



Manifesto for the Non-Recognition of the Conduct of the United States of America

Legal, ethical and political grounds for a principle that admits no exceptions — not even at the top

To whom it is addressed

To the governments of the Member States of the European Union and to all States party to the Charter of the United Nations. To international institutions. To every citizen who believes that the law applies to all or applies to none. And to those who think that defending international legality when the victim of the violation is an autocrat means defending the autocrat. It does not. It is the only moment in which the defence of legality proves itself sincere.

This manifesto is the fourth of a series. The first concerns the conduct of the State of Israel; the second, that of the Russian Federation; the third, the genocide in Sudan and those who arm it. All apply the same legal framework — the non-recognition obligations under ARSIWA Articles 40-41 — to different violators, from different alignments. This fourth document closes the circle in the only coherent way possible: by applying the principle to the very top of the system. The other manifestos are available at iwillnotlookaway.org.

I. Premise

In the night of 3 January 2026 the United States of America attacked Venezuela. Air raids on Caracas and three states of the country, air defences dismantled, communications cut, civilian and military casualties. At 2:01 a.m. special forces reached the residence of President Nicolás Maduro and took him from his bedroom, together with his wife, while they slept. Transferred to a military vessel, then to a New York prison, to be tried by an American federal court on drug-trafficking charges.

No international warrant. No Security Council authorisation. No Venezuelan armed attack to respond to. Not even the authorisation of the American Congress. An operation named,

with involuntary precision, "Absolute Resolve": absolute — that is, by definition, unbound from any constraint.

The American president then declared that the United States would "govern the country until the transition". The de facto administration of a sovereign State, announced at a press conference from a private resort.

This manifesto is not born of sympathy for the Venezuelan regime — which deserves none. It is born of the principle that founds the other three documents of this platform: no State is above international law. And if the principle does not hold for the most powerful, it never was a principle: it was merely the rule that the most powerful imposed on others.

II. The precedent that demolishes the castle

Among all the violations of that night, one has structural consequences that exceed the Venezuelan case.

International law grants sitting heads of State absolute personal immunity from the jurisdiction of other States. It is not a privilege of the powerful: it is the keystone that prevents every State from "arresting" other countries' leaders on the basis of its own domestic laws and its own charges. The International Court of Justice established this unambiguously in the Arrest Warrant case (Congo v. Belgium, 2002): a sitting head of State may be tried only by an international court — as the ICC for Putin or Netanyahu — never by the domestic justice of another country.

The United States did exactly this: they applied their own criminal code to a foreign head of State, removed him by force from his territory while bombing its capital, and will try him before one of their own district courts.

The consequences do not concern Maduro. They concern everyone. If the precedent stands, every power can do the same: China can "arrest" a president its laws qualify as a terrorist; Russia can "arrest" a leader its code qualifies as an extremist. The charge is irrelevant — every domestic legal system can produce one. What was demolished on 3 January was not a regime: it was the barrier separating international law from the law of the strongest.

Add the context: since September 2025, more than thirty military strikes against vessels in the Caribbean and the Pacific, over one hundred and ten people killed without trial, without formal charges, without a single court ever having verified their guilt. Extrajudicial executions in international waters, normalised as the "war on drug trafficking".

III. Legal framework violated

- Article 2(4) of the UN Charter — prohibition of the use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of another State. Article 51 (self-defence) is inapplicable: Venezuela had neither attacked nor threatened the United States
- Personal immunity of sitting heads of State — customary international law; ICJ, Arrest Warrant of 11 April 2000 (Congo v. Belgium, 2002)
- Principle of non-intervention — ICJ, Nicaragua v. United States (1986): the judgment that condemned the United States precisely for the unlawful use of force against a Latin American State, and which Washington ignored then as now
- Prohibition of extrajudicial executions — International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Art. 6; the right to life and to a trial
- Prohibition of administering another's territory without title — the announcement of "governing the country until the transition" amounts to a de facto occupation devoid of any legal basis

IV. Legal basis for non-recognition

The Articles on State Responsibility (ARSIWA, ILC/UN 2001), Articles 40 and 41, oblige all States, in the face of serious breaches of peremptory norms: not to recognise as lawful the situation created by the breach; not to render aid or assistance in maintaining it; to cooperate to bring it to an end through lawful means.

