

July 22, 2021

Bradley A. Freden
Interim Permanent Representative of the United States to the OAS
Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Freden:

I write to you concerning the situation in Venezuela and urge you, in your capacity as the Interim Permanent Representative of the United States to the Organization of American States (OAS), to prioritize efforts to ensure that the Interim Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, under President Juan Guaidó, continues to be recognized by the OAS as the legitimate government of Venezuela. I further call on you to work with the U.S. Secretary of State, and other OAS member states, to take all necessary steps to support ongoing efforts by OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro to maintain broad international support for President Guaidó. This should be a top priority for the United States.

Both the previous administration and the OAS took positive steps to highlight the human rights violations carried out by the Maduro regime. I strongly supported steps taken by Secretary General Almagro to hold the Maduro regime accountable for its crimes, including invoking the Inter-American Democratic Charter in 2016 to convene a Permanent Council on Venezuela and promoting diplomatic initiatives to foster the restoration of Venezuelan democracy.

As you know, after Nicolás Maduro's attempt to inaugurate himself for a second term in office on January 10, 2019 following an electoral process that was not democratic, free, fair, or transparent, the United States and 60 other nations refused to recognize Maduro as Venezuela's rightful president. The United States, and other like-minded countries, then recognized Juan Guaidó, then President of the Venezuelan National Assembly as the Interim President of Venezuela in accordance with Article 233 of the Venezuelan Constitution. Soon after, the OAS passed a resolution refusing to recognize Maduro's second term and in April 2019, welcomed the Venezuelan National Assembly's permanent representative to the OAS.

While I appreciate Secretary Blinken's comments on January 19, 2021 that described Maduro as a "brutal dictator" and vowed to continue recognizing Interim President Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's rightful leader, I worry that the Biden Administration is faltering in its resolve. As the Maduro regime continues to use delay tactics to hold onto power and further violate the human rights of the Venezuelan people, I do not believe that the United States is stressing enough the importance of a return to democracy in Venezuela through free and fair elections.

Nearly 5.5 million Venezuelans have fled the country since the start of the crisis, where its people are fleeing a country in fear of unjust detainment, torture, and extrajudicial execution. According to Venezuelan non-government organization Foro Penal , in 2020, the Maduro regime arrested 413 people in politically motivated arrests. Those arrested included Congressmen Gilber Caro and Renzo Prieto, journalist Roland Carreño, and most recently Freddy Guevara, a close ally of Guaidó. In detainment, the Bolivarian National Police (FAES) subjected them to physical beatings, electric shocks, and even sexual violence. Finally, according to the Office of the United States High Commissioner for Human Rights, Maduro’s security forces have killed more than 19,000 people between 2016 and 2019 for “resisting authority.” In an environment with such widespread violations of human rights, Venezuelans look to the United States, and the OAS, for hope that one day soon, this man-made national nightmare may come to an end.

I know you share the hope for a democratic, prosperous, and safe Venezuela. I urge you to act on that hope and use your voice and vote at the OAS to continue to recognize Juan Guaidó as Venezuela’s rightful leader and to continue shining a light on the horrendous crimes of the Maduro regime.

Thank you for your attention to these serious matters and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', with a stylized, cursive script.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator