

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 28, 2016

COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
SMALL BUSINESS AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Honorable Barack Obama
The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama,

Democracy requires respect for human rights. Sadly, Venezuela today is experiencing an erosion of those rights under the leadership of President Nicolas Maduro and his corrupt henchmen. The resulting implosion of Venezuela's economy has created an unsustainable humanitarian crisis.

Venezuela is a resource rich country that should be among the wealthiest in the Western Hemisphere. Under Maduro's mismanagement and corruption, 20 percent of the population reportedly now only eats one meal a day. Reported shortages of medicine, including vaccines, are frightening. Newborn deaths have also been reported in Anzoategui's Razetti hospital because pregnant mothers are not receiving the proper nutrition to feed their babies.

Politically, Maduro's kangaroo Supreme Court has unconstitutionally limited the power of the opposition members of the National Assembly, an elected body that was duly elected by the people of Venezuela. To make matters worse, the decision taken last week by Venezuela's National Electoral Council to reject the Venezuelan people's desire for a recall of Maduro has shown once again the regime's anti-democratic tactics.

Given these facts, I respectfully request that you demand that President Maduro and his government immediately release all political prisoners including Leopoldo Lopez and others, schedule local elections as soon as possible, and take concrete steps to allow the elected members of the National Assembly to carry out their work.

Your Cuba policy, which has unconditionally rewarded the sole totalitarian dictatorship in the Western Hemisphere, has only emboldened the anti-democratic behavior of the Castro regime's allies, such as Venezuela. As Venezuelan opposition leader, Maria Corina Machado, has noted: "Justice is on its knees in Venezuela with sentences being dictated from Miraflores or Havana."

Mr. President, the Venezuelan people must be allowed to determine their own future and cannot continue to be held hostage by brutal leaders and despots in Cuba who seek to only enrich themselves and their families at Venezuela's expense.

Congress approved the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014 and recently extended this law. The law mandates the imposition of sanctions against individuals who have committed significant acts of violence or human rights abuses. It is imperative that more corrupt individuals who have violated human rights, such as Tibusay Lucena Ramirez, President of the National Electoral Council, Vice-President Sandra Oblitas Ruzza, and Former Minister of Interior and Justice Miguel Rodriguez Torres are sanctioned under this law.

I implore you to take swift action to assist the Venezuelan people in their hour of need.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Marco Rubio

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized initials 'MR' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Marco Rubio
United States Senator