Venezuela wins seat on UN Human Rights Council; US brands it an ‘embarrassment’

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[Venezuela](https://www.foxnews.com/politics/venezuela-human-rights-abusers-on-u-n-human-rights-council) on Thursday won a seat on the controversial U.N. Human Rights Council -- a move that the U.S. quickly branded “an embarrassment” and further proof that its decision last year to leave the body last was the right one.

There had been a last-ditch push in the last 10 days by Costa Rica to deny them the seat, but Venezuela took nine more votes, securing the seat with 105 votes.

Venezuela has descended into economic and social ruin as dictator Nicolas Maduro has been engaged in a tug-of-war for power with Juan Guaido, the U.S.-recognized president since elections this year.

The socialist country has been dogged by malnutrition, disease and violence, as well as accusations that the government is engaged in money laundering and supporting terrorism. In his address to the U.N. General Assembly last month, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that four million people have fled the country, which he called "one of the largest displacements in the world."

When President Trump addressed the U.N. General Assembly, he used the Human Rights Council’s own report to condemn the Venezuelan dictatorship and cited some of the country’s appalling human rights abuses.

“According to a recent report by the United Nation Human Rights Council," Trump said, "women in Venezuela stand in line for 10 hours every day waiting for food, over 15,000 people have been detained as political prisoners, modern day death squads are carrying out thousands of extrajudicial killings."

The United States, which left the body last year over concerns about its membership, condemned the election on Thursday and cited it as further justification for its own departure.

“Today’s election of the former Maduro regime in Venezuela to the UN Human Rights Council is an embarrassment to the United Nations and a tragedy for the people of Venezuela,” U.N. Ambassador Kelly Craft said in a statement.

I am personally aggrieved that 105 countries voted in favor of this affront to human life and dignity,” she said. “It provides ironclad proof that the Human Rights Council is broken and reinforces why the United States withdrew.”

Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon was also critical of the election, pointing to both Venezuela’s election to the body as well as that of Libya as proof that the council has gone astray.

"The Human Rights Council continues to abandon human rights and is now in the business of protecting dictators and war crimes,” he said.

The election of countries with poor human rights records is an almost annual occurrence in Geneva. Last year countries including Somalia, Eritrea, Cameroon, Bangladesh, Philippines and Bahrain were elected to the body. They joined countries such as Cuba, China, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Human rights groups also criticized the election. Anne Bayefsky, director of the Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust, told Fox News that the decision was a "clear cut validation of the Trump administration's decision to get off the Council, to withhold funding, and to refuse to legitimize it."

"With today's result, less than half of the members of the U.N.'s top human rights body are fully free democracies," she said.

In New York on Thursday, Colombian U.N. Ambassador Guillermo Fernandez de Soto told Fox News that Venezuela’s victory was a “sad day,” but praised Costa Rica for picking up 96 votes in just ten days. He also suggested that rules need to be changed for election to the Human Rights Council.

“That’s the rule of the United Nations, maybe we should think for the future we will have to change the rule of simple majority to get in the council,” he said. “But you know this is the way the United Nations works.”