



Five Months of the Interim Government: **Reconfiguration Without Transition**

→ *Political, Institutional, Economic and Human Rights Assessment of Venezuela After 3E*

I. Introduction

January 3, 2026 marked one of the most significant turning points in Venezuela's recent political history. The removal of Nicolás Maduro from power, the installation of a provisional administration headed by Delcy Rodríguez, and the beginning of a new phase of national and international negotiations substantially altered the country's political, economic, and institutional landscape.

The events that followed 3E generated expectations of a possible democratic transition, but also of a process of economic stabilization and political realignment.

This report examines the first five months of Delcy Rodríguez's administration from a human rights, civic space, and democratic transition perspective. Rather than merely assessing government decisions, it seeks to identify trends, continuities, ruptures, and emerging disputes that help explain the nature of Venezuela's new political moment.

The central hypothesis of this document is that, despite the changes that have occurred since 3E, Venezuela appears to be closer to a process of authoritarian recomposition and internal reconfiguration of power than to the verifiable beginning of a democratic transition.

II. Closer to Authoritarian Recomposition, Far from Democratic Transition

Although the United States announced a three-track plan for Venezuela (*Recovery, Stabilization, and Transition*), the first five months following 3E have not produced verifiable decisions aimed at initiating a democratic transition. To date, there have been no reforms comparable to those implemented in other

international transition experiences: new appointments have been based primarily on political loyalty; there is no electoral timetable nor renewal of the *National Electoral Council (CNE)*; no measures have been adopted to guarantee judicial independence; no truth or reparations mechanisms have been established for victims; and the restrictive legal framework that limits freedoms and civic space remains intact. On the contrary, the available evidence points more strongly toward a process of power recomposition and adaptation of the pre-existing political system.

Rather than opening a process of institutional pluralization, the Rodríguez siblings have promoted a reorganization of the state apparatus based primarily on replacing officials close to Nicolás Maduro with figures identified with their own political circle. With the exception of the appointment of Eglee González Lobato as Ombudsperson, most new appointments have involved individuals known for their loyalty and commitment to the Bolivarian project. Rather than reflecting political alternation or institutional opening, the process appears to represent an internal redistribution of power in search of a new equilibrium following Nicolás Maduro's departure from the ruling coalition.

Although there are partial signs of opening (a reduction in the intensity of repression, the limited return of political leaders to public life, a restricted expansion of public debate, and the reemergence of the electoral agenda), these developments coexist with the continuation of practices, actors, and structures inherited from the previous period.

An additional indicator was the appointment of Héctor Rodríguez as *Presidential Commissioner for Government Restructuring and Reengineering*. The decision suggests that the primary objective is not to dismantle inherited

power structures, but rather to adapt them to new political, economic, and international circumstances. More than a transition toward a new political regime, the reengineering process led by Rodríguez appears aimed at preserving the governability of the system through its internal reorganization.

III. The Suspension of the Constitution as an Obstacle to Democratic Transition

Venezuela is currently experiencing a situation of constitutional uncertainty arising from the exercise of presidential authority under a figure that is not expressly contemplated in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Articles 233 and 234 establish the legal framework applicable to permanent and temporary absences of the President of the Republic, but they do not provide for an indefinite exercise of power based on a “forced absence” without a definitive constitutional determination. This situation has created an institutional limbo that affects legal certainty, weakens the legitimacy of the political process, and deepens public distrust regarding the direction of the transition.

No sustainable democratic transition can be built upon the practical suspension or permanent reinterpretation of the Constitution. On the contrary, restoring both national and international confidence requires a return to the constitutional framework as a common point of reference accepted by all actors. This entails resolving the presidential situation through the mechanisms established in the Constitution, definitively determining the nature of the presidential absence, and, should a permanent absence be established within the first four years of the constitutional term, activating the procedure set forth in Article 233, including the convening of free, competitive, and verifiable presidential elections within an agreed and supervised timetable.

More than an isolated legal debate, this is a fundamental condition for rebuilding democratic legitimacy, restoring constitutional continuity, guaranteeing the effective exercise of popular sovereignty, and providing credibility to any transition process. Without a clear, verifiable, and respected constitutional foundation, the perception will persist that the transition is driven by contingent political arrangements rather than by a genuine process of democratic and institutional recovery.

