
USAID-Funded Freedom House Report Casts Leftist Latin American Governments as "Not Free"

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The assessment is unsurprising given the U.S. history of pushing for regime change in leftist governments in Latin America.

The Washington-based, USAID-funded research group Freedom House recently released its annual ["Freedom in the World" report](#), which promoted a definition of "freedom" bent towards U.S. interests in the region. The report cast Venezuela and other left-wing Latin American governments as "not free," while marveling at Brazil's Michel Temer government, which ousted elected President Dilma Rousseff in a parliamentary coup last year.

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"Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro's combination of strong-arm rule and dire economic mismanagement pushed his country to a status of Not Free for the first time in 2016," the organization warns in their report. Its assessment of the country, however, grossly overlooks that the opposition-controlled parliament has long attempted to, and prioritized, ousting Maduro through constitutionally dubious means.

Since the report was published, leaders have spoken out against the conclusion. Uruguay's President Tabare Vazquez quelled the mainstream hysteria surrounding Venezuela, telling Deutsche Welle Tuesday that "there is democracy because there are three powers working."

The Uruguayan president recalled that in that country "there is a functioning judicial power, a legislative power in operation (where the opposition is majority) and there is an executive

branch with its president and vice president ... this is the cold figure of the Venezuelan state."

While the report rebuked Maduro's rule and other leftist governments in the region, such as Nicaragua, Ecuador and Bolivia, it remained unconcerned with Brazil, ranking the country's freedom with a high ranking of 79 in its 100-point ranking system.

"History may judge the impeachment itself. The process impeded government functions by absorbing executive and legislative attention for months, and it did little to resolve a broader corruption crisis," they write of the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff. The report, however, made no mention of Temer regime's [criminalization of social movements](#), its [20-year freezing of social spending](#), and [Temer's history of corruption himself](#).

The assessment is unsurprising given the United States' alignment with the Temer government and history of pushing for regime change in the leftist governments in the region.

While Freedom House claims to be an "independent watchdog organization," it is [financed](#) through "grants from USAID (US Agency for International Development) and U.S. State Department."

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As Venezuela Analysis reported, the NGO has conducted "democracy promotion" projects across the region, funded by USAID. Between 2012 and 2015, the organization received US\$2,160,000 in grants for its activities in Venezuela alone.

[In leaked U.S. State Department documents from 2006](#), U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela William Brownfield explicitly laid out U.S. objectives in the South American nation: "The strategy's focus is: 1) Strengthening Democratic Institutions, 2) Penetrating Chavez' Political Base, 3) Dividing Chavismo, 4) Protecting Vital U.S. business, and 5) Isolating Chavez internationally."