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Putin Congratulates Venezuela's Maduro on Election Victory

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Nicolas Maduro. **Fernando Vergara / AP / TASS**

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday congratulated Nicolas Maduro on his victory in Venezuela's presidential race, as the election results were rejected by the opposition and several foreign countries.

"I am confident that your role as head of state will continue to enhance the progressive development of [Russian-Venezuelan relations]," Putin was quoted as saying in a statement published by the Kremlin.

"Remember that you are always welcome on Russian soil," he added.

Maduro and his opposition rival Edmundo Gonzalez each claimed victory in Venezuela's presidential race on Monday morning following an election campaign marred by claims of voter fraud and intimidation, as well as violence.

Despite pollsters predicting Maduro's loss, the country's electoral council showed him as

taking home 51.2% of the vote, while Gonzales was shown as receiving 44.2%.

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Venezuela has long been an ally of Moscow, and Maduro has repeatedly expressed his support for Putin both before and after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Russia, for its part, has supported Caracas in the face of U.S. sanctions against Maduro's government, whose 2018 election victory went unrecognized by dozens of foreign countries.

Venezuela purchased hundreds of millions of dollars worth of Russian weapons and military equipment during its oil-based economic boom, which ended in 2014.

Moscow and Washington regularly clash over Venezuela, with Moscow claiming in 2020 that the U.S. was attempting to create a pretext for a military intervention there. Maduro accused the opposition of an American-backed plot to assassinate him ahead of the 2024 elections.

AFP contributed reporting.

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