IV. Legal Exceptionalism as a Form of Government

The first five months of government reveal a consistent tendency to replace ordinary procedures with extraordinary solutions, weakening constitutional, administrative, and parliamentary oversight. Exceptionalism has ceased to be a temporary response and has instead become an ordinary mode of governance.

As noted above, the designation of Vice President Delcy Rodríguez as Venezuela’s “interim” president was itself carried out through a mechanism not contemplated in the Constitution: the notion of “forced absence,” created through a decision of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice (TSJ) and absent from the constitutional categories governing presidential succession.

The reform of the Hydrocarbons Law has been questioned due to possible constitutional incompatibilities related to the state’s reserved role in petroleum activities (Article 302), the strategic centrality of PDVSA (Article 303), parliamentary oversight of contracts of public interest (Article 150), and principles governing public administration and dispute resolution (Article 141).

The new Organic Mining Law has likewise generated controversy. Potentially affected constitutional provisions include state ownership and administration of mineral resources (Article 12), parliamentary oversight of contracts of public interest (Article 150), the right to a healthy environment and environmental protection obligations (Articles 127 and 129), as well as the rights of Indigenous peoples concerning habitat, consultation, and participation (Articles 119–126).

On May 23, U.S. military aircraft conducted an exercise in Venezuelan territory without compliance with Article 187(11) of the Constitution, which grants the National Assembly authority to authorize the deployment of foreign military missions in the country or Venezuelan military missions abroad.

Delcy Rodríguez’s public announcement on April 23, 2026, declaring the end of the implementation of the *Democratic Coexistence Amnesty Law* also raised legal concerns. As legislation enacted by the National Assembly, its validity and effects cannot be terminated by a political declaration from the Executive Branch, but only through the corresponding legislative procedures established in Article 218 of the Constitution.

Similarly, the replacement of the Attorney General and the Ombudsperson was questioned because it departed from the internal regulations of both institutions, which provided for temporary succession mechanisms through career officials within the respective bodies.

The appointment of Gustavo González López as Minister of Defense, despite allegations by international human rights bodies regarding his responsibility for serious human rights violations, appears inconsistent with the *Special Law to Prevent and Punish Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment*, whose Article 17 establishes sanctions and disqualifications for holding public office.

The continued application of the State of External Emergency Decree, without parliamentary renewal or formal repeal, has also raised questions regarding its

legal validity. This situation may be incompatible with Articles 337, 338, and 339 of the Constitution, which establish temporal limits, parliamentary oversight, and judicial review for states of exception.

At the time of writing this report, it had not been possible to verify the publication in the *Official Gazette* of the decree appointing Héctor Rodríguez as Presidential Commissioner for Government Restructuring and Reengineering, despite the evident institutional significance of the decision.

Taken together, these developments do not constitute isolated irregularities. Rather, they reflect a model of governance based on the relaxation of institutional controls and the substitution of ordinary procedures with exceptional mechanisms.

V. Appointment and Continuity of Officials Identified by Human Rights Bodies

One of the most controversial aspects of the first five months of government has been the appointment, ratification, or continuation in high public office of officials identified by international human rights bodies as allegedly responsible for serious human rights violations.

No genuine institutional vetting process has taken place with regard to authorities nationally and internationally identified in connection with serious human rights abuses, corruption, or participation in repressive structures. On the contrary, various actors have simply been reassigned within the state apparatus, while other strategic positions have been filled by equally controversial figures through discretionary mechanisms lacking transparency, independence, and adherence to democratic and constitutional standards.

From our perspective, these developments reflect a logic of power management and preservation rather than a genuine transition aimed at institutional reconstruction, accountability, justice, and the effective restoration of democracy in Venezuela.

The most emblematic case was the appointment of Gustavo González López as Minister of Defense. González previously headed both SEBIN and DGCIM, institutions repeatedly identified in connection with arbitrary detention, short-term enforced disappearances, torture, and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Several international reports have even pointed to his direct involvement in such violations.

The appointment of Vladimir Padrino López as Minister of Food also generated concern. During his tenure as Minister of Defense, international bodies documented human rights violations committed in the context of security and social control operations. His continued presence within the cabinet has been interpreted as a

signal of accommodation with the military establishment and of institutional continuity with the previous period.

The appointment of Larry Devoe as Attorney General likewise raised concerns. As Executive Secretary of the National Human Rights Council, he publicly defended the Venezuelan state before international human rights bodies and participated in efforts to discredit human rights organizations and dismiss allegations of abuse of power. His arrival at the Attorney General's Office has been interpreted as a continuation of the state's previous human rights narrative.

Likewise, the retention of Diosdado Cabello as Minister of Interior, Justice and Peace was received with concern by national and international organizations. Cabello has been identified in various international reports and mechanisms for his alleged political responsibility within structures associated with repression, persecution, and restrictions on civic space. He has also been a prominent spokesperson in campaigns aimed at criminalizing political and social leaders. His continued control over a ministry responsible for policing, public security, and internal order has been interpreted as a sign of continuity within the coercive apparatus of the previous period.

Cabello appears to be a key figure in the new balance of power due to his control over both state and para-state coercive structures.

The continued presence of figures associated with serious human rights violations weakens institutional trust and undermines guarantees of non-repetition.

VI. Tactical Retreat: Waiting for More Favorable Conditions to Reverse the Transition

Within sectors of Venezuelan civil society, growing concern exists that the current political process may not necessarily represent an irreversible transition, but rather a strategy of temporary tactical retreat. In particular, some voices warn that the ruling coalition may be betting on a future weakening of pressure from the United States (whether due to domestic political changes, international fatigue, or shifts in Washington's strategic priorities) in order to slow down, redefine, or reverse commitments that have been assumed.

This perception is reinforced by statements from various actors (*linked both to the ruling coalition and the tutelage framework*) that are interpreted by sectors of civil society as signals of tactical retreat and strategic preservation of power. Some of these narratives have explicitly invoked previous experiences of Chavismo, arguing that Hugo Chávez occasionally adopted tactical retreats or temporary concessions in order to regain strength and continue advancing his political project. At the same time, critical voices within Chavismo that question the current

direction of the process have been publicly denounced as “traitors,” reinforcing perceptions of internal discipline and resistance to democratic and pluralistic opening.

As a result, doubts persist as to whether Venezuela is experiencing a genuine transition or rather a strategy designed to buy time, rebuild capacities of control, and preserve governability until a more favorable international or regional context emerges for the continuity of the ruling political project.

Without solid institutional guarantees, verifiable implementation timelines, an electoral roadmap, and genuine mechanisms of national and international oversight, negotiations and political agreements may lead to a prolonged, partial, or reversible transition, in which time functions as a tool for power recomposition rather than democratic transformation.

VII. Democratic Simulation Without Independent Expert Verification

One of the principal risks facing Venezuela’s current political process is the consolidation of compliance simulation dynamics without genuine structural transformation toward democracy and the rule of law.

This situation is aggravated by the absence of an independent, impartial actor with sufficient technical capacity to verify, under international human rights and democratic transition standards, the effective implementation of the commitments and obligations announced by the authorities. As a result, many measures publicly presented as steps toward transition have revealed significant gaps between official discourse and institutional reality.

Among the clearest examples of this phenomenon is the so-called Amnesty Law. The measure failed to meet the legitimate expectations of victims, family members, and democratic sectors, and did not guarantee transparent, comprehensive, and verifiable processes of release and restoration of rights. To date, no complete and publicly verifiable list of beneficiaries has been published, while numerous political prisoners remain deprived of liberty or subject to restrictive measures such as house arrest, precautionary measures, or ongoing criminal proceedings.

Likewise, detention facilities widely associated with allegations of torture and serious human rights violations, including El Helicoide and other detention centers, have neither been closed nor structurally transformed. They remain operational and continue to hold both common and political prisoners, despite the fact that their continued existence is incompatible with minimum standards of non-repetition and democratic guarantees.

VIII. Without Justice, Truth, or Reparation: The Situation of Victims

The principal human rights measure adopted during the first five months of the interim administration was the enactment of the Democratic Coexistence Amnesty Law. The law generated expectations both inside and outside the country, as it was presented as a measure aimed at reconciliation and ending political persecution. However, its implementation was limited in scope and failed to structurally alter the human rights situation that existed prior to 3E.

