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Hands off Bolivarian Venezuela! Defend the Embassy Protectors

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Defenders of Venezuelan Embassy rally in May 2019.

Photo: Alex Rubenstein

Washington, D.C. — The Venezuelan Embassy Protectors and their attorneys appeared in U.S. Federal Court before Judge Beryl Howell for preliminary motions Jan. 29. A jury trial for Adrienne Pine, Margaret Flowers, David Paul and Kevin Zeese, arrested at the Venezuelan Embassy on May 16, 2019, is scheduled to begin on Feb. 11.

The federal prosecutors attempted to limit what could be presented to the jury in defense of the Embassy Protectors. From the point of view of the U.S. Justice

Department, the case was cut and dried — the protectors were told to leave the embassy, they knowingly and willfully did not leave, so they were guilty.

It was a victory today that the judge kept that restrictive motion under advisement and did not approve it immediately.

More of the story must and will come out. As U.S. interference against the elected leadership of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela heated up in 2019, even endorsing a self-appointed, U.S.-sponsored, faux president, Juan Guaidó, the struggle boiled over onto D.C. streets, particularly at the Venezuelan Embassy on 30th Street.

As we heard in court today, and as those of us who protected the Venezuelan Embassy inside and outside can attest, the elected government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, led by President Nicolás Maduro, entrusted the embassy to the Embassy Protection Collective with keys and authority. (For more information on the international legal issues involved, read ["U.S. Illegally Evicts Protectors from Venezuelan Embassy"](#) by Marjorie Cohn, deputy secretary general of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers.)

If the coup attempts on the ground in Venezuela had succeeded, Guaidó might have seemed similarly entrenched like the self-appointed, racist “interim” Bolivian president, Jeanine Áñez. But regime change attempts failed and failed again. In frustration that the U.S.-backed, pro-capitalist forces could not win on the ground, agents of the U.S. government illegally seized the Venezuelan Embassy.

The four Embassy Protectors are now being prosecuted to cover up the fundamental injustice of Washington’s regime-change program against the Bolivarian Venezuelan government, which has constructed 3 million homes for poor Venezuelans and continues to move forward, even burdened by an economic blockade by the largest, most powerful capitalist economy, the U.S.

It is not only the oil and mineral wealth that U.S. imperialism seeks to dominate in Venezuela. The goal is to extinguish the example of the late Hugo Chávez and Cuba's historic leader Fidel Castro, who together forged unity across Latin America and the Caribbean in the spirit of Simón Bolívar and José Martí, that of "all for the good of all" and "homeland is humanity." In essence, the prosecution aims to defeat that solidarity spirit growing inside the U.S.

Although the charges against the Embassy Protectors are considered to be misdemeanors, the four each face a \$100,000 maximum fine with one year imprisonment if convicted for "interfering with certain protective functions" of the federal government.

The Embassy Protectors need and deserve our solidarity and support. If you can, come out to court on Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 333 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. For more information, visit DefendEmbassyProtectors.org.

