

# The keys to Caracas - Max live on the Judge

Max Blumenthal joins Judge Andrew Napolitano's Judging Freedom to discuss Venezuela, Lebanon, Iran and repression at home.

## #Judge Andrew Napolitano

Undeclared wars are commonplace. Tragically, our government engages in preemptive war, otherwise known as aggression, with no complaints from the American people. Sadly, we have become accustomed to living with the illegitimate use of force by the government. To develop a truly free society, the issue of initiating force must be understood and rejected.

## #Judge Andrew Napolitano

What if sometimes, to love your country, you had to alter or abolish the government? What if Jefferson was right? What if that government is best which governs least? What if it is dangerous to be right when the government is wrong? What if it is better to perish fighting for freedom than to live as a slave? What if freedom's greatest hour of danger is now?

## #Judge Andrew Napolitano

Hi, everyone. Judge Andrew Napolitano here for Judging Freedom. Today is Thursday, May 28, 2026. Max Blumenthal will be with us in just a moment on how the feds can make it a crime to bring medication to children in Cuba, and who's really making money in Venezuela. But first this. Don't you just cringe when people say, "I told you so"? Sorry. I told you gold and silver would reap the benefits due to excessive money printing, inflation, and global uncertainty. It's here, it's happened. Gold and silver have reached all-time highs. Did you call Lear Capital and buy some? It's not too late. Experts are predicting higher prices ahead.

Why? Nothing has changed. Geopolitical chaos, cost-of-living crises, and a weaker dollar are driving central banks to boost their gold reserves. Forecasts suggest gold could hit \$6,000 an ounce and silver \$200 an ounce. Even Morgan Stanley ditched the 60-40 rule for 60-20-20, putting 20% into precious metals. They're getting educated, and you should too. Call the best in the business and the people I trust, Lear Capital. Get their reports. Get the facts. Get some gold and silver. Tell them the judge sent you and get up to \$20,000 in bonus gold or silver. Call 800-511-4620 or go to [learjudgenap.com](http://learjudgenap.com).

## #Judge Andrew Napolitano

Max Blumenthal, welcome here, my dear friend. Thanks for accommodating our schedule, as you always do. What is the latest in Venezuela? Who's making money down there? Which American is calling the shots?

## **#Max**

Well, I'd only accommodate your schedule this early. I don't know if I'd even do anything on my own platform at this time, but it's important to get this all out there. I just published a piece at The Grayzone, scooping The Washington Post, and now Reuters has a piece out about it. I was out ahead of the curve, as we often are on Venezuela.

## **#Judge Andrew Napolitano**

Congratulations to you, as are well deserved.

## **#Max**

Thank you. And we did it with one reporter. They needed three and like a million sources. But, you know, I uncovered much of the same material, maybe more, on Mauricio Claver-Carone, who is said to be sort of the gatekeeper, the one who holds the keys to Caracas. He was the mastermind of all of Donald Trump's hardline policies, which are causing so much chaos in Latin America and have caused mass migration from Latin America. During the first Trump term, when he was hired by John Bolton at the NSC, this Cuban-American regime change zealot initiated over 200 sanctions on Cuba and Venezuela. I mean, he really destroyed or brought the Venezuelan economy down to the point where you saw an unprecedented wave of Venezuelan migrants to the U.S. border.

Then, you know, he comes back in the second Trump administration and oversees the deportation of these Venezuelans who actually came legally under the TPS program to SEACOT, the torture prison in El Salvador. He oversaw the naming of Juan Guaidó as interim president, this whole thing—failed coup attempt in Venezuela. Pretty much every Trump policy toward Cuba and Venezuela that has been destructive has been the brainchild of this figure, Mauricio Claver-Carone, who kind of functions as the mentor of Marco Rubio. He faced a massive scandal when, between the two Trump administrations, he was the president of the Inter-American Development Bank, and he appointed his girlfriend, whose name is Jessica Bedoya, who happens to also double as a CIA agent, as his chief of staff.

No one knew she was his girlfriend. He increased her salary by \$133,000 in a year. A scandal kind of familiar to those who know what Paul Wolfowitz did at the World Bank. He was eventually drummed out by all of the governors of this important multilateral institution. Goes back into the Trump

administration, causes conflict there. He's pushed out of the Trump administration. He's a private individual who's raising money for his own investment firm that he runs with his romantic partner, Bedoya, and now he controls Caracas. So this speaks to how corrupt the environment is in Caracas.

