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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

September 23, 2022

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We are writing to request your support in renewing the United Nations Human Rights Council's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission in Venezuela (FFM) when its mandate expires on 27 September 2022.

We would also like to request that the Department, through the U.S. mission to the United Nations, take steps to elevate the FFM to a Commission of Inquiry (COI). It is our view that the scale, intensity, and persistence of the Maduro regime's behavior must be investigated and held accountable alongside those in power in Burma, Russia, and Syria—all of whom are currently being investigated by a Commission of Inquiry.

The Venezuela FFM is a critical tool in responding to the Maduro regime's systematic violations of human rights in Venezuela. The FFM, established in September 2019, has developed and implemented a rigorous methodology for investigating the regime's gross violations of human rights, including extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances, torture, and arbitrary detention. It has determined that the regime has decimated the independence of Venezuela's judicial system, enabling State-sponsored repression.


The Venezuela FFM has concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Maduro regime has committed crimes against humanity. During a September 15 Senate Foreign Relations hearing on Venezuela, Assistant Secretary Nichols confirmed this assessment, stating that the Maduro regime has committed crimes against humanity.

The Venezuela FFM's important work must continue. In the face of the growing exodus of refugees and migrants from the country, the mission must be able to fully investigate and build a credible body of information documenting the regime's crimes against the Venezuelan people. By elevating the mission to a Commission of Inquiry, it would accomplish this goal.

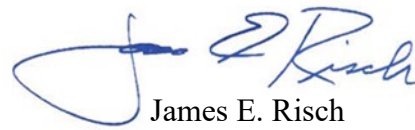
The Venezuelan crisis has surpassed Syria's and is now the second largest refugee and migration crisis in the world. The Maduro regime's methods of social, political, and economic manipulation and control, including through its systemic violations of human rights, have prompted 6.8 million people to flee the country, including at least **660,000 people who have fled since July 2022**, according to UN reporting.

I thank you for the Department's ongoing support for the Venezuelan people, and urge your close attention to and action in advancing accountability and respect for human rights in Venezuela.

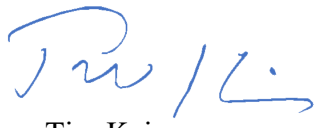
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
Chairman



James E. Risch  
Ranking Member



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Marco Rubio  
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Linda Thomas-Greenfield, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations