



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-02649**

BY: **MR. OUELLETTE (WINNIPEG CENTRE)**

DATE: **SEPTEMBER 24, 2018**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **SIGNED BY THE HONOURABLE CHRYSIA FREELAND**

Response by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

VENEZUELA

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The promotion of democracy and democratic governance, as well as human rights and the rule of law, lie at the heart of Canada's values and foreign policy. Canadians are deeply concerned by the deterioration of democratic rule and human rights in Venezuela. Canada supports the legitimate legislative body in Venezuela, the National Assembly, and condemns the misappropriation of its powers by the National Constituent Assembly (ANC), established in contravention of the Venezuelan constitution. Following the May 20, 2018, disputed Venezuelan election, Canada rejected the electoral process as not representing the democratic will of Venezuelans.

Many credible reports have decried the deteriorating human rights situation in Venezuela. The Secretary General (SG) of the Organization of American States (OAS) has published four reports detailing systematic violations to constitutional order, rule of law, and human rights. In these reports, the SG has denounced: the criminalization of opposition and civil society voices; arbitrary detention; military prosecution of civilians; and the excessive use of force against peaceful protests. The 2017 Inter-American Commission of Human Right country report denounced the marked deterioration to the exercise of human rights, and the grave political, economic, and social crisis in Venezuela.¹ Similarly, Human Rights

¹ <http://oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/Venezuela2018-en.pdf>

Watch reporting has repeatedly exposed the dire human rights and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela.²

In June 2018, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighted serious ongoing human rights violations under the Maduro regime.³

Canada continues to denounce the deteriorating democratic and human rights situation in Venezuela. Canada is actively engaged with hemispheric partners at the Organization of American States (OAS) and within Lima Group in an effort to press for the restoration of democracy in Venezuela. Canada pressed for the adoption of the resolution on Venezuela at the United Nations Human Rights Council (September 27, 2018).

Canada has imposed targeted sanctions against 70 Venezuelan officials and individuals who are responsible for or complicit in the deterioration of democracy, gross violations of internationally recognized human rights, or acts of significant corruption. These measures, based on the Special Economic Measures Act (SEMA) and the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (JVCFOA), prohibit persons in Canada and Canadians outside of Canada from dealing with property held by, or on behalf of, a person named in the relevant sanctions regulations. The measures are consistent with Canadian principles and values, and aim to maintain pressure on the Venezuelan government to restore constitutional democracy and respect for democratic and human rights.

On September 26, 2018, the Prime Minister of Canada joined the Presidents of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru in signing a letter to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) referring the situation in Venezuela to the ICC, and requesting the Prosecutor open an investigation into crimes against humanity that may have been committed in Venezuela since February 2014. The referral was based, inter alia, on the report of the Panel of Independent Experts appointed by the SG-OAS on September 2017, which concluded that there are reasonable grounds to presume that crimes against humanity have been committed by the Maduro regime against its own people.

Canada is committed to defending democracy and human rights around the world, and stands in solidarity with the people of Venezuela as they struggle to restore democracy in their country.

² <https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/venezuelas-crisis>

³ https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/VE/VenezuelaReport2018_EN.pdf