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**FEATURED Q&A**

# Will Maduro Finish His New Six-Year Term in Venezuela?

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro was sworn in Friday for his third term, following the country's widely criticized July election. // File Photo: Facebook Page of Nicolás Maduro.

**Q Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro was sworn in on Friday for a third term following the country's disputed July election. Just days before, Edmundo González, whom Venezuela's opposition says won more than twice as many votes as Maduro, traveled to locations including Buenos Aires where he met with Argentine President Javier Milei and Washington where he met with outgoing U.S. President Joe Biden. What did González accomplish during the visits? What was the significance of the protests in Venezuela the day before Maduro's swearing-in? How likely is Maduro to finish his new six-year term?**

**A Tamara Taraciuk Broner, director of the Peter D. Bell Rule of Law Program at the Inter-American Dialogue:** "While a democratic transition in Venezuela looks naïve with top leadership determined to cling to power by ramping up brutal repression to unprecedented levels, it is not impossible. A transfer of power will not be easy nor quick—and it is certainly not guaranteed—but it may happen if key steps are taken. The opposition's achievement was not only winning the election, but also proving its victory. Despite spiraling violence to crush dissent, the Venezuelan people bravely took to the streets last Thursday to call for their popular will to be respected. María Corina Machado was abducted after the demonstrations and then let go, evidencing internal disputes within the regime. Edmundo González Urrutia is the legitimately elected president of Venezuela and the only one who should take office. Attendees at Maduro's unsurprising closed-door swearing-in included a selected group of loyalists and the region's dicta-

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**TODAY'S NEWS**

POLITICAL

## More Than One Million People Displaced in Haiti: United Nations

More than one million people are internally displaced in Haiti, the U.N. International Organization for Migration said today.

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BUSINESS

## Tether Planning to Move HQ to El Salvador

Tether is moving its headquarters to El Salvador, said the cryptocurrency's CEO. Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele has embraced cryptocurrencies.

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ECONOMIC

## Sheinbaum Unveils Plan to Cut Mexico's Imports From China

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum unveiled a plan to reduce imports from China. U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has described Mexico a back door for Chinese imports to the United States.

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Sheinbaum // File Photo: @Claudiashein via X.

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POLITICAL NEWS

# More Than 1 Million People Displaced in Haiti: U.N.

More than one million people are internally displaced in Haiti amid the country's devastating gang violence, according to data released today by the United Nations' International Organization for Migration, or IOM. Many people have been displaced multiple times, the IOM said, adding that "children bear the greatest burden of displacement, making up over half of the displaced population." The figure marks a more than threefold increase in the past year. The number of internally displaced people in Haiti stood at 315,000 in December 2023, said the IOM. "Haiti needs sustained humanitarian assistance right now to save and protect lives," IOM Director General Amy Pope said in a statement. "We must work together to address the root causes of the violence and instability that has led to so much death and destruction," she added. Most of Haiti's displaced people originate in Port-au-Prince, with many seeking refuge in provinces away from the capital, the IOM said.

ECONOMIC NEWS

# Brazil's Solar Energy Capacity Exceeds 52 Gigawatts

Domestic solar energy capacity in Brazil exceeded 52 gigawatts at the end of 2024, Brazilian private solar industry advocacy non-profit ABSOLAR said in a report released on Jan. 9, PV Magazine reported. Brazil now has the sixth-largest solar capacity in the world and joins China, the United States, Germany, India and Japan in surpassing 50 gigawatts in installed solar capacity, The Rio Times reported. As of the end of 2024, roughly two-thirds of Brazil's solar capacity comes from distributed generation, such as small-scale community and individual rooftop solar energy installations, according to ABSOLAR. The remaining third of Brazil's solar capacity, as measured by annual power output, comes from large-scale solar facilities. Last year, solar energy became Brazil's second-largest source of power generation, surpassing wind energy, accounting for 21 percent of the country's electricity matrix, PV Magazine reported. Only hydropower provides more electricity at 60 percent of national power supply, according to 2023 data from the International Energy Agency. ABSOLAR executive director Rodrigo Sauaia warned in last week's report that roadblocks are ahead for Brazil's solar industry, pointing to the government's decision in November to raise import tariffs on solar modules from 9.6 percent to 25 percent, which solar developers have argued will slow the pace of new installations, PV Magazine reported. Brazil "needs to advance public policies, incorporating good legal and regulatory practices, to better leverage the potential of solar energy in Brazil's social, economic and environmental development," Sauaia said.

