \$30 million a day.

A prohibition on corporations under US jurisdiction from purchasing oil from PDVSA, Venezuela's state oil company, is denying PDVSA \$11 billion in revenues during 2019.

In addition, the assets of Houston based PDVSA subsidiary, CITGO, with a value of \$7 billion, have been frozen

in the US.

Prior to this most recent escalation, US financial sanctions have already cost the Venezuelan government over \$6 billion in lost revenue since August 2017.

Moreover, the British government has blocked the transfer of £1.2 billion of Venezuelan gold deposits in the Bank of England.

Venezuela is now in to its sixth year of economic contraction.

These severe economic and financial sanctions are having a devastating effect upon the economic crisis which faces hyperinflation, collapsing oil prices, a black market economy, and corruption.

As a stark illustration of the human cost of US sanctions, Economists Mark Weisbrot and Jeffrey Sachs in their report—"Economic Sanctions as Collective Punishment: The Case of Venezuela" (April 2019)

calculate that these sanctions have resulted in the deaths of 40,000 Venezuelan civilians between 2017 and 2018. Moreover, they point out that this death toll is merely the start of what is to come.

Earlier this year the international community watched as the US proposed humanitarian aid programme became a highly contentious issue.

The US plan, coordinated by Juan Guaido, was viewed with deep suspicion by the Venezuelan administration.

Former UN rapporteur Alfred Manier de Zayas described this aid as a potential Trojan horse comparable to how it was used in Nicaragua in the 1980's to import contraband and weapons to support the Contras.

The crisis in Venezuela should be a cause of grave concern for the international community.

"Economists Mark Weisbrot and Jeffrey Sachs in their report... calculate that these sanctions have resulted in the deaths of 40,000 Venezuelan civilians between 2017 and 2018."

Domestic political divisions, disagreements and instability within Venezuela should be resolved through proper dialogue and negotiation.

Positive calls have been made for dialogue between all sides by the UN.

Earlier this year, the Mexican, Uruguayan and Bolivian governments sought to play a constructive role in helping to facilitate a negotiated process without preconditions.

The rest of the international community also has a duty to act responsibly.

The current negotiations initiative sponsored by the Norwegian government in Oslo between the Venezuelan government and opposition is a very positive and significant development and should be supported by all within the international community who are committed to helping to achieve a negotiated democratic settlement in Venezuela.

International law must be observed.

The democratic and human rights of all Venezuelan citizens should be protected.

Outside interference with the democratic sovereignty of the country will only cause further destabilisation.

There is a real danger that the ongoing Venezuelan crisis; the sudden eruption of political instability and violence in Nicaragua in April 2018, after twelve years of political stability and economic growth; and, the latest intensification of the economic blockade against Cuba under Title 111 of the Helms-Burton Act; are in fact proxies for a concerted strategy aimed at destabilising progressive countries across the region, which do not conform with the prevailing Washington consensus.

These developments seem to dovetail with bellicose White House public commentary in February which spoke explicitly about the need for regime change not only in Venezuela, but also Nicaragua, and Cuba.

In a telling insight to the ideological motivation for interference in Venezuela, US President Trump has declared that the “twilight hour of socialism has arrived in our hemisphere”.

He also added: “Socialism is a sad and discredited ideology rooted in



Sinn Féin activists, Fra McCann MLA, Danny Lavery, Jim McVeigh and Tam Donlon, at recent ‘Hands off Venezuela!’ protest in Belfast.

the total ignorance of history and human nature.”

The concept of foreign intervention and regime change in Latin America and the Caribbean is in absolute violation of multilateralism, and the rules and conventions which are needed to maintain global peace, stability and solidarity in the modern world.

The doctrine which really needs to be promoted in Latin America in 21st Century is one of peaceful coexistence, political respect and

civilised cooperation.

The UN and those committed to international laws and conventions must oppose any attempts at orchestrating anti-democratic activity or violence in Venezuela by outside forces.

The entire international community needs to be working together to help the people of Venezuela, and not make the situation worse.

The alternative is too disastrous for the people of the region and wider international community to even contemplate.



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Sinn Féin attend Venezuelan Presidential inauguration

SINN Féin representatives Conor Murphy MLA and Dawn Doyle, General Secretary, travelled to Venezuela to attend the Presidential inauguration of Nicolás Maduro Moros at the invitation of the Venezuelan Government in Caracas on 10 January 2019.

The Sinn Féin representatives were part of an international delegation of progressive political forces expressing their solidarity to the people of Venezuela.

Conor Murphy said:

“Nicolás Maduro Moros was democratically elected by the Venezuelan people to serve as their President during the term 2019 - 2025. This is a particularly difficult and challenging period for the citizens of Venezuela.

“We used our presence in Venezuela to express our continuing solidarity to the people supporting their legitimate demands to build a just and equal society free from foreign intervention.

“We also took the opportunity to meet with many of the other international guests and media to provide them with an update on the current situation in Ireland; discussing the negative impact of Brexit for all the Irish people and our on-going campaign for national reunification.”



Conor Murphy with Venezuelan Foreign Minister, Jorge Arreaza.



Sinn Féin MP, Elisha McCallion with Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel.



Sinn Féin MP's, Francie Molloy and Paul Maskey, with Dr Mariela Castro (daughter of former Cuban President Raúl Castro).

Kearney extends Sinn Féin leadership's solidarity on 60th anniversary of Cuban revolution

Cuba an inspiration for freedom loving people all over the world

BY
**DECLAN
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Sinn Féin
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ON 1st January 1959, following the victory of Che Guevara's forces at the Battle of Santa Clara the previous day, the Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista fled Cuba marking the end of his regime in Cuba. Batista's flight paved the way for the Cuban revolution taking power.

2019 will see events taking place all over the globe in celebration of both the anniversary of the Cuban revolution and its ongoing resilience.

Events will also be held in Ireland and very recently in Belfast, Mayor Deirdre Hargey hosted an event at Belfast City Hall to mark this milestone.

I was also delighted to host the Cuban Ambassadors to both Ireland and Britain, Hugo Ramos and Teresita de Jesús Vicente Sotolongo at the Sinn Féin offices on the Falls Road. This was the very first time both the Cuban Ambassadors to Ireland and Britain have jointly visited the north.

During our meeting, the Ambassadors provided an update on the current situation in Cuba, the continuing negative impact



Declan Kearney MLA with Hugo Ramos (Cuban Ambassador to Ireland) and Teresita Vicente Sotolongo (Cuban Ambassador to Britain).

of the US blockade on Cuba, and the new draft Cuban Constitution which will be put to the Cuban people in a referendum later this year.

I provided the Ambassadors with an update on the political situation in Ireland, north and south, and on the deep, systemic political crisis in the north arising from the ongoing denial of democracy and rights.

We also discussed the future relationship between Sinn Féin and the Cuban Government.

Cuba continues to be an inspiration for freedom

loving people all over the world.

The Cuban Government has consistently demonstrated to the world that a nation's people are its greatest asset, and that it is the role of government to serve its people. In prioritising health and education, the Cuban Government has succeeded in virtually eradicating infant mortality and achieving almost one hundred percent literacy with the Cuban population. Cuba is also an exemplar in terms of its commitment to international solidarity through its practical support

to countries throughout Latin America and Africa. Progressive people who are genuinely committed to the transformation of society have much to learn from the Cuban Revolution since 1959.

For our part, Sinn Féin will continue to stand in solidarity with the Cuban people and against those who oppose them.

On this occasion of the Revolution's 60th anniversary it is appropriate to recall the iconic words: "Hasta la victoria siempre." Cuba Libre!