

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 18, 2015

The Honorable Thomas Shannon
Counselor
The Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Counselor Shannon:

We are writing to express our deep concern over the recent meeting between you and Diosdado Cabello in Haiti. We support free, fair, and transparent elections in Haiti, but engagement by the increasingly authoritarian Venezuelan regime in U.S.-Haiti discussions is counterproductive to advancing democratic principles.

While the Venezuelan regime may pay lip service to free and fair elections in Haiti, it continues to oppose subvert democratic institutions and commit human rights abuses against the people of Venezuela. The Maduro regime has imprisoned opposition leaders, banned others from appearing on the ballot, censored and suppressed Venezuela's independent media, brutally oppressed activists, and has yet to set a date for the constitutionally mandated legislative elections that are due before the end of the year.

Meeting with Cabello sends the wrong message to the people of Venezuela. While Venezuelan pro-democracy leaders remain incarcerated and go on hunger strikes to protest deteriorating conditions in Venezuela, meetings between U.S. diplomats and their oppressors undermine their struggle for rule of law and human rights. Furthermore, Cabello utilizes his position as the head of Venezuela's legislature to incite violence against the regime's democratic opposition and has condoned the abuse of human rights. It is also troubling that this meeting comes on the heels of press reports that indicate that Cabello is involved in drug trafficking and under investigation by law enforcement authorities.

The United States must express unequivocal solidarity with those activists and groups struggling for human rights and liberties in Venezuela.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN
Member of Congress

MARIO DIAZ-BALART
Member of Congress



CARLOS CURBELO
Member of Congress