

## Oppose Intervention in Venezuela, Support Diplomacy and Aid

### A Military Intervention in Venezuela Would be Disastrous

- Any military intervention could exponentially increase the suffering in Venezuela. A U.S. military intervention would likely include either an airstrike-focused campaign (as in Libya) or a full scale invasion (as in Iraq) and [could kill thousands of civilians](#).<sup>1</sup> Previous U.S. interventions in Libya, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria have amply demonstrated the impossibility of fully protecting civilian lives once the bombing starts.
- Real democracy can not be imposed by military force. A [majority of Venezuelans](#)<sup>2</sup> oppose military intervention, preferring a negotiated solution to the crisis. If the U.S. intervenes, it will do so over the objection of most Venezuelans — an inherently anti-democratic move.
- As previous U.S. interventions have shown, getting into a war is far easier than getting out of one. Given the weak state of the economy in Venezuela, the U.S. would likely have to be in Venezuela [rebuilding and stabilizing for years](#).<sup>3</sup> Or alternatively, it might leave Venezuela in chaos as was the case with Libya. Congress must learn the tragic lessons of engaging in regime change wars.

### Sanctions Are Making the Humanitarian Situation Worse

- U.S. sanctions are increasing the suffering of the Venezuelan people. [Economist Marc Weisbrot points out](#)<sup>4</sup> that, “Though the government’s economic policies have played a role in Venezuela’s woes, the Trump sanctions have made things considerably worse since August 2017, decimating the oil industry and worsening shortages of medicine that have killed many Venezuelans. The Trump sanctions also make it nearly impossible for the government to take the necessary measures to exit from hyperinflation and depression.”
- A recent [Congressional Research Service report](#)<sup>5</sup> acknowledges that “some analysts are concerned that the stronger sanctions on PdVSA [i.e. the January administration sanctions on the state-owned oil company] will further exacerbate Venezuela’s difficult humanitarian crisis, already marked by shortages of food and medicines and mass migration, by limiting the country’s key source of revenue.”
- As with military intervention, a [majority of Venezuelans](#)<sup>6</sup> oppose sanctions targeting their nation.

### Humanitarian Aid is Good, Politicizing Aid is Not

- It is a core principle of humanitarian aid efforts that they be neutral, impartial and apolitical. The administration’s politicizing of humanitarian in order to create a dangerous stand-off at the border between pro-Maduro and anti-Maduro forces in unconscionable and sets a horrible precedent.

1 Mora, Frank, *What a Military Intervention in Venezuela Would Look Like*, Foreign Affairs, March 19, 2019

2 Smilde, David, *Most Venezuelans Want Maduro Out, but Oppose Military Intervention*, Washington Office on Latin America, January 10, 2019

3 Mora, Frank, *What a Military Intervention in Venezuela Would Look Like*, Foreign Affairs, March 19, 2019

4 Weisbrot, Mark, *Trump Sanctions, Regime Change Strategy in Venezuela Can Only Cause More Violence and Suffering*, Center for Economic and Policy Research, February 2, 2019

5 *Venezuela: Overview of U.S. Sanctions*, Congressional Research Service, March 8, 2019

6 Woody, Christopher, *Venezuela is ‘a target-rich environment’ for more US sanctions — but it could backfire*, Business Insider, December 22, 2017

- The Obama administration’s director of foreign disaster assistance at USAID [recently wrote](#)<sup>7</sup> about how to address the humanitarian crisis: “There are several immediate priorities. First, the United States should explicitly commit to impartial aid and stop tying the relief effort to its political aims. ... Second, to depoliticize aid deliveries, the United States and other donors should cede leadership of the relief effort to more neutral players such as the U.N., the Red Cross, and NGOs. ... Finally, the U.N. should ambitiously scale up its relief efforts.”

## A Peaceful Diplomatic Approach Should be Led by Venezuelans

- The long history of bloody U.S. interventions in Latin America should make the U.S. cautious about acting — or appearing to act — in a way that imposes its political will on Venezuela. The installation of Juan Guaido as self-appointed interim leader came after talks between Guaido and the U.S, and after behind the scenes planning by elements of the Trump administration known for their hawkish positions on Venezuela. Even administration officials acknowledged that the heavy hand of the U.S. behind Guaido’s move could “[divide the region](#).”<sup>8</sup>
- Ongoing efforts to create a parallel government either through showdowns at the border over aid, or the recent seizing of diplomatic offices in the U.S., risks tipping the current polarization in Venezuela into a civil war. Instead the U.S. should support the dialogue called for by the UN that would include multiple factions coming to the negotiating table.

## Steps Members of Congress Can Take

- **Co-sponsor [S.J.Res. 11](#) introduced by Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR), or [H.R. 1004](#) introduced by Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI)**, to prohibit the use of funds for military action in Venezuela without congressional approval.
- **Make statements** opposing military intervention in Venezuela, opposing sanctions that harm the general population of Venezuela, and supporting diplomatic efforts to resolve the political standoff in Venezuela.

<sup>7</sup> Konyndyk, Jeremy, *The most effective way to help Venezuelans: Stop politicizing aid*, The Washington Post, March 1, 2019

<sup>8</sup> Rampton, Roberta, Matt Spetalnick, and Patricia Zengerle, *With Venezuela convulsed by crisis, Trump’s hawks take dramatic turn*, Reuters, January 24, 2019