

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ine Eriksen Sjøreide
Postbox 8114 Dep
NO-0032
Oslo

Oslo, 4 February 2019

Dear Minister Eriksen Sjøreide,

We write to you respectfully about Venezuela.

Before we explain our concerns to you, please kindly receive our deepest gratitude for Norway's expressions of support to the Venezuelan people during the last year/s. We are aware of your last statement of 24/01/19 in support of the National Assembly as well as your offer to assist in a political process that would lead to free and transparent elections. Needless to say, we are immensely grateful for the generous financial contributions provided by your government to local NGOs providing support to Venezuelans, both at home and in the borders, affected by the terrible humanitarian and refugee crisis.

On 10th January 2019, Nicolás Maduro sworn himself for a second term based on fraudulent elections held on 20 May 2018 the results of which were rejected by the world at large, including the EU **and Norway**. Since the results were void, Maduro's presidential mandate expired on 10th January. The country's constitution (Art 233) establishes that in the absence of a legitimate president, the President of the National Assembly (Mr. Juan Guaido) shall act as president on an interim basis. It is on that capacity, and exercising the authority granted by Articles 333 and 350 which call all Venezuelans to defend the Constitution and the Rule of Law, that Guaido assumed the role of interim President.

As you know, Venezuela's National Assembly is the only legitimate and last remaining democratically elected institution in Venezuela and its President (Mr. Guaido) is today the only true representative of the will of the Venezuelan people.

Exercising this constitutional authority, Mr. Guaido has openly requested support from all Venezuelans, as well as from the international community, to successfully deliver on his mandate, as acting president, to take the country safely and peacefully to free and transparent elections. His high level Road Map builds on 3 main actions: 1) Stop Maduro's unconstitutional continuance in Power, 2) Create a transitional government and 3) Call for free and transparent elections.

Mr. Guaido has received the enthusiastic support of millions of Venezuelans representing, according to some, ca 90% of the population, and his temporary mandate as President is seen as the only hope to transition to democracy in a peaceful way. We hope that beyond his legal legitimacy, as already explained, the popular sentiment of country-wide support to Guaido by all sectors and corners in the country has been properly conveyed to your Ministry by your staff in the ground and/or in Bogota.

Mr. Guaido has also received firm support by almost all the American countries; not only in the North (US and Canada) but, also and very important, by our neighbors in Latin America. That is the case of the members of the Lima Group including notably Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Paraguay to name a few. As days pass by, the support by the International Community increases and we are pleased to see messages of solidarity from countries in all continents. In Europe, we received with immense

gratitude this week the statement of the European Parliament clearly recognizing Guaido as acting President. Denmark, Austria and the UK have followed suit and it is expected that France, Spain and others will issue statements along the same lines.

Against this background, we observe with concern the cautious attitude of the Norwegian government, which, although calling for respect for the National Assembly, does not seem prepared to recognize its President in the additional temporary authority that, constitutionally, he is obliged to assume.

Recognition by the international community is critical at this point and we believe that there should be no room for open interpretations or second guessing when it comes to clearly acknowledging the legitimacy of Guaido as acting President, and admitting, by contrast, the lack of legitimacy of Maduro to remain in power.

The last days, we have heard with concern the feedback from some Venezuelan opposition leaders and members of civil society that are wondering about Norway's position. Some would like to see Norway assume a firmer stand giving priority to the restoration of democracy in our country above any other interests or considerations; **for it is the survival of democracy that is at stake here and there is an extreme sense of urgency to obtain broad recognition and move on to the transition.**

It is paramount that Norway takes a firm stand and recognizes Guaido as acting President of Venezuela in accordance with our Constitution and the will of our people. Norway can play an important role in the reconstruction of our country in many areas from building civil society capacity to assisting as facilitation agent in a future reconciliation process. This, in addition to commercial interest in existing and future partnerships in various sectors that will require new technology and collaboration from reliable foreign players. Clear support to democracy now will position Norway as a straight-forward partner in the new free and prosperous Venezuela we are trying to build.

In connection with the above recognition, we, as Venezuelan citizens in Norway, would also like to understand what is the **position of your Government regarding the diplomatic staff at the Venezuelan embassy in Oslo** since they have been appointed by a dictatorial Regime that is no longer legitimate and does not represent us.

Finally, with regards to the upcoming meeting of the UN Human Rights Council, we would like to ask Norway to request the office of the **UN High Commissioner of Human Rights (Michelle Bachelet) to perform the long-awaited inspection in Venezuela of human rights violations.**

We thank you for your attention and continuous goodwill and look very much forward to your response.

Please note that we are also sending this letter to the Norwegian Parliament.

Sonia Zapata Eriksen
The Norwegian Venezuelan Justice Alliance
Chairman