

# *Venezuela says U.S. interfering in its presidential elections*

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**Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado participates during a march in Caripito, Monagas State, Venezuela March 28, 2023. (Photo by Reuters)**

Caracas, July 2 (RHC)-- Venezuela says the United States is interfering in its upcoming elections, a day after Washington criticized Caracas for barring an opposition candidate from holding public office for 15

years.

Venezuela's government disqualified opposition candidate Maria Corina Machado from holding office. The country's controller general said in an official statement on Friday that a previous ban on Machado, has been extended because she supported U.S. sanctions against the government of President Nicolas Maduro and the people of her country. She was barred from holding office in 2015 for 12 months.

The U.S. State Department questioned the move to bar Machado, saying Venezuelans should be able to act freely in the 2024 presidential elections. “[The] decision to disqualify Machado from participating in the electoral process deprives the Venezuelan people of basic political rights,” it said.

In a statement on Saturday, Venezuela firmly rejected “the new attempt by the government of the United States to interfere in its internal affairs.” It also defended its actions as a sovereign and independent nation.

The Washington-based Organization of American States (OAS) also rejected the decision to bar Machado. "The regime resorts to disqualifications and proscriptions to cling to power and liquidate any likeness to democracy while it deepens the political, social, humanitarian and economic crisis the country is living through," the OAS said in a statement.

Machado has been disqualified on the basis of "administrative irregularities" during her tenure as a deputy, according to Venezuelan authorities.

She is also accused of backing the parallel presidency of opposition figure Juan Guaidó. Machado, the former lawmaker, described the ban to her supporters as “rubbish” saying that it would not affect her campaign. “It only shows one thing: they know they’re defeated,” she said, referring to the government.

Under the ban, Machado will not be able to register with electoral authorities and therefore run for the presidential election.

Venezuela’s opposition said it will hold primary elections in October in hopes of selecting a single candidate to rival Maduro in the 2024 presidential vote.

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