According to the organization *Justice, Encounter and Forgiveness* (Justicia, Encuentro y Perdón), approximately 250 people regained their freedom through the application of the law, while 679 individuals remained imprisoned for political reasons at the time of its assessment. Other organizations reported similar figures, indicating that several hundred people remained incarcerated despite the law’s entry into force. Despite the announcement of significant numbers, the authorities never published an official list of those who benefited from the amnesty.

The state’s implementation of the law reflected a logic of clemency rather than recognition of state responsibility for human rights violations, turning the amnesty into a measure of partial relief rather than a policy grounded in truth, justice, and reparation.

During the period under review, one of the most symbolically and emotionally significant episodes in recent Venezuelan history also occurred. Authorities acknowledged that Víctor Hugo Quero had died while in state custody in July 2025, while his mother, Carmen Teresa Navas, had spent approximately eighteen months searching for him and demanding information about his whereabouts. Ten days after officially learning of her son’s fate, Carmen Teresa died, generating profound national and international shock.

Public outrage compelled the authorities to announce the release of 300 individuals imprisoned for political reasons. However, the NGO Foro Penal was only able to verify 50 releases, once again raising concerns about the gap between official announcements and actual implementation.

The continued existence of political prisoners raises a fundamental question: **why do political prisoners still exist in Venezuela?** Various organizations argue that authorities continue to use deprived persons instrumentally as bargaining assets and mechanisms of political exchange during periods of pressure, dialogue, and international negotiation.

The creation of the so-called *Coexistence and Peace Program* also generated expectations that it might evolve into a transitional justice mechanism. However, the

program's mandate, powers, and scope have never been officially published, leaving its legal nature uncertain. To date, the program has not promoted mechanisms for truth, justice, reparation, or guarantees of non-repetition, limiting itself instead to organizing meetings between authorities and different sectors of society as expressions of a supposed "national reconciliation."

The appointment of Larry Devoe as Attorney General further deepened doubts regarding the possibility of meaningful structural reform within the justice system. Although authorities announced a "National Consultation on Judicial Reform," serious questions remain regarding its scope and feasibility. The immediate precedent is discouraging: the reform commitments assumed under the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in November 2021 failed to produce substantial improvements in judicial independence, accountability, or the investigation of violations.

At the same time, relatives of political detainees continued to denounce practices that already existed before 3E: denial of due process, restrictions on private legal defense, prolonged incommunicado detention, allegations of short-term enforced disappearance, and obstacles to obtaining information regarding detainees' health and legal status.

Taken together, the first five months reveal a paradox: humanitarian releases and partial relief measures have occurred, yet no policies oriented toward truth, justice, reparation, or guarantees of non-repetition have emerged. The situation of victims and political prisoners remains defined by uncertainty, selectivity, and the absence of reforms addressing the structural conditions and practices of the justice system.

IX. Human Rights Defenders: Released, but Neither Amnestied nor Legally Cleared

While the release of several human rights defenders constituted a positive development, in many cases these releases were not accompanied by the full restoration of rights or the definitive closure of judicial proceedings.

Defenders such as Javier Tarazona, Rocío San Miguel, Pedro Hernández, Carlos Julio Rojas, Carlos Correa, and Kennedy Tejeda were released after short or prolonged periods of arbitrary detention, yet they continue to face open criminal proceedings, precautionary measures, restrictions on their freedom of movement, limitations on public communication regarding their cases, or legal uncertainty resulting from unresolved investigations.

The replacement of imprisonment with alternative measures does not amount to the full restoration of their civil and political rights. The persistence of criminal

proceedings, mandatory court appearances, travel bans, and other restrictions creates a chilling effect on human rights work and allows the state to maintain mechanisms of control over individuals who were previously persecuted because of their civic activities.

Consequently, these measures reinforce concerns regarding the existence of partial or incomplete advances that, while reducing the number of people behind bars, do not fully eliminate the consequences of political persecution nor guarantee adequate conditions for the free exercise of human rights defense.

X. Persistent Restrictions on Journalists, Media Outlets, and Communicators

The situation of journalists and media workers similarly reflects the structural limitations of the current process.

