

One country, two presidents: the crisis in Venezuela

By Washington Post, adapted by Newsela staff on 02.28.19

Word Count **466**

Level **570L**



Image 1. An activist holds a placard reading "No to the war in Venezuela. Let's defend life" during a demonstration outside Colombia's Foreign Ministry in Bogota on February 25, 2019. Photo by: Juan Manuel Barrero Bueno/AFP/Getty Images

Deadly fights broke out in Venezuela over the weekend. People against Nicolás Maduro's presidency clashed with those who support Maduro.

You may have questions about Venezuela's troubles. Here are some answers.

Why are two men saying they are Venezuela's president?

After Venezuela's leader Hugo Chávez died, Maduro took power in March 2013. Maduro promised to continue Chávez's socialism. In that system, money is shared among everyone. Yet the system failed under Maduro. His popularity dropped.

In response, Maduro filled the government with friends. They rewrote the country's laws for him. In May 2018, Maduro won a new election. He would be president six more years.

Juan Guaidó said Maduro's election was not honest. Guaidó is president of the lawmaking body of Venezuela's government. Guaidó says this makes him the president for now. Guaidó wants a fair election.

What is U.S. President Donald Trump doing?

Trump believes Guaidó is Venezuela's president. Trump wants to help bring democracy back to Venezuela.

Trump has created punishments against Venezuela. The U.S. has stopped paying cash for Venezuela's oil.

Trump is also telling Venezuela's soldiers to quit. Trump has said the U.S. could use its military.

What are other countries saying?

More than 60 countries call Guaidó Venezuela's true president. They include Colombia, Brazil, Canada, Israel and most of Western Europe.

Who is on Maduro's side?

Dozens of countries stand behind Maduro. These countries include China, North Korea and Russia. Russia has given Maduro money and likes keeping weapons there.

Why are Venezuela's companies doing so poorly?

Venezuela used to be a rich country. It has a large amount of oil. Yet oil prices dropped after Chavez died.



Inflation set in. This meant Venezuela's money became worth little. Prices shot up. People couldn't pay for goods. Businesses made fewer products. This includes food and medicine. Millions of Venezuelans left.

What happened this weekend?

Maduro is blocking help for Venezuela. Nevertheless, foreign volunteers tried to bring supplies. They hoped Venezuela's military wouldn't use force, but it did.

"In all, 285 people were injured and 37 hospitalized," The Post reported. "At least four were killed."

What will happen next?

On February 25, Guaidó met with U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and Latin American leaders.

Guaidó hinted that he is open to using military force, but some U.S. government members have already spoken against using force.