

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 24, 2018

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

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.

In recent years, Maduro and his cronies have seriously damaged democracy in Venezuela, including by undermining the constitutional and legal authority of the legitimately-elected National Assembly. The Maduro regime's use of lethal force, violence, and intimidation in response to pro-democracy protests and political opposition has led to hundreds of deaths, thousands of injuries, and destabilizing flows of Venezuelan refugees into neighboring countries.

Last year, the United States rightly imposed targeted sanctions against many senior Maduro regime officials for committing human rights abuses and undermining democracy in Venezuela. We were pleased to see you state in July 2017: "The United States will not stand by as Venezuela crumbles. If the Maduro regime imposes its Constituent Assembly on July 30, the United States will take strong and swift economic actions." The U.S. government later imposed sanctions against Maduro himself after the election of the illegitimate "Constituent Assembly," a body specifically created to circumvent the will of the Venezuelan people, and against senior government officials, including members of the Maduro-controlled National Electoral Council, the judiciary, and security forces, for numerous offenses committed against their own citizens.

The United States also continues to combat the Maduro regime's drug trafficking efforts, which he uses to generate desperately needed revenue and to further threaten international peace and security in the region. 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 of drug smuggling. In addition, we have seen reports implicating Maduro, Diosdado Cabello, Nestor Reverol, and many others for their involvement in narcotrafficking.

It is clear that the United States can—and should—do more to increase international pressure against Maduro and his cronies.

In light of these concerns and your past statements, I respectfully request that you work with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to ensure that Venezuela remains a U.S. foreign policy priority, and direct Secretary Tillerson to fully utilize all diplomatic tools, including regional institutions, to promote peace and accountability in Venezuela. We also respectfully request you to direct Ambassador Nikki Haley to call for the United Nations Security Council to hold an emergency session or related meeting on Venezuela, and for the United Nations to create a special envoy for Venezuela to monitor and address these issues.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator

CC: Secretary of State Rex Tillerson
Ambassador Nikki Haley, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations