

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 17, 2015

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

Secretary John Kerry  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Kerry,

Today in Venezuela, Leopoldo Lopez, Caracas Mayor Antonio Ledezma and other Venezuelans sit in jail as political prisoners for their opposition to the authoritarian rule of President Nicolás Maduro. Recently Mr. Lopez and fellow prisoners began a hunger strike in order to bring attention to the relentless persecution of political prisoners, for the lack of respect for human rights in the country, and to ask for free, fair and transparent elections. President Maduro's violent repression of peaceful demonstrators and resistance to publicly scheduling elections shows his contempt for the Venezuelan people.

President Maduro's oppressive reign is supported by the head of Venezuela's National Assembly, Diosdado Cabello. Cabello, referred to as the second most powerful man in Venezuela, has facilitated the passage of emergency decrees giving dictatorial powers to President Maduro. More recently, there have been media reports that federal prosecutors in the U.S. are investigating Cabello and building a case against him for his role as a leader of "Cartel de los Soles", an international narcotics ring based in Venezuela.

I am shocked at the recent media reports describing a meeting between State Department Counselor Thomas Shannon and Mr. Cabello. I cannot begin to understand what you hope to accomplish in meeting with a suspected narco-trafficker under U.S. investigation, a man suspected in gross human rights violations that includes the death of Venezuelan students, and a man who many consider to be the most corrupt person in Venezuela.

Please explain why Counselor Shannon was sent to Haiti to meet with Diosdado Cabello and what specifically was discussed in regards to relations between the U.S. and Venezuela.

Also, I ask that you make clear to the government of Venezuela that the U.S. will not renew an exchange of ambassadors until human rights are respected, political prisoners freed, and elections scheduled.

I look forward to hearing your response and urge you to continue to take action against leaders of the Maduro regime who violate human rights by fully implementing the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014.

Sincerely,

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

Marco Rubio  
United States Senator