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**Open Letter to Condemn Trump Admin's Hypocritical Indictment on Drug Charges of Venezuelan President**

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By: Organizations and Intellectuals

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We, the undersigned organizations and prominent individuals condemn the false claims of criminal charges by the U.S. government against the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and other high-ranking officials with the pretext of their alleged involvement in international drug trafficking.

The U.S. government is offering a US\$15 million bounty for information that would lead to the arrest of Venezuelan President Maduro. Bounties of US\$10 million are offered for the National Constituent Assembly President Diosdado Cabello, retired generals Hugo Carvajal and Clive Alcalá, Minister for Industry and National Production Tareck El Aissami, and other Venezuelans. The US government indictments accuse the Venezuelan officials of participating in a “narco-terrorism conspiracy” with the Colombian guerrilla group FARC to “flood the United States with cocaine.”

The U.S. has refused to recognize the democratically elected Venezuelan President Maduro and has been seeking to install one to its liking, currently Juan Guaidó. What the US is doing is ordering the arrest of world leaders it does not approve of, putting a bounty on their heads.

This decision of the US constitutes a further escalation in coercive measures against a sovereign country, which has included sanctions so extreme as to create a blockade, costing Venezuela 40,000 lives in a period of just over a year and US\$116 billion in lost revenue.

It is well-documented that two close and long-time U.S. allies in Latin America, the governments of Colombia and Honduras, have been heavily involved in narco-trafficking. The last Latin American leader the U.S. charged with drug trafficking was Panama's Manuel Noriega (who was running drugs with the CIA). The U.S. then invaded his country and later imprisoned him in Miami.

Actual evidence of Venezuela involvement in drug trafficking

The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), which is unfriendly to the Venezuelan government, finds: “CCDB [U.S. interagency Consolidated Counterdrug Database] data does not justify many of the claims made by

those who advance the 'narcostate' narrative to describe organized crime in Venezuela today and to argue against efforts to achieve a negotiated path to democratic governance in Venezuela. As noted, U.S. authorities estimate that 93 percent of U.S.-bound cocaine is trafficked through Western Caribbean and Eastern Pacific routes, not through Venezuela's Eastern Caribbean coast."

The WOLA study found that the U.S. government data suggests that, despite these challenges, Venezuela is not a primary transit country for U.S.-bound cocaine. The State Department reports that over six times as much cocaine passed through Guatemala in 2018 than through Venezuela. Around 90 percent of all U.S.-bound cocaine is trafficked through the western Caribbean and eastern Pacific routes?, not through Venezuela's eastern Caribbean seas.

The US Department of Justice has not presented evidence to substantiate their narco-trafficking indictment. Washington's case looks politically motivated. In the wake of over six years of US sanctions and over a year of failed attempted coups, the majority support of the Venezuelan people for their democratically elected government has not been shaken.

We, the undersigned, demand that the U.S. government:

- Drop the groundless indictments against President Maduro and others.
- Lift the sanctions so that Venezuela can purchase life-giving medicines and medical equipment to fight the coronavirus pandemic that is threatening the entire world.
- Restore normal relations with Venezuela based on peace and respect for national sovereignty.

Sincerely,

John Pilger, Noam Chomsky, Medea Benjamin, Ray McGovern, Susan Sarandon, and 3000 other organizations and individuals.