

**FORMER SENIOR U.S. OFFICIALS'**  
**OPEN LETTER TO SECRETARY BLINKEN ON U.S.-VENEZUELA POLICY**

April 3, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
United States Secretary of State  
The State Department  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As former United States officials with long experience in U.S. relations with Latin America, we have a deep interest in efforts to find a democratic solution to the crisis in Venezuela.

Although the Barbados agreement might have represented an opportunity for the democratic opposition to improve conditions for a freer and fairer election this year, subsequent actions by the Maduro government have left us with little optimism that a credible process and outcome is possible.

We believe the moment calls for more decisive U.S. leadership to preserve any chance that the Venezuelan people may have to seek a democratic future.

First, we respectfully urge you to state unequivocally that unless the Maduro regime permits the opposition to field a presidential candidate of its choosing without further delay, U.S. authorities will rescind General License 44 authorizing oil and gas transactions in Venezuela and renew robust sanctions against the officials found to be subverting democracy and engaged in egregious corruption.

Second, we believe that capitulating to the regime's arbitrary ban on the candidacy of the opposition's singular standard-bearer, Maria Corina Machado, would deal a fatal setback to democratic prospects in Venezuela.

Therefore, we ask you to state publicly that Maria Corina Machado's rightful participation in the election is a condition to the United States extending sanctions relief or recognizing the electoral results.

Finally, we are aware that Ms. Machado and her campaign team continue to be the targets of credible threats to their personal safety. Given that campaign of

harassment and the recent murder of a dissident Venezuelan military officer in Chile under suspicious circumstances, the U.S. government must warn Maduro that he will be held accountable for continued threats or violence against Ms. Machado and her supporters.

If U.S. diplomacy fails to take a clear stand on these issues, we believe Maduro will continue trampling on the Barbados agreement and destroying the prospects for a stable, democratic Venezuela.

In contrast, by insisting that Maduro respect the will of opposition primary voters and driving up the cost of his failure to do so, the United States will keep faith with millions of Venezuelans who have struggled for decades to restore their country's institutions and economy by democratic means.

We hope you will agree that America must act more vigorously for the restoration of democracy in Venezuela.

Thank you for your service to our country. We look forward to working together to promote a positive outcome in Venezuela.

Sincerely,

Elliott Abrams  
U.S. Special Representative for Venezuela, 2019-  
2021

James C. Cason  
U.S. Ambassador to Paraguay, 2006-2008

Marshall S. Billingslea  
Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorist  
Financing, 2017-2020

José R. Cárdenas  
Acting Assistant Administrator for Latin America &  
the Caribbean, USAID, 2007-2009

Phillip T. Chicola  
Director Andean Affairs, U.S. Department of State,  
1998-2004

Paula Dobriansky  
U.S. Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs,  
2001-2009

Patrick Duddy  
U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela, 2007-2010

Daniel W. Fisk  
Special Assistant to the President for National  
Security Affairs and Senior Director for the Western  
Hemisphere, U.S. National Security Council, 2006-  
2009

Lino Gutiérrez  
U.S. Ambassador to Argentina, 2003–2006  
U.S. Ambassador to Nicaragua, 1996–1999

Dennis Hays  
U.S. Ambassador to Suriname, 1997-2000

**Stephen Johnson**

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, U.S. Department of Defense, 2007-2009

**Christopher Landau**

U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, 2019-2021

**Stephen G. McFarland**

U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala, 2008-2011

**Michael McKinley**

U.S. Ambassador to Brazil, 2017-2018

U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, 2015-2016

U.S. Ambassador to Colombia, 2010-2013

U.S. Ambassador to Peru, 2007-2010

**Luis Moreno**

U.S. Ambassador to Jamaica, 2014-2017

**Roger F. Noriega**

U.S. Ambassador to the OAS, 2001-2002

Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, 2003-2005

**Otto Reich**

U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela, 1986-1989

Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, 2002

President's Special Envoy for Western Hemisphere Initiatives, 2003-2004

**Peter Romero**

Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, 2001

U.S. Ambassador to Ecuador, 1993-1996

**Charles Shapiro**

U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela, 2002-2004

**Michael Skol**

U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela, 1990-93