

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0926

March 10, 2022

The Hon. Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

The Hon. Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C 20520

The Hon. Jennifer Granholm
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear President Biden, Secretary Blinken, and Secretary Granholm:

Together, we represent several thousands of Venezuelan nationals who have come to the United States fleeing the brutality and the butchery committed by Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro. The foreign policy posture of the United States has always been to support and defend the cause of freedom and democracy¹, particularly of those in our own hemisphere. It is also the official policy of the United States to recognize Juan Guaidó as the legitimate President of Venezuela² and hold no diplomatic relations with Nicolas Maduro or his henchmen. Accordingly we request, within all applicable rules and regulations, information regarding discussions with the Maduro regime.

Unfortunately, according to reports, the Administration's delegation sent to Venezuela this past week had a stated purpose to use the American sanctions placed on the Maduro regime as a bargaining chip with an illegitimate dictatorship to produce more oil.³ By negotiating with the Maduro dictatorship, your Administration is undermining American foreign policy towards Venezuela and is neglecting the U.S. commitment to the Venezuelan exile community.

In case the Administration needed a reminder of the atrocities the Chavez-Maduro political machine has committed against the people of Venezuela and against our own strategic interests, we write on behalf of our constituents in presenting the following examples:

¹ Latin America and the Caribbean: U.S. Policy Overview, *Congressional Research Service*.

² U.S. Recognition of Venezuela's 2015 National Assembly and Interim President Guaidó, *United States Department of State*, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-recognition-of-venezuelas-2015-national-assembly-and-interim-president-guaido/>

³ White House reaches out to Venezuela, a longtime foe, amid Russia crisis, *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/03/07/biden-venezuela-oil-russia/>

1. The Maduro regime is a puppet regime for autocratic regimes and other state sponsors of terror around the world, including the illegitimate, communist regime in Cuba, Hezbollah in Iran, and both Vladimir Putin in Russia and Xi Jinping in China. As a result, Maduro has allowed these anti-American forces to use Venezuela as a launchpad to permeate their tactics of violence and terrorism throughout the hemisphere.
2. Since 2014, more than 13,000 people have been unjustly arrested in Venezuela by Maduro's security forces in connection with political opposition of the regime. According to the Human Rights Watch, a top-tier human rights watchdog group of global reach, several of those individuals jailed have been subsequently killed by the regime.⁴
3. In 2017, Maduro and his regime dissolved the national assembly, stripping away all of its constitutional powers after opposition forces won control of the chamber.⁵
4. In 2018, Maduro and his regime rigged the 2018 Presidential Election in Venezuela in order to maintain control. Tactics included barring political opponents from running, jailing political dissidents, and threatening punishment for individuals speaking unfavorably about the government.⁶
5. In 2020, the UN Human Rights Council's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela condemned the Maduro regime for committing crimes against humanity. Maduro's henchmen engaged in torture and killings against protestors and political dissidents, using techniques such as electric shocks, genital mutilation, and asphyxiation. The findings came after investigations into nearly 3,000 cases of unjust imprisonment of Venezuelans by the regime.⁷

As your Administration continues a misguided engagement with the illegitimate Maduro regime in Venezuela in pursuit of more foreign oil – rather than bolstering domestic production of energy sources – we request answers to the following questions on behalf of our constituents:

1. Does the Biden Administration still consider Juan Guaidó as the legitimate, interim President of Venezuela?
2. Did the Biden Administration notify President Juan Guaido of the visit prior to the U.S. officials' arrival in Venezuela?
3. Is the Biden Administration considering weakening current sanctions on Nicolas Maduro, his family, his associates, petrol, banking, and related industries, or entities placed by the United States in exchange for more oil production from Venezuela or any other reasons? If so, what specific sanctions are being discussed to be lifted?

⁴ Venezuela: Arrests and Killings in Anti-Government Protests, *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/25/venezuela-arrests-killings-anti-government-protests>

⁵ Venezuela's High Court Dissolves the National Assembly, *CNN*. <https://www.cnn.com/2017/03/30/americas/venezuela-dissolves-national-assembly/>

⁶ Venezuela's Sham Election, *The Atlantic Council*. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/venezuela-s-sham-election/>

⁷ Venezuelan Leaders Implicated in Crimes Against Humanity by U.N. Investigators, *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/16/world/americas/venezuela-un-killings-torture.html>

4. Is the Biden Administration considering purchasing any kind of energy source from Venezuela or licensing private importation of energy of any kind from Venezuelan state-owned enterprises?
5. Will the Biden Administration commit to maintaining all sanctions currently put in place on the Maduro regime?

On behalf of the countless of Venezuelans who reside in South Florida, and the many more in our state and throughout the country who support freedom and democracy for the Venezuelan people, we urgently request a swift response to these questions. We look forward to your answers and welcome any opportunity to further discuss this important topic.

Sincerely,



Carlos A. Gimenez
Member of Congress



Rick Scott
U.S. Senator



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress