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Venezuela: The Democratic Unitary Platform (Plataforma Unitaria Democrática, PUD) [Unitary Platform (Plataforma Unitaria, PU)] political alliance, including the parties making up the alliance, its political agenda, structure, and leadership; whether documents are issued to its members; treatment of its members by authorities (2023–February 2025)

1. PUD

The PUD is the main opposition coalition in Venezuela (Al Jazeera 2024-03-26; Crisis Group 2024-01-30).

In an interview with the Research Directorate, an assistant professor at the University of California, Berkeley, who specializes in Venezuelan politics, indicated that the PUD is a coalition of old and new opposition parties (Assistant Professor in California 2025-02-07).

In an interview with the Research Directorate, an assistant professor at the University of Toronto, whose research focuses on the political and economic situation and political parties in Venezuela, stated that the PUD made it possible for the opposition to have a common platform (Assistant Professor in Toronto 2025-02-18).

1.1 Political Alliance

According to the Assistant Professor in California, the PUD is "very broad and diverse" (2025-02-07). Sources indicate that the PUD includes members such as the following: Justice First (Primero Justicia, PJ) [1], Democratic Action (Acción Democrática, AD) [2], Popular Will (Voluntad Popular, VP) (Assistant Professor in California 2025-02-07; Crisis Group 2025-02-07), and A New Time (Un Nuevo Tiempo, UNT) (Crisis Group 2025-02-07). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a senior analyst at International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) indicated that PJ, AD, and UNT are "centrist or social democratic," whereas VP is "further to the right" (Crisis Group 2025-02-07). The same source added that the PUD also consists of another "[h]alf a dozen minor parties" (Crisis Group 2025-02-07).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a program director at the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), who specializes in human rights issues in Venezuela, and who provided information based on WOLA's research and knowledge and consultation with local partners, indicated that the PUD is formed of the following 10 political parties:

- Encuentro Ciudadano
- Copei
- Movimiento Progresista
- Convergencia
- Causa R
- PJ
- VP
- AD
- UNT
- Proyecto Venezuela (WOLA 2025-02-28).

A 2021 article by Crónica Uno, a non-profit Spanish-language online news outlet based in Caracas (SembraMedia n.d.), indicates that the PUD was formed in 2021 from the following:

1. The following regional and national political parties:
"Unidos para Venezuela, Movimiento Republicano, Unidad NOE, Moverse, Movimiento Ecológico, Izquierda Democrática, Aprisal, Migato, Guillermo UNE, Sociedad, Vanguardia Popular, Camina, Cuentas Claras, Nuvipa, Bandera Roja, Alianza Lápiz, Fuerza Liberal, Partido Centro Democrático, URD [Unión Republicana Democrática], MDI [Movimiento Democracia e Inclusión], Parlinve, Goajiraven, PAM, Convergencia, Tison, Buscando Soluciones, DSM [Dignidad Social Monaguense], Fiel, Gente Emergente, Proyecto Venezuela, La Causa R, Encuentro Ciudadano, MPV [Movimiento por Venezuela], Copei, AD, PJ, VP, UNT, Movimiento Zulia Humana, [and the] MEP [Movimiento Electoral del Pueblo]";
2. The Unity Parliamentary Group (Fracción Parlamentaria de la Unidad) in the National Assembly (Asamblea

Nacional), including approximately 80 members who had been elected from 2016 to January 2021;

3. The Free Venezuela Broad Front (Frente Amplio Venezuela Libre, FAVL), a coalition formed in 2018 by movements of women, students, workers, professionals, religious groups, unions, political parties, and youth, among others;
4. The Citizen Conference for the Restoration of Constitutional Order (Conferencia Ciudadana para el Restablecimiento del Orden Constitucional), which emerged in 2020 and is made up of movements such as Petroleum People (Gente del Petróleo); some unions in Guayana and Zulia; pensioners and retirees; representatives of the Venezuelan Medical Federation (Federación Médica Venezolana), the National Agri-Food Platform (Plataforma Agroalimentaria Nacional) and the Military Institutional Front (Frente Institucional Militar), and political parties (Crónica Uno 2021-04-21).

1.2 Political Agenda

Sources indicated that opposition parties in Venezuela have "much internal incoherence and fragmentation" (Assistant Professor in Toronto 2025-02-18) or do not have a "unified stand" (Assistant Professor in Europe 2025-02-12). According to Al Jazeera, the PUD brings together different political views and aims to "improve relations with the West" and improve the country's conditions which would allow for the return of the Venezuelan diaspora (2024-07-26). According to the Senior Analyst, the PUD's objective is the "restoration of a multi-party constitutional democracy" (Crisis Group 2025-02-07). The PUD's objectives, as cited by media sources in 2021, include the following:

1. Addressing the humanitarian needs, the economic crisis, the impact of COVID-19, and the social, ethical, and human rights crisis.
2. Restoring constitutional order, the rule of law, human rights, justice, peace, freedom of civilian and military political prisoners, and democratic values.

3. Conducting free, fair, and transparent elections.
4. Promoting national reconciliation (Crónica Uno 2021-04-21; TalCual 2021-04-21).

