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February 18, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary of State  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I would like to respectfully request that the United States government immediately reduce by at least 10% our oil imports from Venezuela and direct our Permanent U.S. Representative to the Organization of American States (OAS) to call for the Permanent Council to convene a special session of the General Assembly to debate the crisis in Venezuela.

The ongoing conflict in Venezuela has led to the deaths of young students with scores injured as its people call for democratic reforms and freedom. In return, the Venezuelan leader has responded by: declaring three U.S. consular affairs personnel as personae non gratae and giving them 48 hours to leave the country, restricting the Venezuelan people's access to social media such as Twitter, censoring the press, violating human rights by detaining and intimidating students, and arresting the leader of the peaceful opposition, Leopoldo Lopez.

It is regrettable that in 2012, Venezuela was still the fourth largest foreign supplier of crude oil to the United States even though oil imports from Venezuela have been declining. In 2012, the U.S. imported less barrels of total crude oil than in 2005 and this downward trend should continue. According to statistics from the Department of Commerce, Venezuela's oil exports to the United States were valued at almost \$31 billion in 2013, accounting for 97% of Venezuela's exports to the United States. In 2011, the state-owned Venezuelan oil company Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) was sanctioned by the U.S. government for delivering two cargoes of reformate to Iran, worth approximately \$50 million. The United States should not help maintain a regime that undermines our national security and violates human rights.

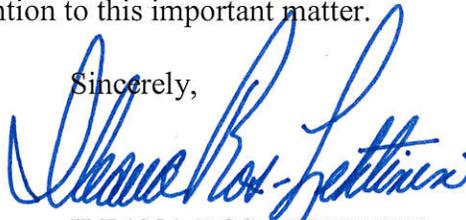
Regarding the OAS, I firmly believe that the U.S. should take the lead in bringing Venezuela's crisis to the fore at this multilateral entity. The OAS has proven that it lacks the inherent ability or political will to properly address regional threats to democracy. As a founder and the largest international donor to the OAS, the U.S. has a responsibility and moral obligation to ensure that democratic principles are upheld and hold accountable those leaders who infringe on the fundamental freedoms of their people. Article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter specifically states that "if the urgency of the situation so warrants, the Permanent Council shall immediately convene a special session of the General Assembly." In addition, the people of Venezuela deserve an opportunity to present their claims in front of the inter-American system in keeping with Article 8 of the Charter which states, "Any person or group of persons who consider that their human rights have been violated may present claims or petitions to the inter-American system for the promotion and protection of human rights in accordance with its established procedures."

It is worth noting that we are not alone in this matter and have received regional support calling for peace in Venezuela. For example, former President of Colombia Alvaro Uribe and former Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo have asked for solidarity with the Venezuelan people during their struggle. In addition, the former judge of the Inter-American Human Rights Court, Asdrubal Aguiar, has called for the Permanent Council at the OAS to convene.

Mr. Secretary, we must stand in solidarity with those freedom fighters in Venezuela that are being persecuted. Due to the actions taken by the Venezuelan regime that violate democratic order, the U.S. must not stay silent and should therefore immediately reduce oil imports from Venezuela by at least 10%. In addition, our Permanent Representative at the OAS should urgently use the voice, vote, and influence of the United States to help convene a special session to examine the current violence and crisis in Venezuela.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN  
Chairman Emeritus

CC: The Honorable Carmen Lomellin  
Permanent U.S. Representative to the Organization of American States