

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 24, 2018

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Sessions:

We write to express our growing concern about efforts by Nicolás Maduro and his regime officials to undermine the rule of law in Venezuela and promote instability in the Western Hemisphere. The Maduro regime, in an effort to cling to power and promote a failed political ideology, has dismantled democratic institutions, repressed political opponents, and starved the Venezuelan people through economic mismanagement. This lawless environment threatens the stability and security of the region, including the United States, by providing fertile ground for drug cartels and U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations, such as the FARC and ELN, to operate.

Over the past few years, the United States has taken targeted, punitive economic actions against Nicolás Maduro and his cronies for undermining the authorities and legal responsibilities of the legitimately-elected National Assembly and other efforts to seriously damage the democratic order in Venezuela. In July 2017, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions against Maduro after the election of the illegitimate “Constituent Assembly,” a body specifically created to circumvent the will of the Venezuelan people. Senior government officials, including members of the Maduro-controlled National Electoral Council, the judiciary, and security forces, have also been sanctioned by the U.S. government for numerous offenses against their own citizens, including anti-democratic actions, human rights violations, corruption, drug trafficking, money laundering, and working with foreign terrorist organizations.

We are concerned about the growing connections between members of the Maduro regime and established narco-trafficking organizations. On August 1, 2016, General Nestor Reverol, Venezuela’s current Minister of Interior and former National Guard commander, was indicted by a U.S. district court for participating in an international cocaine trafficking conspiracy. On February 13, 2017, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions against Venezuelan Vice President Tareck el-Aissami for drug trafficking and other related crimes. On December 14, 2017, two nephews of Maduro’s wife, Franqui Francisco Flores de Freitas and Efrain Antonio Campo Flores, were convicted in U.S. federal court for drug smuggling. In addition, we have seen reports implicating Maduro, Diosdado Cabello, Nestor Reverol, and many others for their involvement in narco-trafficking.

The Maduro regime has caused an economic and political disaster in Venezuela that threatens to destabilize the Western Hemisphere. We request the U.S. Department of Justice to immediately pursue an investigation into the credible allegations of drug trafficking and other illicit activities by senior Venezuelan government officials in order to better understand the nexus between criminal actors and members of Maduro's inner circle.

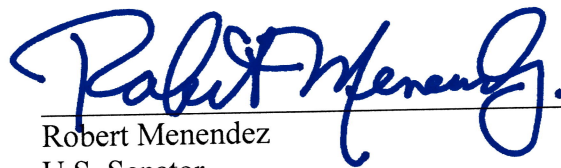
Recognizing the threat that the Maduro regime poses to the region, Luis Almagro, Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS), has appointed international experts to assess the need for an international legal body to investigate corrupt acts and human rights abuses by the Maduro regime. In addition to undertaking a U.S. investigation, we urge you to support the OAS Secretary-General's efforts to hold Venezuelan government officials accountable for the horrific human rights abuses that they have committed against their people.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator