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Maduro Stays Ahead in Venezuelan Elections

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Local elections in Venezuela yesterday confirmed popular support for President Nicolas Maduro and his administration, the United Socialist Party (PSUV), as they won the greatest share of the vote.

At 6am on Sunday, Venezuela time, balloting began to pick 337 mayors and over 2000 city councillors. Most votes have been counted.

Maduro's party won in 196 of 335 municipalities in the country, with the preliminary results being announced by the National Electoral Council. The opposition took 53 municipalities whilst independent parties took eight, with the remainder yet to be declared.

Whilst the governing party won rural areas, the opposition won urban areas, gaining the majority in Caracas, the capital, and Maracaibo, the country's second largest city. They also won the eponymous capital of Barinas, the city where Chávez hailed from.

Maduro commented on the results. He said: "The Bolivarian Revolution continues now with more strength", and called the election results a "grand victory".

Meanwhile, opposition leader Henrique Capriles said, "I did everything humanly possible", adding, "Remember that Venezuela does not have a single owner. A divided country needs dialogue".

Maduro was the handpicked heir of his predecessor, Hugo Chávez, who died of cancer in March 2013. He took office in April. Yesterday's elections were widely held to be an important test for Maduro.