

**Special Roundtable on Matters Arising from United States' Interventions in  
Venezuela  
Held on Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

In view of recent interventions of the United States in the affairs of some countries around the world, the latest being Venezuela, particularly the arrest of their sitting President, Nicolas Maduro and his wife on January 3, 2026, the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) convened a special roundtable to discuss the development. At the program were Professors of international relations, former ambassadors, public affairs analysts and legal practitioners and experts on international affairs to discuss the nature, circumstances, legal frameworks, prospects and other threats attached to the intervention.

The special roundtable was chaired by the Institute's Governing Council Chairman, Professor Bolaji Akinyemi while the members of the panel included Professors Adele Jinadu, Remi Femi Otubanjo, Agu, Messrs Magnus Onyibe, Femi Ojumu and Kayode Komolafe.

In his introduction, the anchor of the event, Assoc Prof Joshua Bolarinwa, Director of Research at the Institute, mentioned that such intervention from the US had happened in Panama and Iraq and wondered what President arrested by the General, Prof Eghosa Osaghae,



in his opening remarks, opined that the incident sent shockwaves all over the world since it is an alarm signal ticking off. He also suggested that it was a question of distant imperialism and colonialism.

Prof Adele Jinadu, while presenting on the nature of the new world order observed that one question on the minds of people was about who would stop America and this stemmed from the knowledge that Donald Trump is a reflection of tendencies and trends that have often been overlooked in contemporary events. The question of state formation and nation building was raised while stating the conventional functions of a state: enforcement of contracts, monopoly of violence, deterrence of internal and external subversion, protection of lives and property and so on. The implications for state sovereignty was also quizzed since it relates to the autonomy of the state and it is a function of the structure of global politics. However, the US' intervention suggests challenges for multilateralism, and a rule-based world, the issue of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), and the renewed scramble for the minerals in the third world countries.



International Law Provisions and Dimensions was extensively discussed by Dr Rita Agu, a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute. She elaborated that US' intervention in Venezuela represents one of the most contested contemporary cases in international relations where the intersection of law, power, and politics is concerned. From the perspective of international law, the US–Venezuela conflict is hinged on the extent to which US actions complied with or violated established legal principles, parri passu relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter, customary international law, international human rights law, and international economic law. Invoking Articles 2 (4) and 41 of the UN charter, the US has acted in violation since Venezuela did not launch an armed attack against the US and no UN Security Council resolution authorized the use of force against Venezuela. This translates that, an invasion by arresting a political leader or enforcing regime change is illegal under international law. On the question of if universal jurisdiction applied, it is generally limited to genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and torture and Nicolas Maduro is absolved of these. Immunity clause is in support of the Venezuelan leader and so, his arrest violated sovereign equality of states, breached customary international law, and contravened

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jurisprudence.



Mr. Femi Ojumu, a legal practitioner relayed the strategic options for the United Nations and global peace and security. There was a call for reforms that could democratise the UN Security Council, particularly the permanent membership and veto power clauses. Also, the application of *nemo judex in causa sua* in UN Charter is key in the circumstance where the US is the abductor, detainer, prosecutor, judge and jury in the Maduro debacle. There has to also be a legal definition of the parameters of strict observance of the UN Charter and the Duty to Act under international law in exceptional circumstances. It was suggested that the UN HQ should be moved from countries that persistently violate its Charter to send a symbolic message that infractions will not be tolerated. There should also be an enhancement of the adjudicatory capacity of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court in international dispute resolution devoid of politics. The reaffirmation of the Prohibition on the Use of Force, absolute respect for Head-of-State immunity, non-intervention in domestic political affairs, protection of the First Lady under international law, prohibition of extraterritorial arrest operations, preference for peaceful dispute settlement (Article 33 of the UN Charter) and regional and global safeguards against abuse of power are other measures to be instrumentalized by the UN.

On his own part, Prof. Femi Otubanjo, a Research Professor at the Institute presented adroitly on the history and catalysts of US-Venezuela conflict, brilliantly providing in details, the trajectory of the US' military interventions in Latin America. He eloquently cited the Monroe Doctrine as the guiding foreign policy principles for US' active intervention in the Western Hemisphere. Since Venezuela became one of the world's major oil producers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, US oil companies have dominated exploration and exports. At that time, relations were cordial but asymmetrical with the US having major economic leverage. Venezuela aligned with the US during World War II, supplying oil and then, the key tension effectively began when Hugo Chavez elected Venezuelan nationalism versus foreign corporate control. In understanding the catalyst in Maduro's arrest, Prof Otubanjo asserted that the US-Venezuela conflict had progressed from an

initially cooperative relationship based on oil and strategic alignment into a sustained ideological and geopolitical confrontation. Rooted in long standing US hemispheric doctrines and intensified by Venezuela's assertion of resource sovereignty under Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro, the relationship has shifted from conventional diplomacy towards sanctions, warfare and indirect pressure. Beyond a bilateral dispute, the conflict reflects broader struggles over energy, security and global power, particularly in the context of rising competition with China making US-Venezuela relations a microcosm of great power rivalry.

Magnus Onyibe, while discussing the subject matter, intelligently illustrated the extent to which



a state could pursue its national interest amid the constraints of these pursuits due to the contradictions with international laws and conventions. He established that the geo-strategic and economic interest and drive of the US is at full display. Noting that the US is hugely interested in Venezuela's oil reserves which if obtained, translates to cheaper energy in the United States. He likened the situation between the United States led by President Donald Trump against the captured Venezuela's Maduro to the ongoing crisis in Africa between the government and armed forces of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Rwandan-backed M23 rebel forces over mineral resources in eastern DRC. Magnus warned that Nigeria must evolve with the complexities of the evolving global order and that every state must develop capacity and capability to defend and

take care of themselves. He also noted that this continued crisis can lead to the potential death of the United Nations. Kayode Komolafe gave a detailed economic outlook of the current situation as global oil price has shifted which is a direct implication of the uncertainty from the US' Maduro's abduction. Ambassador Joe Keshi in his brief presentation highlighted that a situation such as Maduro's abduction by the US government has been happening and will continue to happen.

It was altogether an insightful and enlightening roundtable session.

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