Now, what is the most important policy to the Venezuelan government of Delcy Rodríguez? It is restructuring \$170 billion in debt that they need to pay back to the debt owners. And so the Trump administration announces that it will allow Venezuela to finally hire a financial advisor to help it restructure its debt, which means that they'll move out of sanctions, possibly. Mauricio Claver-Carone sends his girlfriend to Caracas, and they tell the Venezuelan government which financial advisor to appoint. Now, Claver-Carone is declaring himself the Jared Kushner of Latin America. He's a private individual who says, if you want to play ball down here, you have to go through me. And you have these MAGA vultures feasting off the carcass of the post-Maduro Venezuelan petrostate, which is extremely depressing.

I'm hearing that Donald Trump Jr. is down there to raise money for his 1789 fund, which is a major channel for corruption. A Peter Thiel-backed startup just signed a major deal to reconnect Venezuela to the global economy through the SWIFT system. And Claver-Carone is presiding over all of it, but he has no government portfolio, no official role, and therefore no accountability to us. And so we, the American taxpayer, have no idea where—or the Venezuelans have no idea where—their oil export money is going. As I wrote, two of the most corrupt trading houses on the planet, called Trafigura and Vitol, are responsible for exporting Venezuela's oil. These are groups that were rung up by the Justice Department's Corrupt Foreign Practices Division for paying hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes. What happened to that division under Donald Trump at the DOJ? He ended it.

He suspended it. So everything the Trump administration is doing in Venezuela is to make things more opaque, more murky, so they can extract more wealth. Donald Trump just claimed that he was financing the Iran war with Venezuelan oil money. In other words, that it's all a slush fund for his personal international rampage. And this will come back to haunt the government of Delcy Rodríguez, which for now has guaranteed stability and could lead to the kind of chaos we're now seeing in Bolivia, where the country is on the verge of civil war, or a right-wing, kind of neoliberal government coming in like we see in Ecuador, and carrying out harsh repression, raids, brutalizing peasants. This is the danger for Venezuela under Trump management.

## **#Judge Andrew Napolitano**

How has the American public gained by the kidnapping of Nicolás Maduro and the consequent disruption in Venezuela?

## **#Max**

Well, I mean, speaking, for example, to a former senior U.S. official, I was told Maduro was very eager to accommodate the U.S. and make a deal before he was kidnapped. So a lot of this could

have happened because the U.S. wanted to erode Venezuelan sovereignty and Trump wanted to pillage the country, which Maduro would not have allowed. How has the U.S. benefited? Have our oil prices gone down? Have we seen—I mean, even if you were looking at this from a rapacious neocolonial point of view—did the U.S. benefit? Did the American consumer benefit? No, the American consumers benefited about as much as they did from the invasion of Iraq. And meanwhile, ordinary Venezuelans are telling me nothing has changed.

Inflation is going up in Venezuela because inflation is going up globally, because of Trump's war on Iran and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and Trump's blockade of Iranian ports. So nothing has changed except for Trump cronies like, as I mentioned, Peter Thiel. Palmer Luckey is also involved with this startup that's making money there. Other Trump cronies are talking about buying luxury hotels—Don Jr. It's only for them. They're the only ones who have profited. And if the Democrats win in the midterms, we're going to see the House Oversight Committee start to zero in on this corruption. And again, it's going to have negative consequences for Delcy Rodríguez and the remnants of Chavismo to have overcomplied and embraced Trump so tightly when things have not improved domestically and the Democrats begin pushing for regime change with their usual mantra of democracy.

## **#Judge Andrew Napolitano**

Mm-hmm. What is switching over to Cuba? What happened to our mutual friend Medea Benjamin as she and her colleagues attempted to deliver medications for Cuban children in Cuba?

## **#Max**

Well, the Trump administration, or the Trump mafia, is presiding over one of the worst and sloppiest crime reigns of repression against the anti-war movement that we've seen in our lifetime. They are determined to crush dissent. They hate the fact that Code Pink yesterday staged a major protest on the Capitol steps against Israel's holding of 8,000 Palestinians without any trial or without any charges, who are basically hostages. Many of them are being sexually abused. I believe the United Nations just added Israel to a list of countries that practice sexual abuse.

They hate the fact that Code Pink's always in the faces of people on Capitol Hill, that they're involved in protests nationally, and they're seeking to crack down, accusing Medea Benjamin and podcaster Hasan Piker, who is much closer to the Democratic Party's sort of progressive wing, of violating U.S. sanctions and OFAC licenses by staying at a supposedly sanctioned hotel while they were delivering aid to Cuba. The fact is, they weren't staying at that hotel. It's silly enough that you could be prosecuted for staying at the wrong hotel in Cuba, which is a tourist destination, but they weren't staying at that hotel. The prosecution, or the alleged subpoena, is based on a viral tweet that was wrong, and so it's obvious what they're trying to do.

This is all happening under the watch of the so-called counterterrorism director, Sebastian Gorka, a former British military intelligence officer who, before being in the Trump administration, was at Salem Media, which is now registered as an Israeli foreign agent. Sebastian Gorka replaced Joe Kent, and he is now directing the whole counterterrorism policy at the left. He has even said being a leftist makes you a terrorist. He said this in an interview. He's coordinating this through the NSC, and they want to crack down on dissent. The target seems to be Cuba because the Trump administration mafia wants to restore Cuba to Miami control. It may launch a military intervention by the summer there. But I think this is really about Israel, and that Cuba is a cover for Israel, and they don't want to admit it.

## **#Judge Andrew Napolitano**

How is Cuba a cover for Israel?

## **#Max**

The same way that China was a cover for Israel on the TikTok purchase. When members of Congress and the U.S. government under Biden were complaining that TikTok was supposedly owned by China and that young people were being targeted by Chinese propaganda, then we learned through Ted Cruz or even complaints by Tony Blinken and others that young people were actually being mobilized in support of Palestine after October 7th. That was the real source of their complaint. And who went ahead and bought TikTok? It was David Ellison, the Israel-first billionaire, son of Larry Ellison, the data center kingpin who's close friends with Benjamin Netanyahu.

## **#Judge Andrew Napolitano**

These are the people who now own CNN and CBS.

## **#Max**

Correct. And they've done it in many ways to tamp down on dissent against Israel. Hasan Piker is really despised by the Republicans and by a wing of the Democrats — the Debbie Wasserman Schultz wing of the Democratic Party, the Chuck Schumer wing of the Democratic Party — that hates that there's a part of their party that wants to sanction Israel. Medea Benjamin is hated primarily for her activism on Palestine, and many of the other targets of this fake federal dragnet are primarily loathed by that side because of their activism on Palestine. But through Cuba, and through this trip to Cuba that Medea Benjamin and Hasan Piker participated in, I think in April, to deliver aid, they seem to have found an opening — a way in to issue subpoenas and begin to hound them.

So that's the way I'm reading it, is that the Trump administration is planning to support Israel's rampage throughout the region. They know there's going to be massive dissent. It's why, when Pam

Bondi was attorney general, she was flown down to Florida to meet with Miriam Adelson, and then appeared on stage at Miriam Adelson's Israeli American Council event to declare that the Justice Department will define anti-Semitism as hate speech and will begin cracking down on nationalists, because they know that there's a growing segment of the public, including in the Republican Party base, that is up in arms about this slaughter and that they need to crack down. How...

## **#Judge Andrew Napolitano**

How are American Jews reacting? I mean, are there statistics showing a significant number of American Jews opposing the Zionist regime?

## **#Max**

Yeah, there's a new poll out. Let me get the name of that poll so I can be as precise as possible in case no one believes me, because it's pretty remarkable. This is a Jewish Voter Resource Center poll, and it finds that almost 50% of American Jews under the age of 35 favor a binational state, which means that they are functionally anti-Zionist and support ending Israel as a Jewish ethnosupremacist state. That's highly significant. That percentage is higher than the percentage of young Jews or Jews overall in America who favor annexing the West Bank, which is the de facto U.S. policy under Trump. The majority overall of American Jews favor a two-state solution, which is non-existent.

And because there will never be a Palestinian state, we can see all of the momentum within American Jewish life is moving towards anti-Zionism as they get younger. And this mirrors the overall opinion of the American public. In Thomas Massie's district, in this race where he was defeated essentially through Israel-first billionaires, the majority of voters under the age of 45 supported Thomas Massie, and those over 45, and especially over 50—the Fox News boomers—supported the warm body that Israel ran against him, Ed Gowrie. You can even look at a Washington Post poll from several months ago, which found that over 65 percent, 60 percent of Jewish American adults believe that Israel had committed war crimes in Gaza, and 40 percent believe that it had committed genocide.

Look at the internals, and the younger the respondents are, the more they felt that Israel was responsible for genocide. So Jewish life is changing against the backdrop of the Gaza genocide. Jews who are more progressive, or tend to be more progressive in the United States, tend to be less aligned with Orthodox Judaism. But on the other hand, there's another survey that I read by a Jewish pollster named Sergio DellaPergola, which found that inside the United States, the Jews who are having the most Jewish babies are ultra-Orthodox. Many of them are actually themselves non- or anti-Zionist, like the Satmar.

And that by 2050 or 2060, close to a majority of Jews in the United States will be ultra-Orthodox. The males do not work often and therefore live off the state, and so a crisis is brewing. And then meanwhile, this Jewish Voter Resource Center poll, which should generate a lot of reflection by the

Jewish communal institutions and the self-appointed Jewish leaders who have supported the genocide in Gaza—they're not commenting on it. The Jewish federations, which are the main kind of body that coordinates Jewish communal, like semi-official life in the U.S., and which are staunchly Zionist, have refused to comment on this poll.

And in my own experience, if you are moving toward this trend of anti-Zionism within Jewish life and you're organizing around it, you get pushed out of Jewish communal life. You can't find anywhere to be a part of anything. So the crisis is brewing as the self-appointed leadership will find itself, in many ways, in the same position that our political leadership nationally finds itself in, where they have to impose undemocratic, anti-democratic measures to suppress the dissent within their own base on Israel-Palestine. So it's actually reshaping American life totally, and this is not confined to Jewish life at all.

## **#Judge Andrew Napolitano**

What do you think Trump would gain by his threat yesterday to blow up Iran, as absurd as that is, an American ally?

## **#Max**

An American ally, a key negotiator, one of the most important negotiators in this entire conflict. Trump threatens to blow them up if they don't do what he wants around the Strait of Hormuz, because they are supposedly essential allies, underpinning the coming toll system around the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has made a red line in their negotiating terms. The State Department promoted Trump's threat to blow up Oman. This is significant because it's a message to the Gulf states overall, to the GCC. Trump has also—and I don't think he knows what he's talking about—Jared Kushner told him to say this.

He's also demanded that all of the other Gulf states—for example, Saudi Arabia, primarily Saudi Arabia—join the Abraham Accords, what I call the Epstein Accords, which are designed to bury the Palestinian question and the Palestinian struggle and force them to normalize with Israel in order for there to be a deal with Iran. So what Trump is saying to Saudi Arabia, or what he's saying to Oman, is if they don't do what he wants, they will be destroyed. Either Trump will order them to be blown up, or he will reignite war against Iran. And we all know that Iran will escalate against countries that are hosting U.S. bases, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

And he will plunge these countries into disaster. So Trump is threatening the destruction of all of these countries that have done so much to support him. Remember the sword dance in Donald Trump's first term in Saudi Arabia? He walked away with a trillion dollars from his last visit there, and all they got were threats of their own destruction. What happened? Let me just say, it's time for

Saudi Arabia and these states that have not sold out, like the United Arab Emirates, to wake up and start making regional alliances and accommodate Iran or face destruction from the Mad King. That's clearly the message.

## **#Judge Andrew Napolitano**

What happens if the United States and Iran enter into some agreement whereby Trump removes the U.S. military? What would Netanyahu and company do to sabotage that agreement?

## **#Max**

Well, removing the U.S. military from the Gulf states would not necessarily be the endgame for Israel. You can already see how Israel is positioning itself. It is willing to, and is even soliciting, the U.S. to establish permanent military bases inside its own territory. And it's given over airfields at Ben Gurion Airport for U.S. C-130 aircraft and F-35 and F-15 jets, basically turning the entire airport into human shields. Nevatim Air Base in the south, in the Negev Desert of Israel, is where the F-35s are primarily disembarking from toward Iran.

And that's also because Israel, with its small landmass and high population, which is military-ready, has more anti-aircraft and anti-missile defenses in a tighter space than the Gulf states. So it's more defensible, and its military censorship regime has been airtight. So it's been hard to see how much damage Iran has done to U.S. jets on the ground at these bases. So Netanyahu might actually exploit the situation to make Israel seem more indispensable to U.S. power projection in the region. And then there's also Azerbaijan, which is aligned in many ways with Israel against Iran, launching attacks through the Caspian Sea on Iran. Wow.