1.3 Structure

According to the Assistant Professor in California, the PUD has a "very informal" structure (2025-02-07). The Senior Analyst indicated that decisions of the PUD "are taken by consensus" and that "major parties carry more weight in the internal voting system" (Crisis Group 2025-02-07). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.4 Leadership

The PUD is led by María Corina Machado (Assistant Professor in California 2025-02-07; Infobae 2025-01-23). According to the WOLA Program Director, "opposition leader María Corina Machado" joined the PUD after the presidential elections of July 2024 in her "personal capacity," and noted that her political party, "Vente Venezuela, is not a part of the PUD" (WOLA 2025-02-28). Sources indicate that in June 2023, opposition presidential candidate María Corina Machado was banned from running for office (Al Jazeera 2024-03-22; Freedom House 2024-02-29, Key Developments), "due to her support of US sanctions" (Al Jazeera 2024-03-22) or "on spurious grounds, which included purported irregularities in a declaration of assets she made in 2015 while a legislator" (Freedom House 2024-02-29, Key Developments). Sources state that María Corina Machado has been in hiding (Assistant Professor in California 2025-02-07; AFP 2025-01-27). Edmundo González Urrutia was the candidate of the PUD for the 2024 presidential elections

(Al Jazeera 2024-09-09; Inter-American Dialogue n.d.). For information on the July 2024 presidential elections, see Response to Information Request VEN202202 of February 2025.

The Program Director of WOLA, who received information from PUD representatives, stated that María Corina Machado and Edmundo González Urrutia were "incorporated" in the decision process of the PUD due to the "broad support" they receive and the number of votes they obtained in the primary and presidential elections, respectively (WOLA 2025-02-28). Representatives of the PUD also told WOLA that the vote of either María Corina Machado and Edmundo González Urrutia, along with the vote of 7 out of 10 of the political party members, is required for "political decisions, as well as decisions regarding public statements," and that the PUD has "an internal rule stating that no single party—nor either of the two aforementioned leaders—can unilaterally claim to represent the coalition" (WOLA 2025-02-28). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sources indicate that Omar Barboza of the UNT party is the Coordinator for the PUD (Crisis Group 2025-02-07) or that Omar Barboza is the Executive Secretary of the PUD (VOA 2024-04-19; Diario de Los Andes n.d.).

2. Documents Issued to Members

Sources indicate that there are no membership documents issued to members of the PUD (WOLA 2025-02-28; Crisis Group 2025-02-07). According to the WOLA Program Director, for the July 2024 presidential elections, "poll watchers were given PUD credentials" (WOLA 2025-02-28). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the

sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3. Treatment of Members by Authorities

According to the Senior Analyst, leaders and members of parties constituting the PUD "tend to be treated more or less badly" for criticizing the government rather than being members of the platform (Crisis Group 2025-02-07). Following a request from the organization Defend Venezuela (Defiende Venezuela) [3], the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States (OAS) had urged the Venezuelan authorities to adopt "precautionary measures" "to protect the rights to life and personal integrity of" 3 members of the PUD who "have been subjected to threats, harassment and persecution by state authorities" (OAS 2024-10-22, 1). An article by Efecto Cocuyo, a Venezuelan news source, indicates that in a statement issued in December of 2024, the PUD called for the release of political detainees arrested both before and after the presidential elections and to put an end to [translation] "political persecution" (2024-12-22). In response to a question about the treatment of PUD members, the WOLA Program Director stated that members of the opposition and their supporters are subject to "repression, arbitrary detention, and harassment," as well as "enforced disappearances," by the authorities (WOLA 2025-02-28).

According to the Assistant Professor in Toronto, opposition in Venezuela can be divided into three levels:

1. Top tier: which includes individuals who have global recognition, are "highly educated, outspoken, powerful, and are part of the financial elite," such as María Corina Machado. Persons in this group face "marginalization and regular harassment" by the security forces.
2. Middle tier: which includes those who are "mainly" organizers and parties' functionaries. This group faces

"more repression" as it is seen as "a threat" by the government, is less known internationally, and its members have in the past "participated in attacks against the regime supporters and public institutions."

3. Rank and file persons: which includes regular citizens who have been members of opposition parties for longer or recent periods. Members of this group face harassment in addition to social and economic pressure and threats at work or when trying to access services (2025-02-18). For further information on the political situation in Venezuela, including treatment of political opponents, see Response to Information Request VEN202202 of February 2025.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] For information on the Justice First (Primero Justicia, PJ) [also known as Movimiento Primero Justicia (MPJ)] political party, see Response to Information Request VEN201809 of March 2024.

[2] For information on the Democratic Action (Acción Democrática, AD) political party, see Response to Information Request VEN201518 of March 2024.

[3] Defend Venezuela (Defiende Venezuela) is a human rights NGO that provides training to human rights defenders and represents [translation] "victims" before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the International Criminal Court, and the UN (Defiende Venezuela n.d.).

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Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). 2025-02-28. Correspondence from a program director to the Research Directorate.

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Assistant professor at a university in the US who specializes in political sociology; associate professor emeritus of political science at a university in the US who specializes in comparative politics; professor emeritus of political science at a university in the US whose writings focus on Venezuela and Latin America; professor of political

science at a university in the US whose research focuses on comparative political behavior and public opinion, in particular in Latin America;
professor of political science and law at a university in the US whose research focuses on citizenship, democratization, political economy and foreign policy in Latin America.

Internet sites, including: Atlantic Council; Austrian Red Cross – ecoi.net; Brookings Institution; Carnegie Endowment; CBC; Chatham House; CNN; Council on Foreign Relations; Factiva; Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom; Global Americans; *Journal of Democracy*; NewsRadio Halifax; North American Congress on Latin America; openDemocracy; Política Exterior; *Political Handbook of the World 2022–2023*; *Time*; UN – Refworld; US – Congressional Research Service, Department of State; Washington Office on Latin America; Wilson Center.

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