The prohibition of aggression is a peremptory norm (*jus cogens*). It was when Russia violated it. It is when the United States violate it. The obligation of non-recognition does not distinguish between likeable and unlikeable aggressors, between allies and adversaries: this indistinction is precisely what makes it law.

A precise consequence follows: no State may recognise as legitimate a Venezuelan government installed under foreign military administration, nor the jurisdiction of an American domestic court over a head of State captured through an act of aggression.

V. The test of consistency — the loudest silence

When Russia invaded Ukraine, the European Union reacted within hours: unanimous condemnation, sanctions, frozen reserves, extraordinary summits.

When the United States bombed Caracas and abducted a head of State, the European Union reacted thus: the High Representative commented that Maduro "lacks legitimacy". The Commission President spoke of a "peaceful transition" without naming the operation

— as if Maduro had been carried away by the wind. One European foreign minister quipped: "couldn't have happened to a better person". No condemnation. No sanctions. No extraordinary summit. A single European head of government invoked international law with clarity — and the formal condemnation of the aggression came from Lula, Petro, Boric, from Mexico: from the Global South, not from the Europe that proclaims itself the mother of law.

That Maduro was an autocrat is true, and it is irrelevant. International law does not protect leaders because they are good: it protects them because the alternative is that every power becomes judge, policeman and executioner of the others. The Europe that stays silent on Caracas after sanctioning Moscow certifies before the entire world that its compass is not the law: it is the identity of the aggressor.

And here the damage reaches the bottom. Because the United States are not just any State: they are the architect of the 1945 order, the power that wrote the San Francisco Charter, established the Nuremberg tribunals, preached the "rules-based order" for eighty years to every corner of the planet. When the guarantor of the system violates it with impunity — and its allies applaud or stay silent — it is not a government in Caracas that falls: it is the very argument with which the West justified its moral leadership. Every future Western condemnation of someone else's aggression will be born dead, with Caracas as the ready answer. The West's presumed ideological supremacy no longer holds: not because its principles were wrong, but because it has shown it does not believe in them.

VI. Concrete measures

1. The formal condemnation of the aggression of 3 January 2026 as a violation of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, in the same forms used for the Russian aggression against Ukraine
2. The non-recognition of any Venezuelan government installed under foreign military administration or tutelage, until the Venezuelan people can express themselves in free elections without occupiers
3. The non-recognition of the jurisdiction of US domestic courts over a head of State captured through an act of aggression, and the demand for his transfer to an international jurisdiction for the crimes he must answer for — which exist, and deserve a legitimate trial
4. An independent international inquiry into the extrajudicial executions at sea and the civilian victims of the raids
5. The application of these same standards to every State, whatever its geopolitical weight — because a law that stops before the strongest never existed

VII. Fundamental distinction

This manifesto is not a defence of Nicolás Maduro. His regime repressed dissent, hollowed out institutions, stole an election: the opposition's victory in 2024 is documented, and the repression that followed is a disgrace for which Chavismo answers before history and — hopefully — before a legitimate court. Nor is it a manifesto against the American people, whose own press called the operation illegal, and whose Congress was not even consulted.

It is against a method. Defending the immunity of an indefensible head of State is the supreme test of the sincerity of those who believe in the law: anyone can defend legality when it protects the innocent. The principle proves itself when it also protects those we despise — because that is the moment it stops being convenience and becomes civilisation.

Final declaration

I do not recognise as lawful the aggression of 3 January 2026 against Venezuela. I do not recognise the abduction of a sitting head of State as a "police operation". I do not recognise the foreign administration of a sovereign State as a "transition". I do not grant the most powerful the right to do what it condemns in others. And I note: those who built the castle of international justice are demolishing it from within, while Europe looks elsewhere. This manifesto exists so that someone puts on record that not everyone looked elsewhere. Because the law applies to all, or it applies to none.

Legal references

- Charter of the United Nations, Arts. 2(4), 51
- ICJ, Arrest Warrant of 11 April 2000 (DR Congo v. Belgium), 2002 — immunity of sitting heads of State
- ICJ, Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States), 1986
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), Art. 6
- ARSIWA (ILC/UN 2001), Arts. 40-41
- Statement of the UN Secretary-General, 3 January 2026 ("dangerous precedent")
- Joint declaration of the governments of Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay and Spain, January 2026