

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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

May 13, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
United States Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

I am deeply concerned about the Administration's half-hearted and dangerously unclear policies regarding the ongoing political crisis in Venezuela. I am particularly concerned about conflicting statements made by the Administration – at a Senate hearing and then to the media – regarding the Venezuelan opposition's position on sanctions.

On May 8, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing to assess Venezuela's political crisis and the ongoing human rights abuses committed by Venezuelan government forces on peaceful demonstrators. At said hearing, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta Jacobson claimed the Administration had been asked by members of the opposition "who are participating in the dialogue" with the Maduro regime not to impose human rights violations sanctions at this time. Later that day, a statement by the United States Embassy in Caracas claimed that "members of the opposition participating in the dialogue" have "made the point that the United States Government should not undermine the current dialogue while it still offers a chance of progress."

As you may know, Ms. Jacobson's testimony was immediately questioned by senior representatives of the opposition participating in the so-called "dialogue", including the general secretary of the umbrella opposition organization "Mesa de la Unidad" (M.U.D.), Mr. Ramon Guillermo Avelo. The M.U.D. also made clear that it has never opposed or requested to postpone the imposition of sanctions on individuals committing human rights violations, or those involved in drug trafficking or corruption.

Either the State Department made a mistake, or it is relying on unfounded information as its basis for opposing sanctions on Venezuelan regime officials at this time. In either case, I am deeply troubled about the mixed signals and message of impunity the Administration is sending to the Maduro regime and its enablers as its repressive machine ramps up the brutality of human rights abuses inflicted on peaceful demonstrators, including more than 240 students arrested the morning of May 8 – the same morning the Senate Foreign Relations Committee examined these matters.

I urge the Administration to publicly support the immediate imposition of targeted sanctions on individuals involved in human rights abuses and outrageous cases of corruption in Venezuela.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marco Rubio', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marco Rubio  
United States Senator