

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 4, 2014

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid,

As the Senate prepares to reconvene, I would like to call your attention to a worsening human rights crisis in our own hemisphere that I believe demands an immediate response from the United States Senate.

In recent months, the people of Venezuela have been in the throes of a bitter, agonizing struggle against their country's own leadership. The corruption, incompetence, and malicious negligence of Nicolas Maduro's government have left Venezuela on the verge of collapse, with a dangerous scarcity of food and goods, soaring crime and murder rates, and virtually nonexistent economic opportunity.

The people of Venezuela have responded by exercising a right that our nation's founders recognized as universal. They have lifted their voices to protest what has been a long train of abuses and usurpations, demanding their government provide basic economic opportunity and public safety. But these peaceful protesters have been met in the streets with bullets, tear gas, and brutal beatings from government thugs.

This sweeping arc of human rights abuse demands the attention of the United States Congress. You were quoted in July saying that you support bipartisan legislation to sanction the Venezuelan officials responsible, yet in the two months since, the heart wrenching stories of savage violence from the Maduro government have worsened while Congressional action has only stalled.

Just last month, as the Senate was about to pass the sanctions bill that unanimously passed the House, Maduro's regime found a way to influence our legislative process. Even though the legislation would have targeted individuals only and posed no threat to American jobs or Venezuelan firms, a Venezuelan government-controlled oil company with operations in the U.S. succeeded in convincing a member of the Senate's Democratic majority to block the bill's passage.

As Majority Leader, I hope you will use your authority to ensure that the bipartisan legislation sanctioning Venezuelan officials - legislation which you have spoken in favor of - will be allowed an up or down vote immediately upon our return on September 8th.

The people of Venezuela can wait no longer. Their government is striking out more frantically every day, working to beat them into submission, to tear at the very fabric of their nation. Now is the time to implement targeted sanctions that end this abuse – that allow the cries of the Venezuelan people to finally be heard, and bring them at last to justice and peace.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized cursive letters that appear to read 'MR' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Marco Rubio  
United States Senator