

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

September 23, 2020

Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Vice-President of the European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200 1049
Brussels Belgium

Dear High Representative Borrell:

We write in regards to the continued erosion of democratic norms in Venezuela, in particular, the upcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for early December that will not be transparent, free, or fair. The people of Venezuela have been forced to live under a brutal regime run by Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro that has violated, and continues to violate, their fundamental rights. These illegitimate elections rob the Venezuelan people of their voice and their basic rights to decide their country's leaders. The United States, the European Union, the Organization of American States, and the Lima Group should work together to support the return of legitimate democracy in Venezuela.

A majority of EU Member States have recognized Interim President Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's legitimate sovereign leader. Guaidó, however, is not just legitimate because countries recognize him as such, but because of Venezuela's governing documents. Maduro remains in power after conducting sham presidential elections in 2018, which the EU denounced as rigged and fraudulent. The Venezuelan constitution states that when there is a vacancy in the Presidency, the democratically-elected President of the National Assembly will assume the role of President until free and fair elections are held. It is clear that the Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE) is violating the laws of the country by pressing forward with elections this year that do not meet international standards, and which serve only to allow Maduro to retain his grip on power.

Venezuela was once a prosperous and stable democracy and one of Latin America's fastest growing-economies. Maduro's regime brought the country into economic catastrophe, created a massive migration crisis that has destabilized the region, financed his regime with stolen gold and other illicit activities, and has committed horrific human rights violations. These violations include arresting opposition leaders and jailing journalists, weaponizing food, torture, and extrajudicial killings. Venezuelans lack basic food, medicine, and access to social services – each of which has become especially dire during the coronavirus pandemic. Hyperinflation and corruption have only added to the dire situation. Just recently, the United Nations' Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Venezuela released a report that confirmed the Maduro regime is committing crimes against humanity.

The United States and the EU share a commitment to promoting and defending democratic values and the fundamental rights of all people. These principles are the bedrock on which our decades-long partnership have rested. Therefore, we find the recent reports of EU discussions with the Maduro regime related to the upcoming election to be deeply concerning. We respectfully urge the EU to denounce efforts by the Maduro regime to hold fraudulent legislative elections in an effort to undermine Venezuela's democratically-elected National Assembly. We must work together to demand transparent, free, and fair presidential and legislative elections; the release of all political prisoners, an independent CNE, and that all political parties and their directors be reinstated.

The Venezuelan people have now endured many years of extreme repression under the grip of the brutal Maduro regime. It is our hope that the U.S., EU, and democracies worldwide will stand together in rejecting and condemning Maduro's attempts to silence opponents and hold fraudulent elections that will not adequately represent the will of the people. We must support the Venezuelan people and their most basic rights to take control of their future.

We thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
U.S. Senator