

113TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 488

Supporting the people of Venezuela as they protest peacefully for democratic change and calling to end the violence.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 25, 2014

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (for herself, Mr. SALMON, Mr. DIAZ-BALART, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. SIRES, Mr. GARCIA, Mr. DESANTIS, Mr. GRAYSON, Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. DEUTCH, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mr. MURPHY of Florida, Mr. YOHO, Mr. STOCKMAN, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, and Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Supporting the people of Venezuela as they protest peacefully for democratic change and calling to end the violence.

Whereas the United States Government should support the free and peaceful exercise of representative democracy in Venezuela, condemning violence and intimidation against the country's political opposition, and calling for dialogue between all political actors in the country;

Whereas, on February 12, 2014, also known in Venezuela as the National Youth Day, students began protesting in several cities against anti-democratic decisions and the crippling economy made by Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro;

Whereas, on February 12, 2014, a judge issued an arrest warrant for Leopoldo López, leader of the opposition party Voluntad Popular, for baseless and unfounded allegations in connection with the student protests;

Whereas, on February 17, 2014, the Government of Venezuela notified the United States Department of State that it had declared 3 consular officers at the United States Embassy in Venezuela *personae non gratae*;

Whereas over the last year, the Government of Venezuela has expelled a total of 8 United States Government officials from Venezuela;

Whereas, on February 18, 2014, opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez turned himself in to Venezuelan authorities, was arrested, and charged with criminal incitement, conspiracy, arson, and intent to damage property;

Whereas Leopoldo Lopez is currently being held in a prison at a military facility;

Whereas according to Amnesty International, “The charges brought against Venezuelan opposition leader Leopoldo López smack of a politically motivated attempt to silence dissent in the country”;

Whereas the Venezuelan Government has blocked users’ online images as opposition groups marched through Caracas;

Whereas the Venezuelan people have been protesting economic, social, and political concerns facing their country, including corruption, rising inflation rates, unemployment, shortages of everyday products, increasing crime rates, and the erosion of human rights and respect for political dissent;

Whereas, on February 19, 2014, President Barack Obama criticized the Venezuelan Government for arresting protesters, called for their release, and urged the government to focus on the “legitimate grievances of the Venezuelan people”;

Whereas, as of February 20, 2014, there have been 13 people killed, over 100 injured, and many persons unjustly detained due to pro-democracy demonstrations throughout Venezuela;

Whereas Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro threatened to expel the United States news network CNN from Venezuela and has taken off the air the Colombian news channel NTN 24, which transmits in Venezuela, after news outlets reported on the nation-wide protests;

Whereas the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights released a statement on February 14, 2014, which “expresses its concern over the serious incidents of violence that have taken place in the context of protest demonstrations in Venezuela, as well as other complaints concerning acts of censorship against media outlets, attacks on organizations that defend human rights, and acts of alleged political persecution”; and

Whereas as a member of the Organization of American States and signatory to the Inter-American Democratic Charter, the Government of Venezuela has agreed to abide by the principles of constitutional, representative democracy, which include free and fair elections and adherence to its own constitution: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—
- 2 (1) supports the people of Venezuela in their
- 3 pursuit of freedom of expression and freedom of as-

1 sembly to promote democratic principles in Ven-
2 ezuela;

3 (2) deplotes the inexcusable violence per-
4 petrated against opposition leaders and protesters in
5 Venezuela, and the growing efforts to use politically
6 motivated criminal charges to intimidate the coun-
7 try's political opposition;

8 (3) urges responsible nations throughout the
9 international community to stand in solidarity with
10 the people of Venezuela and to actively encourage a
11 process of dialogue between the Government of Ven-
12 ezuela and the political opposition to end the vio-
13 lence;

14 (4) urges the United States Department of
15 State to work in concert with other countries in the
16 Americas to take meaningful steps to ensure that
17 basic fundamental freedoms in Venezuela are in ac-
18 cordance with the Inter-American Democratic Char-
19 ter and to strengthen the ability of the Organization
20 of American States (OAS) to respond to the erosion
21 of democratic norms and institutions in member
22 states;

23 (5) urges the United States Department of
24 State to insist that the Secretary General of the
25 OAS immediately convene the OAS's Permanent

1 Council to seek the most effective way to expedi-
2 tiously end the violence in Venezuela in accordance
3 with the Inter-American Democratic Charter; and
4 (6) supports the Inter-American Commission on
5 Human Rights in calling upon the Venezuelan Gov-
6 ernment to “urgently adopt all measures that may
7 be necessary to guarantee the rights to life, humane
8 treatment, and security, as well as the political
9 rights, the right of assembly, and the rights of free-
10 dom of association and freedom of expression of ev-
11 eryone under its jurisdiction”.

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