

113TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

S. RES. 365

Deploring the violent repression of peaceful demonstrators in Venezuela, calling for full accountability for human rights violations taking place in Venezuela, and supporting the right of the Venezuelan people to the free and peaceful exercise of representative democracy.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 27, 2014

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. NELSON, Mr. KIRK, Mr. BEGICH, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. KAINE, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. WARNER, and Mr. THUNE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

MARCH 11, 2014

Reported by Mr. MENENDEZ, without amendment

MARCH 12, 2014

Considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Deploring the violent repression of peaceful demonstrators in Venezuela, calling for full accountability for human rights violations taking place in Venezuela, and supporting the right of the Venezuelan people to the free and peaceful exercise of representative democracy.

Whereas the Government of Venezuela's chronic mismanagement of its economy has produced inflation that exceeds 50 percent annually, currency shortages, economic distor-

tions, and the routine absence of basic goods and food-stuffs;

Whereas the Government of Venezuela's failure to guarantee minimal standards of public security for its citizens has led the country to become one of the most violent in the world, with the per capita homicide rate in the city of Caracas exceeding 115 per 100,000 people;

Whereas the Government of Venezuela has taken continued steps to remove checks and balances on the executive, politicize the judiciary, undermine the independence of the legislature through use of executive decree powers, persecute and prosecute its political opponents, curtail freedom of the press, and limit the free expression of its citizens;

Whereas, on January 23, 2014, National Representative Maria Corina Machado and Mr. Leopoldo López, leader of the political party "Popular Will", among others, called on the Venezuelan people to gather in street assemblies and debate a popular, democratic and constitutional "way out" of Venezuela's crisis of governability;

Whereas, since February 4, 2014, the people of Venezuela—responding to ongoing economic hardship, high levels of crime and violence, and the lack of basic political rights and individual freedoms—have turned out in demonstrations in Caracas and throughout the country to protest the Government of Venezuela's inability to ensure the political and economic well-being of its citizens;

Whereas the government of Nicolas Maduro responded to the mass demonstrations by ordering the arrest without evidence of senior opposition leaders, including Mr. Leopoldo Lopez, Carlos Vecchio, and Antonio Rivero, and

by violently repressing peaceful demonstrators with the help of the Venezuelan National Guard and groups of armed, government-affiliated civilians, known as “collectives”;

Whereas, on February 18, 2014, opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez turned himself in to authorities in Venezuela, was arrested, and charged unjustly with criminal incitement, conspiracy, arson, and intent to damage property;

Whereas the Maduro government has sought to censor information about the demonstrations and the government’s violent crackdown by blocking online images and threatening the few remaining uncensored domestic media outlets;

Whereas President Maduro threatened to expel the United States news network CNN from Venezuela and has taken off the air the Colombian news channel NTN 24, which transmits in Venezuela, after news outlets reported on the nationwide protests;

Whereas the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights released a statement on February 14, 2014, which “expresses its concern over the serious incidents of violence that have taken place in the context of protest demonstrations in Venezuela, as well as other complaints concerning acts of censorship against media outlets, attacks on organizations that defend human rights, and acts of alleged political persecution”; and

Whereas, as of February 27, 2014, there have been 13 people killed, over 100 injured, and dozens have been unjustly detained due to pro-democracy demonstrations throughout Venezuela: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

1 (1) reaffirms United States support for the peo-
2 ple of Venezuela in their pursuit of the free exercise
3 of representative democracy as guaranteed by the
4 Venezuelan constitution and defined under the Inter-
5 American Democratic Charter of the Organization of
6 American States;

7 (2) deplores the use of excessive and unlawful
8 force against peaceful demonstrators in Venezuela
9 and the inexcusable use of violence and politically
10 motivated criminal charges to intimidate the coun-
11 try's political opposition;

12 (3) calls on the Government of Venezuela to
13 disarm and dismantle the system of "colectivos" or
14 "collectives" and any other government-affiliated or
15 supported militias or vigilante groups;

16 (4) calls on the Government of Venezuela to
17 allow an impartial, third-party investigation into the
18 excessive and unlawful force against peaceful dem-
19 onstrations on multiple occasions since February 4,
20 2014;

21 (5) urges the President to immediately impose
22 targeted sanctions, including visa bans and asset
23 freezes, against individuals planning, facilitating, or
24 perpetrating gross human rights violations against

1 peaceful demonstrators, journalists, and other mem-
2 bers of civil society in Venezuela; and

3 (6) calls for the United States Government to
4 work with other countries in the hemisphere to ac-
5 tively encourage a process of dialogue between the
6 Government of Venezuela and the political opposi-
7 tion through the good offices of the Organization of
8 American States so that the voices of all Ven-
9 ezuelans can be taken into account through their
10 country's constitutional institutions as well as free
11 and fair elections.

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