
Obama Declares Venezuela a Threat to National Security

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"I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, find that the situation in Venezuela, including the Government of Venezuela's erosion of human rights guarantees, persecution of political opponents, curtailment of press freedoms, use of violence and human rights violations and abuses in response to anti-government protests, and arbitrary arrest and detention of antigovernment protestors, as well as the exacerbating presence of significant public corruption, constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, and I hereby declare a national emergency to deal with that threat," the order reads. ?

?Immediately after, Venezuela's Foreign Ministry announced the government of President Nicolas Maduro would "soon" respond to Obama's executive action against the Latin American country.

"We will soon make Venezuela's response to the extent and reach of these statements," Venezuelan Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez said in a news conference.

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?Obama also ordered sanctions against seven Venezuelan officials, saying that all they would be banned from traveling to the U.S. and any and all assets and properties belonging to them would be frozen.

The officials affected by Obama's sanctions are Antonio Jose Benavides Torres, Commander of the Strategic Region for the Integral Defense (REDI) of the Central Region of Venezuela's Bolivarian National Armed Forces (FANB); Gustavo Enrique Gonzalez Lopez, Director General of Venezuela's Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) and President of Venezuela's Strategic Center of Security and Protection of the Homeland (CESPPA).

Also, Justo Jose Noguera Pietri, President of the Venezuelan Corporation of Guayana (CVG), a state-owned entity, and Katherine Nayarith Haringhton Padron, a national level prosecutor of the 20th District Office of Venezuela's Public Ministry, as well as Manuel Eduardo Perez Urdaneta, Director of Venezuela's Bolivarian National Police; Manuel Gregorio Bernal Martinez, Chief of the 31st Armored Brigade of Caracas of Venezuela's Bolivarian Army; Bernal Martínez, who was the head of SEBIN on February 12, 2014, and against Miguel Alcides Vivas Landino, Inspector General of the FANB.

"We now have the tools to block their assets and their use of U.S. financial systems," White House spokesman Josh Earnest said in a statement.

"We are deeply concerned by the Venezuelan government's efforts to escalate intimidation of its political opponents. Venezuela's problems cannot be solved by criminalizing dissent," Earnest added.

Earnest said Washington has consistently called on the Venezuelan government to release opposition member they claim to be unjustly jailed.

"The Venezuelan government should release all political prisoners, including dozens of students, opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez and Mayors Daniel Ceballos and Antonio Ledezma," he stated, completely ignoring all the conclusive evidence presented by the Venezuelan government against these and other members of the right-wing opposition.

These statements come despite the fact that grave human rights violations have been reported in the United States, including the police killing of various unarmed African-Americans and hispanics without any legal consequences against the perpetrators.

The U.S. is also responsible for serious human rights violations against dozens of arbitrarily detained people in Guantanamo.

The Obama administration has also opted to ignore the extremely serious human rights issues in allied countries such as Mexico, despite the fact that international organizations, including the United Nations, have continuously criticized the Mexican government for human rights abuses and impunity.

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