The National College of Journalists (CNP), Capital District Chapter, documented 97 attacks against journalists between January and May 2026, including 18 arbitrary detentions, 16 instances of obstruction of news coverage, 15 deportations of foreign correspondents, acts of harassment and intimidation, and the closure of media outlets.

The organization has also warned that several journalists and media workers who were released from detention continue to lack full freedom, remaining subject to court appearances, travel restrictions, precautionary measures, and other limitations incompatible with the full exercise of freedom of expression and independent journalism.

These developments demonstrate that releases and other measures announced by authorities have not necessarily been accompanied by comprehensive and verifiable restoration of rights. Mechanisms of judicial control and institutional pressure remain in place and continue to affect civic and democratic space in Venezuela.

The persistence of open criminal cases, restrictions, and forms of intimidation directed against journalists and human rights defenders reinforces concerns that the current process may represent a partial and limited transition based more on symbolic compliance than on structural guarantees of non-repetition and democratic opening.

XI. Partial Openings and the Persistence of Restrictions on Civic Space

The first five months following 3E were marked by a reduction in the intensity of repression, without any corresponding dismantling of the legal and institutional restrictions affecting public freedoms and civic space.

At the normative level, legal instruments widely

questioned by national and international organizations for their impact on freedom of association, expression, and peaceful assembly remained in force. Restrictions on civil society organizations, monitoring mechanisms over international cooperation, and administrative measures previously used to limit civic space also remained in place. Likewise, the blocking of news websites and digital platforms continued, along with censorship policies and restrictions on access to information.

Selective detentions of activists linked to political parties and social organizations also persisted. Unlike the period preceding 3E, these actions did not generally result in prolonged imprisonment or temporary disappearances. However, they did lead to ongoing criminal proceedings, precautionary measures, and mandatory reporting requirements that continue to generate legal uncertainty and restrictions on political activity.

Social conflict was driven primarily by workers, trade unionists, and students, whose mobilizations focused on salary demands, working conditions, and the release of political prisoners. Public universities resumed nationwide protests and work stoppages, expressing dissatisfaction with budgetary conditions, salaries, and the broader structural crisis affecting higher education.

In the communications sphere, partial changes became visible. Although censorship, website blocking, and self-censorship persisted, some media outlets began incorporating actors, perspectives, and issues that had previously been excluded from public debate. At the same time, political leaders, activists, and human rights organizations that had operated under conditions of semi-clandestinity gradually resumed public activities and statements.

Overall, repression declined in comparison with the period preceding 3E, but there was no comprehensive dismantling of the legal and institutional restrictions affecting public freedoms. The opening that has taken place appears to reflect a controlled relaxation of restrictions rather than a full expansion of rights and guarantees.

As an example of the caution learned after the peak of repression following 28J, the National Environment Survey conducted by *Poder y Estrategia* in March 2026 found that 49.5% of respondents preferred not to answer questions regarding their current political preferences.

XII. Growing Disapproval of Delcy Rodríguez as Acting President

Various public opinion surveys conducted in Venezuela throughout 2026 reveal a consistent pattern of limited social legitimacy and high levels of distrust toward Delcy Rodríguez.

According to the *AtlasIntel* survey for *Bloomberg*, her

approval rating declined from 37% in February to 35% in March and 31% in April, while disapproval increased from 44.3% in February to 47% in April.

Likewise, studies cited by *ORC Consultores* and *Datanálisis* indicate that approximately 74.4% of Venezuelans express distrust toward her leadership.

Although results vary among polling firms and methodologies, the overall trend suggests that Delcy Rodríguez maintains a support base representing approximately one-quarter to one-third of the population, while facing significantly higher levels of rejection and distrust.

These figures point to substantial challenges regarding political legitimacy and governability in a context marked by demands for economic recovery, institutional strengthening, and democratic guarantees.

XIII. Legitimacy as an Essential Condition for a Credible Transition

The profound legitimacy crisis and high levels of public rejection toward Delcy Rodríguez and the current governing arrangement constitute one of the principal obstacles to a credible, sustainable, and socially supported democratic transition in Venezuela.

The sustainability of any transition process is closely linked to its ability to generate public support, institutional stability, and verifiable progress in democracy and human rights. When high levels of distrust and perceptions of illegitimacy prevail, doubts increase regarding the political viability of long-term agreements and the implementation of sustainable reforms.

Likewise, the absence of clear signs of democratic opening, electoral legitimacy, and tangible improvements undermines the credibility of U.S. policies based on gradual normalization, cooperation, and sanctions relief.

In this context, public perception becomes a central factor. The longer the absence of concrete and verifiable results persists, the greater the likelihood of increased domestic pressure to accelerate political and institutional change under democratic and human rights guarantees.

XIV. Reconfiguration of Political Leadership and the Return of the Electoral Agenda

The first five months following 3E have been marked by a reconfiguration of Venezuela's political landscape. Although the center of gravity of power shifted toward the provisional administration of Delcy Rodríguez and the international negotiation process, the struggle over legitimacy, leadership, and political representation remains unresolved.

Given the high levels of public rejection toward Delcy Rodríguez, despite official efforts to portray her as a figure of stability, economic recovery, and international negotiation, the government has attempted to differentiate her leadership from previous stages of Chavismo. However, these initiatives have not yet succeeded in reversing the negative perceptions accumulated over time.

The ruling coalition has managed to contain the public expression of internal discontent through mechanisms of organizational cohesion, narrative control, and political discipline. The slogan “*Delcy moves forward, you have my trust*” summarizes this strategy. At the same time, spokespersons and sectors critical of decisions adopted after 3E have been displaced from institutional and media spaces.

María Corina Machado remains the country’s leading opposition figure, although several studies indicate a gradual decline in her support compared to the period immediately following 28J and 3E. Despite initial expectations, there remains no clear timetable for her return to Venezuela, a decision that she herself has linked to political and security conditions.

Political dynamics have also altered the role of the National Assembly. In August 2025, the newly elected legislature was expected to become the principal arena for negotiations between the ruling coalition and minority opposition sectors. However, that role was displaced by direct negotiations between the United States and the administration of Delcy Rodríguez. The National Assembly has instead assumed a largely legitimizing role, providing institutional endorsement to agreements and decisions negotiated elsewhere.

At the societal level, a gradual process of re-electoralization has also begun to emerge. Mobilizations by workers, trade unionists, and students have increasingly incorporated demands for elections. According to the consulting firm *Poder y Estrategia*, 64% of respondents believe elections should be held during the current year. Likewise, civil society organizations have launched new initiatives to reposition political participation on the public agenda, including the “*Quiero Elegir*” (“I Want to Choose”) platform, promoted by a coalition of Venezuelan organizations demanding the full restoration of political rights.

The interim authorities have acknowledged that elections will eventually have to take place. Different accounts of the political negotiations suggest that an electoral sequence for 2027 has been proposed, beginning with regional elections, followed by parliamentary elections, and only later presidential elections. This proposal has been rejected by María Corina Machado, who argues that any electoral timetable must begin with presidential elections and guarantee the participation of all Venezuelans, both inside and outside the country.

Various experts have noted that the minimum time required to organize a competitive electoral process ranges between seven and nine months and includes, as an essential condition, the renewal of the National Electoral Council (CNE) and the reconstruction of institutional guarantees. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has called for a new electoral authority to be established “*as soon as possible*.” Predictably, negotiations over its composition are likely to become a central source of political conflict in the coming weeks.

The interim authorities have also launched a nationwide mobilization campaign officially presented as opposition to international sanctions. However, various sectors interpret this initiative as a process of territorial reactivation and electoral reorganization of the ruling coalition.

In response, and despite persistent limitations on a safe return, some political and social leaders have begun returning to the country in order to contribute to the restructuring of the democratic bloc in anticipation of a possible electoral process. During this period, at least two returnees were reportedly detained upon arrival at Venezuelan airports (Edwin Sambrano and Alexis Paparoni).

The first five months reveal the gradual return of the electoral agenda to the center of public debate. The discussion no longer revolves exclusively around the continuity of power, but increasingly around the timing, conditions, sequencing, and guarantees of future electoral competition.

