

Greater Boston's Venezuelan community cautiously hopeful as Democratic lawmakers condemn capture of Maduro

By **Katie Muchnick** and **Jaime Moore-Carrillo** Globe Correspondent and Globe Staff, Updated January 4, 2026, 8:59 a.m.



Protesters affiliated with leftist political groups gathered on Boston Common to decry US actions taken in Venezuela.
JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

Mariangel Aular anxiously followed a news broadcast about the overnight [capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro](#) on her phone as she manned the cash register Saturday at a Venezuelan restaurant in Jamaica Plain.

The 26-year-old Norwood resident, who left Venezuela for the United States about two years ago to escape her [home country's devastated economy](#), welcomed news of Maduro's detention but said she was "nervous" about the developments. For Venezuelans, she said, "Liberty is what we want most."

"For Venezuela to get better, tragedies need to happen," Aular added.

In Boston, some Venezuelans celebrated Maduro's capture, but [wariness about what might follow his removal](#) is keeping their enthusiasm in check. By contrast, Democratic lawmakers took to social media decrying the attack as unconstitutional and reckless.

The United States captured Maduro overnight and transported him to New York. The nighttime attack was accompanied by strikes in Venezuela. The legal authority for the attack was not immediately clear.

At a news conference Saturday morning, President Trump said that the United States is "going to run" Venezuela until a safe transition of power can take place. He invoked the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, which was used to justify US military interventions in Latin America.

Saturday morning, the Justice Department released an indictment of Maduro and his wife for their alleged role in narco-terrorism conspiracy. The indictment accuses Maduro of leading "a corrupt, illegitimate government that, for decades, has leveraged government power to protect and promote illegal activity, including drug trafficking."

In Venezuela, Maduro had been losing support. Protests erupted after the National Electoral Council declared Maduro the winner in the 2024 election, despite Venezuela's opposition party claiming victory. Last year, the leader of Venezuela's opposition party, María Corina Machado, won the Nobel Peace Prize for her struggle to achieve a democratic transition.

Political [experts](#), human rights [organizations](#), and foreign [governments](#) — including the [United States](#) — denounced Maduro's 2024 victory as fraudulent or questioned its credibility.



Although no Venezuelans spoke, according to organizer Meilyn Huq, protesters in Boston denounced Nicolas Maduro's seizure. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

At a different Venezuelan restaurant in Boston, Don Tequeño and Doña Arepa JP, strands of small Venezuelan flags hung from the ceiling. Blown-up portraits of Venezuelan landmarks were plastered across the wall. Three separate mounted TV screens broadcast Spanish-language news updates on Maduro's capture.

Rebeca Aguilar, 63, sat alone and echoed Aular's sentiments.

Aguilar said she left Venezuela in 2018 and now resides in Spain, where she works as a waitress at a hotel. She's in Boston visiting her daughter, who, Aguilar says, helped her escape her home country.

“There was no work,” Aguilar said in Spanish. Accessing basic resources became an ordeal. “Whoever could get out had to leave,” she said.

Aguilar says she’d like to return home now that Maduro is gone, but wants to wait until things stabilize.

Not long before Trump was scheduled to update the world on Maduro’s seizure, restaurant workers turned off the blaring music and upped the volume of the newscast.

A channel showcased a picture apparently depicting a constrained Maduro — eyes covered, ears encased in earmuffs, wearing gray sweats.

Sandra Reinoso, seated in the restaurant, took a photo of the image with her phone.

Reinoso, 33, hails from Barquisimeto, a city about a five-hour drive west from Caracas, the capital. She now lives in Wrentham, she says, having moved to the States nine years ago.

Reinoso, in her telling, left Venezuela soon after graduating from college because of chronic robberies and kidnappings.

“I had constant panic attacks,” Reinoso said in Spanish. “I didn’t feel safe anywhere.”

Reinoso now works as a dental assistant. Like Aguilar and Aular, she sends money back to Venezuela to keep afloat the loved ones who still reside there.

“I’m skeptical,” she said of Maduro’s capture. She didn’t quite know what to think about the event, she said, as it felt so outside the realm of possibility. “I want to see what happens.”



Near the Park Street T stop, protestors held picket signs that read “Free Nicolas Maduro and Cilia Flores,” his wife. Other signs declared “No Blood for Oil.” JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

Meanwhile at the easternmost corner of Boston Common Saturday afternoon, protestors gathered to denounce Maduro’s capture. Some held picket signs that read “Free Nicolas Maduro and Cilia Flores,” his wife. Other signs declared “No Blood for Oil” in bold, black print.

“We are here today because the US government is escalating a war,” said Meilyn Huq, the event’s emcee and a 30-year-old member of the Party for Socialism and Liberation, an organization targeting the negative byproducts of “[destructive capitalism](#),” according to the group’s website.

“Does the US Government have any right to kidnap the president of another nation?” Huq asked. The crowd yelled “No!” in unison. “This is just another criminal act by Trump.”

On Saturday, several Democratic members of Massachusetts's congressional delegation questioned the legality of the United States' overnight attack.

Representative Bill Keating, a member of the House Armed Services and Foreign Affairs committees, said the attack amounted to an illegal, "out-and-out seizure" of the country by the United States.

"It's masqueraded to the American public in the world as some type of law enforcement action, the veneer of which is so thin it's laughable," Keating said in an interview with the Globe Saturday afternoon.

Keating said the operation was not about drugs, but about seizing control of an oil-rich country and replacing its leader.

"The Venezuelan people must be sitting back wondering ... 'are we just replacing one illegitimate leader for another?'" he said. "And indeed, they have [the] right to question that."

Representative Stephen Lynch called the strike "reckless."

"We were reassured by Secretary [Marco] Rubio that no military action would happen with respect to Maduro and with respect to Venezuela without them coming back to Congress first, so this was a surprise early this morning when I got notice that this operation had gone forward," Lynch said in an interview with the Globe.

Lynch said that Maduro is a "legitimate target" as part of an ongoing legal process, but that attacking without congressional approval means the operation could have gone badly for US soldiers.

"It seems to have ended well, without loss of life, although I'm not fully briefed on it yet," Lynch said. "However, there's a level of recklessness that went on here that is definitely troubling."

In Saturday's news conference, Trump added that Congress was not notified of the attack in part because "Congress has a tendency to leak."

Other Massachusetts lawmakers echoed Lynch's and Keating's comments on social media.

"The Trump administration has been lying to Congress and the American people while carrying out illegal attacks on dozens of Venezuelan boats, seizing oil tankers, and now, conducting a large-scale land strike. This is what dictators do," Senator Ed Markey said in a statement Saturday.

Representative Jim McGovern called the strike "unjustified" and "illegal." Representative Seth Moulton compared it to regime change to Iraq, saying, "Wars cost more than trophies."

"The president has no authority to strike Venezuela, no strategy for a democratic transition, and no credibility that he won't just pardon the criminal Maduro like he did the Honduran president," Representative Jake Auchincloss said on X.

Still, Venezuelans in Boston were waiting for what comes next.

"I feel optimistic. This is a great step forward; this was something unthinkable," said Reinoso, the dental assistant. "But I also feel afraid."

Wars, she said, irrespective of the greater good they produce, always have costs. "The people are going to suffer."

Material from the Associated Press was used in this report.

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