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Imperial Greed for Energy

Nicolás Maduro long argued that Venezuela's suffering and the Palestinian struggle were not separate tragedies, but manifestations of the same global crime: imperial domination driven by an insatiable hunger for energy. In speech after speech, Maduro denounced what he described as a shared fate imposed by U.S.-backed aggression—one in which sovereign peoples are stripped of autonomy, subjected to blockades, and punished for possessing resources coveted by global powers. History has now vindicated his warning. Venezuela and Palestine stand as parallel victims of America's predatory pursuit of fossil fuels—oil, gas, and energy control at any cost.

Venezuela and Palestine: A Shared Anti-Imperialist Front

Venezuela's alignment with Palestine was not rhetorical theater or diplomatic opportunism. It was a foundational pillar of Chavismo, inherited from Hugo Chávez and sustained under Maduro. Since assuming office in 2013, Maduro consistently framed Palestine's occupation as inseparable from Venezuela's own siege under sanctions and coercion. Venezuela severed diplomatic relations with Israel in 2009, delivered humanitarian aid during repeated Gaza crises, and denounced Israeli actions as crimes enabled by U.S. power.

Maduro repeatedly described Gaza as a laboratory of collective punishment—mirrored, he argued, by the economic strangulation imposed on Venezuela through U.S. sanctions. He accused Washington and its allies of enabling “genocide” in Gaza while waging “economic terrorism” against Caracas. In a 2024 address, he declared the Palestinian struggle “humanity's most sacred cause,” explicitly linking it to Venezuela's resistance against U.S. attempts to seize control of its oil wealth.

These warnings were dismissed by critics as ideological posturing. Yet events since have rendered them chillingly prescient. Maduro argued that resource-rich nations are not merely pressured, but targeted—through sanctions, proxy conflicts, and direct force—until compliant regimes are installed. In Palestine, he pointed to Israel's blockade of Gaza as a deliberate strategy to deny Palestinians control over their own natural resources, including the Gaza Marine gas field. In Venezuela, the same logic applied to oil. As fossil fuels remain central to geopolitical power despite the rhetoric of energy transition, U.S. interventionism has intensified, transforming Maduro's analysis into lived reality.

Venezuela: Punished for Protecting Its Oil

Venezuela's vast natural wealth has long marked it for foreign predation. With over 300 billion barrels of proven oil reserves—the largest in the world—concentrated largely in the Orinoco Belt, the country represents a prize too valuable for energy-hungry powers to ig-

more. Under Maduro, the state oil company PDVSA resisted U.S. corporate domination, instead partnering with Russia, China, and Iran to develop projects such as Carabobo and Junín.

The response was economic warfare. Beginning in 2017, U.S. sanctions systematically crippled Venezuela's economy, slashing oil production from roughly 2.5 million barrels per day to under one million. Maduro consistently described these sanctions not as tools of democracy promotion, but as instruments of theft—designed to force Venezuela into submission and open its oil fields to U.S. control.

That objective became explicit on January 5, 2026, when U.S. military strikes hit Caracas and Nicolás Maduro was captured. President Trump justified the operation as a campaign against "narco-terrorism," but his own words stripped away any pretense. Speaking at Mar-a-Lago, Trump announced: "We will run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition." He emphasized that U.S. administration of Venezuela "won't cost us a penny," because oil revenues—"the money coming out of the ground"—would reimburse American efforts.

This was not an anomaly. It followed a familiar imperial script, echoing Iraq and Libya, where regime change paved the way for energy access. Maduro's removal, condemned internationally as an act of aggression, confirmed what he had warned for years: Venezuela's oil made it a target. Trump's unapologetic fixation on resource extraction exposed the intervention for what it was—an energy grab disguised as security policy.

Gaza Marine: Palestine's Stolen Future

Palestine's experience follows the same logic. In 2000, the Gaza Marine gas field was discovered roughly 36 kilometers offshore, containing an estimated one trillion cubic feet of natural gas. While modest by global standards, the field represents a lifeline for Palestinian energy independence. Located within Palestinian maritime zones under UNCLOS, Gaza Marine should have transformed Gaza's economy.

Instead, development was strangled. Israeli restrictions, military control, and the ongoing occupation prevented Palestinians from accessing their own resources. Advocates argue that Israel's blockade and repeated military campaigns—backed diplomatically and militarily by the United States—serve not only security aims, but economic ones: denying Palestinians sovereignty over their natural wealth.

Since the October 2023 war, these concerns have intensified. Accusations have mounted that mass displacement in Gaza could facilitate Israeli exploitation of Gaza Marine, integrating it into regional energy networks with U.S. support. Israel's issuance of exploration licenses in adjacent waters in 2023, combined with a \$35 billion gas export deal with Egypt, has fueled claims of deliberate resource theft. Throughout this process, the U.S. has shielded Israel diplomatically, vetoing UN resolutions and prioritizing energy security in the Levant Basin over Palestinian rights.

The parallel with Venezuela is unmistakable. In both cases, sanctions, blockades, and force prevent local populations from benefiting from their own resources, while external powers position themselves to profit.

The Law Shattered

The U.S. intervention in Venezuela and Trump's own statements raise grave legal consequences under international and domestic law.

Venezuela Under Occupation

By openly declaring that the U.S. would "run" Venezuela during a transitional period, Trump established the legal conditions of occupation. Under Article 42 of the 1907 Hague Regulations, occupation exists when territory is placed under the authority of a hostile army exercising effective control. The January 5, 2026 operation—combining military strikes with the forcible removal of Venezuela's head of state—meets this definition, triggering obligations under the Geneva Conventions.

International law is unequivocal: an occupying power may not exploit natural resources for its own benefit. Article 55 of the Hague Regulations limits the occupier to usufruct—temporary administration without depletion of non-renewable resources. Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly prohibits pillage, classifying such exploitation as a war crime under the Rome Statute. Trump's promises that U.S. oil companies would profit from Venezuela's oil, and that revenues would reimburse American costs, signal clear intent to violate these prohibitions.

The Abduction of a Head of State

The capture of Nicolás Maduro compounds these violations. Customary international law, affirmed by the International Court of Justice in the *Arrest Warrant* case (2002), grants sitting heads of state absolute immunity from foreign criminal jurisdiction. Forcibly removing Maduro without consent or extradition violates Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which prohibits the use of force against a state's sovereignty. Legal scholars warn this act invites state responsibility, reparations, and scrutiny under the International Criminal Court, while setting a precedent that erodes diplomatic norms globally.

U.S. Law Ignored

Domestically, the intervention clashes with the War Powers Resolution of 1973. The President may introduce U.S. forces into hostilities only with congressional authorization or in response to a national emergency caused by an attack on the United States. Trump's "narco-terrorism" justification does not meet this standard. No imminent armed attack existed. The operation therefore constituted an unlawful initiation of hostilities, bypassing Congress and echoing controversies surrounding prior interventions such as Libya in 2011.

Palestine and Venezuela: The Same Crime, Different Names

These violations mirror Israel's long-standing exploitation of Palestinian resources. In the West Bank, Israel diverts an estimated 80% of shared aquifer water for settlements and domestic use, severely restricting Palestinian access—another breach of occupation law. In Gaza, Israel's obstruction of Palestinian control over natural gas, combined with its \$35 billion export deal with Egypt signed in December 2025, entrenches economic domination while Palestinians remain dispossessed.

As in Venezuela, occupation persists not merely for security, but for profit.

Conclusion

Maduro's linkage of Venezuela and Palestine was neither exaggeration nor propaganda—it was diagnosis. Both societies, endowed with valuable fossil fuels, have been punished for asserting sovereignty. Both have faced blockades, sanctions, and military force designed to break resistance and facilitate resource extraction. As long as oil and gas underpin global power, imperial greed will continue to masquerade as humanitarian intervention.

Justice demands more than rhetoric. It requires ending occupations, restoring resource sovereignty, and confronting the energy imperialism that drives modern conflict. Maduro may have been silenced, but the truth he articulated endures—and so does the shared struggle he named.