XV. Economic Reforms, Social Conflict, and the Deterioration of Public Services

The most significant decisions adopted during the first five months of government were concentrated in the economic sphere. The provisional administration promoted a set of measures aimed at transforming the inherited economic model, characterized by strong state intervention, into one based on greater market openness, foreign investment, and regulatory flexibility.

The reforms to the Hydrocarbons Law and the adoption of the new Organic Mining Law constitute the most visible expressions of this shift in orientation. These measures were accompanied by negotiations with foreign companies to rehabilitate energy infrastructure, the relaxation of petroleum regulations, and an explicit policy of attracting international capital to support economic recovery.

However, the change in economic model was not accompanied by equivalent improvements in living conditions. The minimum wage increase announced on May 1 fell short of public expectations and preserved the bonus-based compensation structure implemented during the previous administration, a practice that many argue is inconsistent with constitutional provisions.

Dissatisfaction with labor conditions generated mobilizations and public statements from various sectors, including health workers, educators, and public employees. As a new development, sectors of public employees traditionally identified with the ruling coalition also began joining these protests, broadening discontent beyond conventional opposition and labor circles.

At the same time, the administration of Delcy Rodríguez announced a National Energy Saving Plan and implemented electricity rationing measures in response to increasing blackouts and the structural crisis affecting the power system. These policies included consumption restrictions, reduced working hours, and extraordinary measures designed to lower energy demand.

However, social sectors denounced that these policies deepened territorial inequalities in service provision, maintaining a relatively protected electricity supply in Caracas while western states and other regions continued to experience prolonged outages and deteriorating service conditions.

The first five months therefore reveal a paradox: while the government moved rapidly toward economic liberalization and investment promotion, demands related to wages, labor conditions, and public services remained at the center of social conflict.

The economic transformation has begun to generate structural changes, but its benefits have yet to translate into tangible improvements for broad sectors of the population.

Despite the shift in economic orientation and expectations of recovery, Venezuela continued to experience high levels of inflation throughout 2026. According to official figures, inflation reached 71.8% during the first quarter of the year, while year-on-year inflation for April stood at 611.86%. Although monthly inflation showed signs of deceleration, the sustained increase in prices continued to erode citizens' purchasing power.

According to the *National Environment Survey* conducted by *Poder y Estrategia* in March 2026, 50% of respondents answered “*It remains the same*” when asked about their personal economic situation compared to the beginning of the year, while 19% reported that it had “*improved somewhat*” and 13% stated that it had become “*much worse*.”

During this period, a narrative increasingly emerged according to which economic stabilization should precede any political opening or expansion of rights, subordinating demands for justice and accountability to objectives of recovery and stability.

XVI. Foreign Policy, Negotiation, and Sovereignty

Foreign policy was one of the areas in which the most significant transformations occurred during the first five months following 3E. The bilateral relationship between the United States and the provisional administration of Delcy Rodríguez became the principal organizing axis of the Venezuelan political landscape, progressively displacing national actors and multilateral mechanisms that had previously occupied central positions in political negotiations.

One of the most symbolic developments of this new phase was the surrender of Alex Saab to U.S. authorities, widely interpreted as an explicit signal of political and judicial cooperation between Caracas and Washington, as well as a willingness to sacrifice emblematic figures from the previous period in order to sustain the negotiation and stabilization process.

At the same time, the administration of Delcy Rodríguez pursued a more pragmatic foreign policy, focused on restoring relations with Western actors, attracting investment, and gradually reintegrating Venezuela into international financial and commercial circuits.

This process was accompanied by selective sanctions relief, particularly in the energy sector, although the European Union maintained restrictions conditioned upon verifiable progress in democracy, human rights, and institutional guarantees.

At the regional level, Venezuela began a process of diplomatic repositioning facilitated by the reduction in internal conflict and expectations of stabilization. In this context, the meeting between Delcy Rodríguez and Colombian President Gustavo Petro was interpreted as a sign of the gradual re-legitimation of the interim authorities and confirmed Colombia's role as a bridge between Venezuela, the United States, and other regional actors.

Military cooperation with the United States also introduced tensions between political pragmatism and debates over sovereignty, particularly following the U.S. military aircraft exercise conducted on May 23 without parliamentary authorization.