BUSINESS NEWS

# Crypto Firm Tether Planning to Move HQ to El Salvador: CEO

Cryptocurrency firm Tether will relocate its corporate headquarters from the British Virgin Islands to El Salvador after recently obtaining a digital banking license in the Central American country, the company's CEO, Paolo Ardoino, told Reuters in an interview Monday. El Salvador "has become an ideal destination for companies leading the digital finance revolution," Tether said Monday in a statement. Ardoino said the company will hire around 100 new employees in El Salvador after establishing its headquarters there, Reuters reported. Tether markets so-called "stablecoins," which are backed by real-world assets and aim to keep a one-to-one ratio with fiat currencies. Stablecoins are designed to limit an individual's

NEWS BRIEFS

## Mexico's Sheinbaum Unveils Plan to Cut Imports From China

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum on Monday unveiled a plan to reduce imports from China, seemingly addressing a demand of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, Reuters reported. The plan includes increasing local supply chain capacities for industries that rely on Chinese imports, in addition to cutting red tape to increase foreign direct investment for manufacturing in Mexico. Sheinbaum also defended the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade agreement, describing it as an advantage in the context of economic competition with China.

## Peruvian Court Dismisses Money Laundering Charges Against Fujimori

A Peruvian federal court on Monday threw out money laundering charges against Keiko Fujimori, three-time presidential candidate and daughter of former President Alberto Fujimori, Infobae reported. Keiko Fujimori was accused of leading a criminal organization that funded her 2011 and 2016 campaigns; she faced more than 30 years in prison for the charges, which a federal judge annulled on Monday.

## Chile's Lower House Approves Higher Electricity Subsidies

Chile's lower house of Congress on Monday approved legislation to boost electricity subsidies for low-income households but removed text that would have raised those funds from small-scale power providers, Bloomberg News reported. President Gabriel Boric's government is considering replacing the proposed changes to fee structures for small power providers, which critics say would have disproportionately hurt Chile's growing solar energy industry, according to Bloomberg News.

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exposure to price swings by linking a cryptocurrency's value to traditional currencies such as the U.S. dollar and the Mexican peso, Reuters reported. In the middle of 2024, Tether had direct and indirect ownership of approximately $100 billion in U.S. Treasury bills, Bloomberg News reported. Amid steadily rising stablecoin markets, Tether recorded greater net profit in the third quarter of 2024 than New York-based asset manager BlackRock, according to public company data. El Salvador has tried to become a hub for cryptocurrencies under the tenure of President Nayib Bukele, who made Bitcoin legal tender in the country in 2021, Reuters reported. "Welcome home," Bukele said Monday in a post to X in response to news of Tether's relocation.

## Change Global Seeking to Double Exposure in Brazil

U.S.-based hedge fund Change Global Investment wants to double its exposure in Brazil and cut investments in China, the firm's director told Bloomberg News in an interview on Monday. The company is betting on Brazil's currency and stocks to recover from a selloff at the end of last year; it plans to buy additional Brazilian stocks and increase portfolio exposure in the country to 15 percent, up from its current level of 7 percent, Bloomberg News reported. "Today there is nothing like what we are seeing in Brazil elsewhere," said Thea Jamison, Change Global Investment's managing director. Brazilian stocks tumbled at the end of 2024 as the real slid to its weakest ever level relative to the dollar in December, Reuters reported. Foreign investors withdrew $5.3 billion from Brazilian stocks in 2024, according to Bloomberg News. "I don't think the situation is as bad as it's reflected in the market," Jamison said regarding Brazil's macroeconomic stability. The firm, headquartered in Camas, Wash., believes that Brazilian investors' unease will be short-lived, Jamison added. Change Global Investments views Brazilian stocks as more stable and potentially lucrative than those in China, which currently make up 12 percent of its portfolio, Bloomberg News reported.

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tors, but no democratic leader. Likeminded governments have consistently failed to recognize Maduro's victory (although key countries like Colombia and Brazil have done so with contortions). A series of sanctions issued by the United States, United Kingdom, European Union and Canada sent an important symbolic message but failed to target together key actors and businesses. To break the current cycle of violence, which contributes to increasing insecurity and migration in the region, it is essential to avoid yet another wave of Venezuela fatigue that will perpetuate Maduro in power. This will only be possible through a two-pronged approach, coordinated by the international community with Venezuela's democratic leadership. It must increase the cost of repression—including by sanctioning regime officials' family members, economic enablers and limiting access to markets that will have a disruptive effect on the regime's ability to operate. Incentives should be offered to key people in power—including within security forces—to show them they can avoid prison and enjoy a better future if they turn their back on those at the top who must respond for the corruption and crimes against humanity committed in Venezuela."

**Miguel Pizarro, commissioner for foreign relations at Venezuela's National Assembly:** "The Venezuelan people, even in one of the world's most repressive contexts, have shown admirable courage by taking to the streets last week to demand their rights. These actions have exposed the fragility of a regime weaker than ever and reaffirmed Venezuelans' unwavering determination for democratic change. The abduction of María Corina Machado during last Thursday's protests highlights the regime's desperation and brutality. This attack underscores the urgent need to increase international pressure and isolation, as normalizing authoritarianism or human rights violations would only deepen the humanitarian crisis and force more Venezuelans into exile. The international community has played a crucial role in this process, but stronger coordination among key actors is essential. The coordinated actions of the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom and Canada have demonstrated the importance of firm and strategic measures. Expanding this approach to include more countries in the region will be key to effectively weakening the regime. Venezuelans have already made their voices heard at the ballot box, mobilized in the streets, and are ready to move forward with rebuilding. Regime change in Venezuela will benefit not only the country but also the region and hemisphere by striking at illicit economies and armed groups, while opening the door to new energy, industrial and trade opportunities. Venezuela is ready for transition."

**Carrie Filipetti, founder and president of the Vandenberg Coalition:** "There are a few ways to look at the events of Jan. 10. On the one hand, that the world has allowed it to come this far is a disgrace. In response to Maduro swearing himself in for yet another illegal term, disappearing opposition leaders and threatening their family members, the international community issued a handful of individual sanctions. While that's better than nothing, there remains much to be done—not least of which, revoking licenses that continue to provide a lifetime to the regime. It is not just Venezuela's democracy that is at stake here; with continued fecklessness and an unwillingness to stand up for itself, democracies around the world will continue to fall. On the other hand, there is a silver lining. The opposition showed more unity than ever before by bringing Venezuelans to the streets. Their tour to major capitals and warm reception in the United States by Democratic and Republican leaders is a reflection of the leadership of María Corina Machado and Edmundo González. Thanks to the opposition's preparedness and her own personal strength, María Corina was quickly

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released after being detained by Maduro officials. The only foreign heads of state who attended Maduro's 'inauguration' were dictators, showing that the regime is more isolated than ever. His pre-taped inauguration—complete with fake applause—shows his own waning confidence. The regime is scared. Jan. 10 was indeed a lost battle for the friends of democracy, but these signals of Maduro's weakness suggest greater success in the larger war."

**Beatriz Borges, executive director of CEPAZ:** "During Edmundo González Urrutia's international visits and tours, significant progress was made in the fight for Venezuelan democracy. González Urrutia has faced persecution and exile following the July 28 election. Through meetings in countries such as Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Panama and the United States, he has gained international recognition from presidents and the Venezuelan diaspora, consolidating a message of pressure and hope to ensure that Jan. 10 becomes a day for democracy, not authoritarianism. In parallel, protests in Venezuela have been fundamental, even in a context of repression, harassment and enforced disappearances, such as the case of human rights defender Carlos Correa. Civil society, both inside and outside the country, continues to mobilize to demand freedom, democracy and the validation of the will expressed on July 28. These actions reaffirm the need for a peaceful political change and a democratic transition. Regarding the likelihood of Maduro completing a new six-year term, that will depend on the level of international pressure, internal mobilization and possible fractures within the regime. Without legitimacy, his government will face global isolation and growing internal discontent. In this context, CEPAZ emphasizes the importance of strengthening ties with the international community to guarantee human rights and promote a democratic transition."

**Gabriel Hetland, associate professor of Latin American studies and sociology at the State University of New York at Albany:** "At present, there is little to suggest Maduro faces any serious threat to his rule. While he continues to invoke the memory of Hugo Chávez, his regime appears ever more distinct from his predecessor's. There are two striking differences. First, Maduro's social base has decisively shifted toward capital and away from workers and the popular sectors, which were core to the original Chavista project. The extent of this shift can be seen in Maduro's increasing embrace of classically neoliberal policies such as widespread privatization of state-owned enterprises and the brutal repression Maduro's regime has meted out to popular protests, which occurred just after the stolen July 28 election and over the last several weeks. The second notable difference is Maduro's increasing isolation from leftist allies in Latin America, such as Brazil's Lula and Colombia's Petro, both of whom have been extremely critical of Maduro's atrocious human rights records, with Petro also voicing criticisms of Maduro's economic policies. These shifts are unlikely to weaken Maduro, whose alliances with the military, Russia and China seems firmly entrenched. Much depends on  hat the incoming Trump administration does. Early signs are contradictory, and there is reason to believe Trump may adopt a more transactional approach to Maduro (for example, seeking his support for mass deportations of Venezuelans from the United States) rather than a reprise of the maximum pressure campaign. Edmundo González will win some support in Latin America and Washington, but it seems unlikely González will become a new Juan Guaidó or pose a serious threat to Maduro."

*The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.*

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