



**Statement of Lead Republican Michael McCaul (R-TX)
House Committee on Foreign Affairs**

“Hearing: Venezuela at a Crossroads”
February 13, 2019

Remarks as Prepared

When Nicolas Maduro was handpicked by Hugo Chavez in 2013, it was clear that he would follow his socialist footsteps. Since that time, Maduro’s socialist policies, rampant corruption, and violent crackdowns on peaceful political dissent have turned Venezuela into a failed state.

Hyperinflation has skyrocketed. Food and medicine are scarce. And according to the UN, up to 3 million people have fled the country since 2014. Last week, a fuel tanker and two shipping containers were placed on a bridge to block the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid. This act highlights how evil the Maduro regime really is.

The current crisis highlights the horrifying impact of socialism. Those who continue to preach or show sympathy toward socialism do not understand its history and the abject suffering it has caused.

Let us be clear. The suffering of the Venezuelan people at the hands of the Maduro regime is not caused only by its ideology. The Maduro regime is full of criminals that oversee a mafia state backed by U.S. adversaries like Cuba, Russia, China, and Iran, and is linked to drug trafficking and other illicit activities.

Today, the people of Venezuela have had enough. And over the last month, they have started to take back the country they love. Inspired by Juan Guaidó, leader of the National Assembly



and interim President, millions of protestors have rallied in the streets across the country and stood up to the Maduro dictatorship.

Bolstered by the leadership of the U.S., many nations around the world, including most Latin American and European countries, are standing with him.

I commend the President for recognizing Juan Guaidó as the legitimate interim President, for supporting his efforts to call for free and fair elections, and for imposing sanctions that hold the regime responsible for their criminal actions.

This week, I am introducing a resolution that condemns the criminal actions of Nicolas Maduro and countries like Cuba, Russia, China, Iran, and Syria for supporting his regime.

It also clearly recognizes Juan Guaidó as interim President and urges the international community to support humanitarian and economic assistance for Venezuela.

The Venezuelan people need to know that America is on their side. But it should also be known that we do not aim to choose their next leader. We simply want the conditions that would allow the people to choose for themselves.

Our role must be a supporting one, but one that stands for the universal principles of freedom and democracy. And today's hearing will allow us to discuss how we can play that role to the best of our ability.

In January, I was very pleased that President Trump and Secretary Pompeo called on Elliot Abrams to serve as Special Envoy for Venezuela. As a seasoned diplomat who has served in



numerous foreign policy and national security positions, I believe Mr. Abrams is the right man for this job.

I look forward to hearing his testimony as well as the testimony of our other expert witnesses. Both parties can come together and support this noble cause.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back the balance of my time.

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