

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 10, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We commend you for your recent efforts toward constructive engagement with the government of Venezuela. Thanks to your actions, two U.S. citizens, Gustavo Cardenas and Jorge Fernandez, have been freed from imprisonment and brought back home, and President Nicolás Maduro appears committed to re-initiating negotiations with opposition forces. This new approach to Venezuela is already yielding tangible results, and we should see it through. We urge you to continue pursuing dialogue with the Venezuelan government and, in support of that process, to consider lifting broad economic sanctions that have achieved little but the widespread suffering of the Venezuelan people.

Nicolás Maduro and his allies bear much responsibility for the humanitarian and political crisis in Venezuela. But the policies pursued under the Trump administration not only failed to improve the situation in Venezuela, they significantly exacerbated it. Attempts to foment a military uprising, threats of armed intervention, the termination of all relations with Maduro and his allies, and the imposition of far-reaching sanctions served only to deepen Venezuela's political crisis, strengthen the hand of the Maduro government, and undermine U.S. credibility, while leaving everyday Venezuelans to bear the dire human costs.

Over the course of the crisis, Venezuela has experienced the second largest documented peacetime economic contraction in modern history.¹ According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, the number of undernourished Venezuelans quintupled in only five years.² Since 2014, the number of Venezuelans seeking refugee status has increased by 8,000 percent.³ UNICEF reports that childhood mortality rates have reached levels not seen since the late 1990s.⁴

The suffering of the Venezuelan people is a tragedy. Though this tragedy is the result of various factors, numerous studies have shown that U.S. sanctions have been one of the leading causes.

¹https://sanctionsandsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/January-2022-Venezuela-Case_Rodriguez.pdf

²<https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#country/236>

³<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/venezuela-emergency.html>

⁴<https://data.unicef.org/country/ven/>

And these impacts are not borne equally: broad-based sanctions are widely known to disproportionately harm women and girls,⁵ as well as other vulnerable populations including people with disabilities or chronic diseases and Indigenous populations.

Key Venezuelan opposition figures have also spoken out against U.S. sanctions. In a recent interview, leading opposition politician and two-time presidential candidate Henrique Capriles Radonski acknowledged the failure of the sanctions strategy. “It didn't give the result we wanted,” Capriles declared. “The greatest beneficiary of the sanctions against Venezuela was Putin.” Expressing his support for your administration’s engagement with the Maduro government, and advocating for the lifting of broad sanctions, Capriles added, “The mere fact that the meeting took place, if that can open doors that benefit Venezuelans, and therefore benefit the country, then that must be seen positively... Any action that results in improvements in the living conditions of Venezuelans is good.”⁶

It is clear that broad sanctions have failed to achieve their aims. In light of this, and the dire human costs incurred, we urge you to lift all U.S. financial and sectoral sanctions that exacerbate the humanitarian situation, though without hindering or delaying the urgent action needed to transition the U.S. economy off of fossil fuels. The easing of sanctions would mark a critical step forward in the process of engagement and diplomacy that your administration has initiated and could contribute to the resolution of the political crisis and improve the wellbeing of the Venezuelan people. We are grateful for the steps that you have already taken to advance dialogue with the Venezuelan government. Now, we urge you to see them through.

Thank you for your attention on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



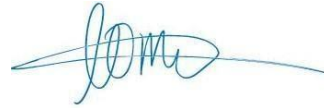
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

⁵<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00220388.2020.1746277?journalCode=fjds20&journalCode=fjds20#:~:text=Our%20results%20show%20that%2C%20on,US%20sanctions%20is%20significantly%20smaller>

⁶<https://efectococuyo.com/politica/capriles-asegura-que-las-sanciones-fracasaron-y-se-debe-cambiar-la-estrategia/>



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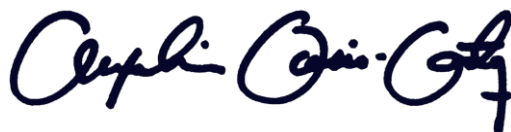
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