

NOBEL 2025: DEMOCRACY OR SOVEREIGNTY?

FONDEMOS' VIEW:



María C. Machado heading a protest in 2019

We had almost expected to see Donald Trump step onto the stage in Oslo; instead, it will be María Corina Machado who receives the Nobel Peace Prize on 10 December 2025.

An engineer turned civic activist, co-founder of Súmate, opposition MP and later founder of Vente Venezuela, she chose the thankless path of seeking change through the ballot box in a country of sham elections.

Harassment, legal persecution, a brief detention in January 2025: she embodies a **rare steadiness** in a context of mass repression and the exile of millions of Venezuelans.

The Nobel Prize first rewards this courage. But it also acknowledges a strategy: buoyed by her victory in the unity primary and then barred from running, Machado took the initiative to **step aside** in favour of Corina Yoris and later Edmundo González, in order to preserve the electoral path, contain the splintering of an already fragmented opposition, and broaden the coalition. Her camp has worked to document, with tally sheets and hard data, the **lack of legitimacy of those in power**, including through clandestine means of transporting and digitizing the evidence.

This struggle, however, unfolds in a tightly crowded geopolitical landscape. If some alliances do not seem to herald the building of a lasting democracy, who could blame her for taking advantage of the overtures of a neighbour as gigantic as it is threatening, and for grasping **the only hand extended to her**? Machado has publicly embraced her support for U.S. sanctions and for

the pressures directed at the regime which she presents as a way to defend the “Venezuelan people” against a **“criminal organization.”**

This support is already dividing the opposition and feeding the regime’s rhetoric, while the White House, frustrated that Trump has been denied the Nobel, accuses the committee of choosing “politics” over “peace”.

It shows just how much Venezuela’s democratic future remains hostage to other’s agendas. Democracy is measured by a society’s ability to decide for itself. How far can that power be supported by foreign powers **without being emptied of its substance**? CIA-engineered coups have never legitimized the regimes they claimed to save; they have served interests. The Nobel awarded to Machado supports Venezuela’s democratic struggle, but it also underscores the urgency of a transition in which external backing remains a lever, not a tutelage, and in which **popular sovereignty** once again becomes the core of the democratic project.