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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

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January 29, 2015

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The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to express my concern that the Department of State has not acted expediently to sanction Venezuelan regime officials and their associates who are responsible for human rights abuses in Venezuela, and to urge the State Department to take immediate action to hold those individuals accountable to the greatest extent possible.

On December 18, 2014, the President signed into law the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-278). This law requires the President to impose sanctions against any foreign person, including current and former Venezuelan regime officials, or any person acting on the regime's behalf, that the President determines fits the criteria of any of the following three categories:

- has perpetrated, or is responsible for ordering, significant acts of violence or serious human rights abuses in Venezuela during the protests that began on February 4, 2014;
- has ordered or directed the arrest or prosecution of a person in Venezuela because of their legitimate exercise of freedom of expression or assembly; or
- has knowingly provided material support for the commission of these acts of violence or serious human rights abuses.

Mr. Secretary, it has been nearly one year since the Venezuelan people's pro-democracy demonstrations were met with State ordered violence, resulting in dozens of deaths. The law's intent is clear: the President shall sanction individuals who fall within these parameters by blocking and prohibiting all transactions of their property and denying them visas to the United States.

As we approach the one year anniversary of the protests, as well as National Youth Day, on February 12, it is extremely important that these sanctions be strongly enforced. We must hold the Venezuelan regime publicly accountable in order prevent another bloody attack against peaceful protestors and send a signal to the Maduro regime and other human rights violators in the hemisphere that the U.S. will not let human rights violations occur without consequences.

Sincerely,

ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN  
Member of Congress

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