## **#Judge Andrew Napolitano**

Last question about Lebanon. Weren't Israel and Lebanon engaged in ceasefire negotiations in Washington, D.C.?

## **#Max**

Well, this just shows the fecklessness of the Lebanese government. Its own prime minister, Najib Mikati, doesn't even represent a political party. And how they have provided cover for some of the most heinous attacks that we have witnessed against the Lebanese population for years. They carried out negotiations on two occasions in Washington, supposedly for a ceasefire. They have entertained the possibility of using the Lebanese military to disarm Hezbollah. They haven't done it yet, which would mean civil war and a complete surrender to Israel, which has troops in southern Lebanon.

They have not agreed to any timeline for Israeli withdrawal as they went into these constitutionally illegal negotiations. And now what is Israel doing? It has evacuated the fifth largest city in Lebanon, Tyre, in the south of Lebanon, causing ethnic cleansing on a historic scale. Today, it's now bombing and issuing evacuation orders for Nabatieh. And what it's doing is attacking what it thinks is Hezbollah's support base because it cannot defeat Hezbollah militarily. Its soldiers are suffering losses under FPV drone attacks that they can't repel, so they're just targeting civilians across the border. And the Lebanese government is doing nothing except waving the white flag.

It's absolutely criminal. I don't think we understand the scale of human suffering in Lebanon. I would encourage everyone to follow the reporting at The Grayzone of Wyatt Reed, who's in Beirut, who's been in and out of southern Lebanon, producing, for example, a report with Nabatieh Rescue, who are the rescuers who have been trying to tend to the wounded that are getting hit with Israeli drone strikes and bombings of their homes. And what's happening is these rescuers are being killed day after day in double and triple tap strikes on ambulances, and Israel just says they're all Hezbollah targets. This is an epic crime unfolding in real time as we watch.

## **#Judge Andrew Napolitano**

So the U.S. and Iran—well, let me put it this way. Iran will never enter into an agreement with the U. S. that fails to restrain Israel in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon, will it?

## **#Max**

Well, Lebanon is really the key because of the alliance with Hezbollah. And that's another reason why Israel is escalating. Netanyahu is escalating in Lebanon in order to sabotage this deal in which Iran has declared that they will not sign any agreement unless Lebanon is included. To the extent that Iran gets that deal, Iran will receive the respect of many Lebanese citizens who are not Hezbollah supporters because they simply don't want war imposed on them. Israel can't allow that to happen. Netanyahu can't allow the war to end because it will be a defeat for himself, and he's going into elections later this year. I can see the polls in Israel are kind of seesawing.

A couple of weeks ago, it looked as though Netanyahu's party, Likud, would lose to his opposition. Now they're up by two seats. And as long as he keeps the war going, he can keep his... he can maintain some possibility for Likud to survive, which means he must sabotage the Iran deal. He must sabotage it also because a deal between the U.S. and Iran would destroy Netanyahu's lifelong project of regime change in Iran. And so Netanyahu is working to sabotage the Trump administration, intervening in U.S. politics through proxies like, for example, Senator Ted Cruz, whose office is run by an Israeli operative named Omri Ceren.

And we've seen Trump move very close towards a deal, and now he has to walk it back. I would be very, very surprised if there were any serious negotiations even taking place. I'd be very surprised if

the Trump administration were even talking to Iran in a serious way after all the pushback Donald Trump got from Israel. Itamar Ben-Gvir, the security minister in Israel, has openly declared that Israel will not allow the United States to make any deal. And that really tells you how the power—it really exposes the true contours of the power dynamics and who's in charge in Washington.

## **#Judge Andrew Napolitano**

Wow. Max, thank you, my dear man. Again, your knowledge of all these hotspots is truly encyclopedic, and you bring great explanations to all of us. Thank you so much. Thanks again for your time.

## **#Max**

Thanks a lot, Judge.

## **#Judge Andrew Napolitano**

Sure. What a brilliant and gifted man he is. Coming up later today, if you're watching us live, in an hour and 15 minutes at 11 this morning, I think he's in China, maybe he's in St. Petersburg — Pepe Escobar. At 2:15 this afternoon, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson. Batting cleanup at 3 o'clock, Colonel Douglas Macgregor. Judge Napolitano for Judging Freedom.