The first five months reveal a foreign policy characterized by pragmatism, negotiation, and selective cooperation. Venezuela has begun a slow process of reducing its international isolation, although external recognition remains partial, conditional, and deeply shaped by its relationship with the United States.

XVII. Social Patience for Transition Is Declining

In contexts of prolonged crisis, the erosion of public trust often translates into a decline in social patience toward

solutions perceived as slow, insufficient, or primarily oriented toward preserving power.

When broad sectors of society perceive no meaningful changes in rights, institutions, economic conditions, or democratic guarantees, the risk of collective frustration, demobilization, social conflict, and loss of confidence in negotiation processes and gradual transitions increases.

Likewise, limited legitimacy reduces the capacity of political leadership to build broad consensus, sustain complex reforms, and generate long-term political stability.

In this context, public perception becomes a decisive factor. The longer the absence of concrete and verifiable results persists, the greater the likelihood of growing domestic pressure for accelerated political and institutional change under democratic and human rights guarantees.

Recommendations to Venezuelan Society

1. Maintain the demand for a verifiable presidential electoral timetable as a central condition for democratic recovery.

Venezuelan society should continue, in a peaceful, pluralistic, and sustained manner, to demand a public, transparent, and verifiable electoral timetable that enables the restoration of popular sovereignty. Such a timetable should begin with free, competitive presidential elections under independent international observation, and should include the renewal of the National Electoral Council (CNE), the updating of the Electoral Registry, and effective mechanisms for the participation of Venezuelans both inside and outside the country.

2. Demand guarantees for political participation free from reprisals

Elections will lack legitimacy if arbitrary detentions, threats, political disqualifications, judicial persecution, or restrictions against political leaders, activists, journalists, and citizens persist. Society must demand conditions that allow people to participate, organize, express themselves, run for office, and vote without fear of reprisals, including the full release of political prisoners, the dismissal of criminal cases used for political control, and the repeal of laws that obstruct the full exercise of the right to participation.

3. Take advantage of partial openings to rebuild trust and strengthen society's democratic capacities.

The repression that followed July 28 seriously undermined the interpersonal and organizational trust necessary for collective action. Democratic reconstruction will depend not only on institutional reforms or political agreements, but also on society's ability to rebuild bonds of cooperation, solidarity, and organization. The partial openings observed after January 3 provide an opportunity to strengthen professional associations, trade unions, social organizations, student movements, and community spaces. Given the uncertainty surrounding the evolution of the political process and the possibility of renewed restrictions on civic space, it is essential to take advantage of this window of opportunity to rebuild the country's associative fabric, develop new leadership, and strengthen citizens' capacities for participation and democratic advocacy.

4. Defend the rights of victims against proposals of impunity and forgiveness without justice.

In the current context, narratives have emerged that portray stability, reconciliation, or governability as objectives incompatible with the pursuit of truth and

justice. Venezuelan society must reject this false dichotomy between peace and accountability. Building a sustainable democracy requires recognizing victims, clarifying the human rights violations committed over recent decades, guaranteeing mechanisms for justice and reparation, and promoting effective guarantees of non-repetition. No genuine reconciliation can be built upon silence, forgetting, or impunity. Defending memory and the rights of victims is an indispensable condition for the country's democratic reconstruction.

5. Defend the restoration of constitutional order and reject the normalization of exceptional rule.

Venezuelan society must promote the full restoration of the Constitution as the common framework for resolving political conflicts and rebuilding the country's institutions. The normalization of exceptional mechanisms, discretionary interpretations of the law, or systems of government based exclusively on political agreements weakens legal certainty, erodes democratic legitimacy, and increases citizens' vulnerability to the exercise of power. No sustainable transition can depend indefinitely on temporary arrangements among national or international political actors. Democratic recovery requires restoring the effective force of constitutional norms, strengthening institutional checks and balances, and reaffirming the principle that citizens' rights should not depend on circumstantial political agreements, but on stable, public, and enforceable legal guarantees.



Laboratorio de Paz (LabPaz) is a Venezuelan research and strategic think tank founded in 2012 that works on conflict resolution through democracy, nonviolence, and human rights approaches. Its work focuses on vulnerable communities, promoting the right to peace, the protection of civic space, and the strengthening of civil society organizations.
www.labpaz.org