

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 6, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We write with concerns regarding the severe human rights abuses in Venezuela. These abuses, which existed during the rule of former President Nicolas Maduro, have not lessened despite significant involvement and control of Venezuelan affairs by the U.S. Government or the replacement of Maduro by Acting President Delcy Rodriguez. The Trump administration's increased support of the same officials who contributed to the Venezuelan government's lengthy and well-documented record of human rights abuses and violations is alarming, and we urge the State Department to re-commit to its long-standing practice of calling attention to human rights violations committed by the Venezuelan regime and exerting pressure on regime officials to end these abuses.

The State Department has monitored and documented the Venezuelan government's long history of committing human rights abuses and violations since its 1999 Country Report on Human Rights Practices during Hugo Chavez's presidency. In its 2024 Country Report, the most recent official report available, the State Department continued to find abuses, including credible reports of arbitrary or unlawful killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment; arbitrary arrest or detention; and restrictions on freedom of expression and the press.¹ Likewise, Amnesty International and other international human rights organizations have detailed government attacks on fundamental human rights, finding that, for example, "[h]undreds of people suffered arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance, as well as torture and other human rights violations, for opposing or criticizing the government" last year.²

Many of the abuses perpetrated by Maduro and his agents, including repression of political opponents and targeting of civil society activists and independent journalists, have persisted

¹ U.S. Dep't of State, *2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Venezuela*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/venezuela/>.

² Amnesty International, *Venezuela 2025*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/americas/south-america/venezuela/report-venezuela/>; Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2026: Venezuela*, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/venezuela/freedom-world/2026>.

despite Maduro's capture in Operation Absolute Resolve, Rodríguez's recognition as the "sole Head of State" by the Trump Administration, and the United States' outsized role in the country's day-to-day operations.³ For example, the Venezuelan government continues to use its security apparatus, including the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM) and the infamous Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN), to carry out arbitrary arrests and disappearances while concealing detainees' whereabouts from their families and legal representatives.⁴ Despite Rodríguez's promotion of a so-called "amnesty law" at the beginning of the year, human rights organizations report that over three hundred political prisoners still remain detained without access to relief or a fair trial, including several political opposition leaders, journalists, and human rights defenders facing politically motivated prosecutions.⁵ Restrictions on the freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression remain significant as well, and independent journalists and media outlets continue to face censorship, restriction, intimidation, and blocking by the Rodríguez government; at least 405 media outlets have closed in the past 20 years, and more than 60 news sites continued to be blocked as of February this year.⁶

Importantly, several of the Venezuelan regime's current officials were implicated in human rights violations and abuses committed under the Maduro regime. Rodríguez, then Maduro's Executive Vice President, was sanctioned in 2018 under an Executive Order designed to address Venezuela's "erosion of human rights guarantees, persecution of political opponents, curtailment of press freedoms, use of violence and human rights violations and abuses."⁷ Now recognized as Venezuela's head of state, the Trump administration has removed Rodríguez's sanctions without explanation.⁸ The White House also pressed this month for her removal as a defendant in a lawsuit against several Venezuelan officials for the detention and alleged torture of three Americans released in a 2023 prisoner swap.⁹ Additionally, in 2015 the U.S. government sanctioned Gustavo Enrique González López, the former the head of SEBIN, for his role in

³ The Associated Press, *U.S. lifts sanctions on Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez*, NPR (April 2, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/04/02/g-s1-116142/u-s-lift-sanctions-venezuela-president-delcy-rodriguez>; Tyler Pager and Anatoly Kurmanaev, *How Marco Rubio Is Running Venezuela From Afar*, N.Y. Times (July 13, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/07/11/us/politics/how-marco-rubio-runs-venezuela.html>.

⁴ Reuters, *Venezuelan mother dies 10 days after state confirms missing son died in custody* (May 17, 2026), <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuelan-mother-dies-10-days-after-state-confirms-missing-son-died-custody-2026-05-18/>.

⁵ Foro Penal, *La Represión en Cifras*, <https://foropenal.com/represion-en-cifras#presos-politicos>;

⁶ Manuel Rueda, *Venezuelans test the limits of new freedoms* (Feb. 10, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/02/10/nx-s1-5706626/venezuela-prisoners-free-speech-maduro-delcy>.

⁷ Federal Register, *Notice of OFAC Sanctions Actions* (Oct. 4, 2018), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/10/04/2018-21591/notice-of-ofac-sanctions-actions>; Federal Register, *Blocking Property and Suspending Entry of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Venezuela* (May 11, 2015), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2015/03/11/2015-05677/blocking-property-and-suspending-entry-of-certain-persons-contributing-to-the-situation-in-venezuela>.

⁸ Office of Foreign Assets Control, *Venezuela-related Designation Removal* (April 1, 2026), <https://ofac.treasury.gov/recent-actions/20260401>.

⁹ Joshua Goodman, *Federal judge awards \$314 million to 3 Americans held and allegedly tortured in Venezuela* (July 14, 2026), <https://www.nbcmiami.com/news/local/federal-judge-awards-314-million-to-3-americans-held-and-allegedly-tortured-in-venezuela/3833673/>.

“significant acts of violence or conduct that constitutes a serious abuse or violation of human rights.”¹⁰ Today, González López is Venezuela’s Defense Minister.

Furthermore, Venezuelans repeatedly saw their political rights eroded under Maduro, including after he claimed victory in the illegitimate 2018 presidential election. The Trump administration called the election “neither free nor fair,” and as a United States Senator, you emphasized the importance of Venezuelans’ political rights when asserting that Maduro “was not elected under [Venezuela’s] constitution.”¹¹ Similarly, the Maduro regime brazenly ignored the well-documented opposition victory in the July 2024 Venezuelan election. Unfortunately, the United States has stood by Rodríguez after her regime ignored its constitutional requirement to hold a presidential election within thirty days of the expiration of her 90-day temporary role as acting president in early April.¹² Administration officials have also reportedly assisted the regime’s efforts to obstruct opposition leader María Corina Machado’s return to Venezuela, despite previously recognizing her party’s 2024 electoral victory.¹³ The United States’ continued support for Rodríguez despite her extra-constitutional hold on power is an implicit endorsement of her regime’s violation of Venezuelans’ political rights.

The next expected human rights report on Venezuela, which was due to Congress on February 25, 2026, will be limited to violations and abuses committed in 2025. In order to provide Congress with a clearer picture of U.S. efforts to disassociate from these abuses and hold perpetrators accountable since the recognition of Rodríguez as the head of state in January 2026, please provide detailed responses to the following questions no later than August 21, 2026:

1. What is the State Department’s assessment of alleged violations and abuses of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Venezuelan government since Acting President Rodríguez was sworn in?
2. What is the State Department’s assessment of changes, if any, to the human rights situation in Venezuela since January 3, 2026?
3. Since January 3, 2026, has the State Department reviewed credible information of Venezuelan security forces or officials committing gross violations of human rights for the potential application of Leahy Law or Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act sanctions?

¹⁰ Office of the Press Secretary, *FACT SHEET: Venezuela Executive Order* (March 9, 2015), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/09/fact-sheet-venezuela-executive-order/>.

¹¹ Dave Lawler and Jonathan Swan, *Trump seizes chance to ratchet up pressure on Venezuela’s Maduro* (Jan. 23, 2019), <https://www.axios.com/2019/01/23/trump-regime-change-venezuela-maduro-pence-video>.

¹² Regina Garcia Cano, *Venezuela’s Delcy Rodríguez remains acting president after her initial 90-day appointment expired* (April 6, 2026), The Associated Press, <https://apnews.com/article/venezuela-maduro-acting-president-delcy-rodriguez-trump-f33d6fe7407305b513940dfa4f69136c>.

¹³ Vera Bergengruen and Juan Forero, *How Machado’s Return to Venezuela Got Derailed After U.S. Resistance* (July 2, 2026), The Wall Street Journal, <https://www.wsj.com/world/americas/how-machados-return-to-venezuela-got-derailed-after-u-s-resistance-dc5ef755>.

4. What is the State Department's assessment of the likelihood that United States security or economic assistance provided to Venezuela has been used in support of activities related to facilitating civil repression and arbitrary detentions since January 3, 2026?
5. What actions did the United States government take between January 1, 2025, and January 2, 2026, and has it taken since January 3, 2026, to:
 - a. promote respect for and observance of human rights by the Venezuelan government?
 - b. penalize individuals who are or were previously suspected of violating or abusing human rights in Venezuela?
 - c. disassociate the United States, as well as any assistance provided to Venezuela, from human rights abuses and violations?

It is critical that the State Department ensure no United States foreign assistance funding, including security or economic assistance, contributes to the human rights violations routinely committed by the Venezuelan regime and its long-entrenched officials. It is also crucial the Department continues to report on and work to prevent human rights violations and abuses committed in Venezuela, even as the U.S. government strengthens its ties to the Rodriguez government.

Congress will continue to conduct rigorous oversight of the Administration's efforts to support the Rodriguez regime. Should the State Department refuse to address the Venezuelan government's human rights violations by the time the immediate earthquake recovery efforts conclude, we will consider using all available tools to require such a report, including Section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act.

We look forward to your timely response to these urgent concerns.

Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



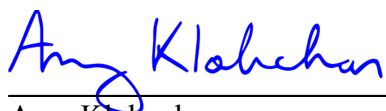
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



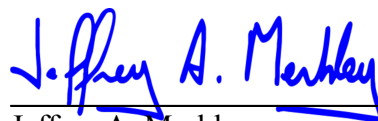
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