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Participation in Venezuela's May 25 Regional and Parliamentary Elections Would Legitimize Electoral Fraud

Executive Summary

This brief outlines why participation in Venezuela's upcoming regional elections, scheduled for May 25, 2025, risks legitimizing a political process that has systematically violated the principles of electoral integrity, constitutional order, and democratic accountability. The regime's refusal to accept the verified results of the July 28, 2024, presidential election, despite irrefutable evidence of opposition candidate Edmundo González's victory, further consolidates its autocratic character and deepens the breakdown of constitutional legality. The 2025 electoral cycle is not an opportunity for transition but a continuation of institutional fraud, aimed at consolidating authoritarian power, manufacturing international legitimacy, and obscuring unresolved electoral crimes.

The July 2024 Presidential Election and the Breakdown of Electoral Legitimacy

The July 28, 2024, presidential election was not a democratic contest but a confrontation between a closed authoritarian regime and a mobilized civil society. Despite repression, including the disqualification of María Corina Machado, media censorship, and institutional capture, the opposition mounted a historic campaign. A parallel tally involving over 600,000 trained volunteers, the most technically sophisticated civil audit effort in Venezuelan history, digitized more than 85% of tally sheets, using official data to confirm Edmundo González's victory. The verified results were published as open-source data on a public website accessible to the international community, and more than 20 independent experts and institutions reviewed and validated the findings.

The regime rejected this verifiable outcome and declared Nicolás Maduro the winner using fabricated results, further consolidating the regime's autocratic character and deepening the breakdown of constitutional legality.

International institutions responded accordingly. The Carter Center concluded the election "did not meet the minimum standards for democratic elections," citing the National Electoral Council's (CNE) refusal to publish disaggregated results or allow an independent audit. UN experts echoed these concerns, stating that the elections "lacked transparency and integrity." Opposition actors launched a non-state diplomatic campaign, presenting verified electoral records to democratic governments across Europe and the Americas, leading to widespread non-recognition of the official results.

Following the election, repression intensified. Dozens of local organizers were arrested. Activists faced politically motivated charges, exile, or threats. Human Rights Watch documented over

2,200 arbitrary detentions. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) described these actions as a form of state-sponsored terrorism, characterizing the crackdown as systematic and intended to instill fear, suppress dissent, and dismantle organized democratic resistance.

Structural Irregularities in the 2025 Electoral Cycle

The 2025 regional and parliamentary elections are taking place in a context entirely devoid of the rule of law or electoral credibility. All branches of government, judiciary, legislature, and electoral authority, remain under the firm control of the executive, eliminating any institutional safeguards for electoral integrity. These elections are a direct continuation of the July 2024 fraud. A detailed examination of technical and legal irregularities confirms the absence of material conditions for competitive participation.

Key irregularities include:

1. **Lack of Access to Electoral Registry and Procedures:** The CNE's official website has been offline since July 28, 2024, leaving voters unable to verify their registration status in the national electoral registry (REP), or access basic information such as voting procedures and manuals.
2. **Absence of Announced Voting Districts:** The electoral authority has failed to publicly announce the official voting districts (circunscripciones), creating legal and logistical uncertainty about where and how votes will be cast and counted.
3. **Cancellation of Opposition Ballot Lines:** The CNE annulled multiple opposition parties' ballot lines (tarjetas electorales), including those used in 2024. This undermines electoral continuity and voter ability to identify candidates or parties on the ballot.
4. **Arbitrary Disqualification of Candidates:** Dozens of opposition leaders were barred without due process.
5. **Coercive Preconditions:** The CNE demanded unconditional acceptance of results as a precondition for registration, blocking any legal contestation.
6. **Technical Failures:** From April 6–10, multiple parties were unable to register candidates due to prolonged technical failures in the CNE's automated system.
7. **Judicial Takeover of Parties:** The Supreme Court imposed regime-aligned leadership on opposition parties, enabling fake candidacies.
8. **No Electoral Calendar:** The CNE failed to publish a full electoral calendar in the official government bulletin for publishing laws and regulations (Gaceta Oficial).
9. **Removal of QR Codes from Tally Sheets:** During the May 11 simulation, it was confirmed that the tally sheets lacked QR codes—a key transparency measure used in July 2024 that enabled secure.
10. **Violation of International Law:** The regime included the disputed Esequibo territory as a voting district in the elections despite an ICJ ruling prohibiting it.

11.Repression of Electoral Organizers: Dozens of opposition organizers have been forcibly disappeared or charged with terrorism. Property seizures, raids, heavy fines, and judicial harassment followed, including the targeting of dozens of individuals associated with the Con Venezuela campaign, some of whom were accused of terrorism or conspiracy without due process.

12.Manipulation of Representation: The National Assembly was expanded from 167 to 277 seats with a new 48-seat national list. This violates Article 186 of the Constitution, which ties representation to population, and has led to disproportionate overrepresentation favoring the ruling party.

These irregularities, taken together, form a deliberate strategy of institutional control, not a series of isolated flaws. They reflect an electoral apparatus designed to exclude, neutralize, and simulate, rather than enable, democratic choice.

Regime-Tolerated Opposition as a Tactical Tool

A growing threat to Venezuela's democratic movement is the participation of regime-approved opposition figures in the upcoming elections. These include candidates and parties previously disqualified or inactive, now selectively reauthorized by the CNE—often through the opaque revival of dormant ballot lines. Though framed as pragmatic attempts to preserve political space, these candidacies operate within the same institutions that blocked a verified presidential victory in 2024. Their presence serves to simulate pluralism, relieve international pressure, and reinforce authoritarian control. Even well-meaning participation risks legitimizing exclusionary structures built to absorb dissent and block any real democratic choice.

Why Participation in Venezuela's 2025 Elections Would Legitimize Fraud

Participation in the May 25 elections risks legitimizing the very mechanisms used to dismantle democratic accountability, mechanisms defined by exclusion, coercion, and institutional imbalance. The contrast with July 28, 2024, is clear: that presidential election marked a high-stakes, strategic act of civic mobilization aimed at confronting the regime through a stunning victory. The current process, by contrast, follows a post-electoral crackdown and offers no room for real competition. It is engineered to simulate pluralism, incorporating only regime-approved actors to ease international pressure without yielding actual power.

This system has repeatedly shown itself immune to reform and incapable of meaningful change. In this context, participation risks legitimizing fraud and deepening authoritarian control.

The international community must not mistake orchestrated participation for democratic progress. Doing so would not only validate the regime's strategy of authoritarian simulation but also betray the millions of Venezuelans who risked everything to reclaim their democracy. The way forward is not through normalization of a sham process, but through reaffirming the July 2024 electoral mandate, maintaining diplomatic and economic pressure, and standing unequivocally with those still fighting, at great personal cost, for a free and democratic Venezuela.