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**US Senate to Hold Hearings on Venezuela**

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On Monday, the Obama Administration announced financial sanctions against human rights violators in Venezuela. The Administration's announcement comes almost a year after Rubio first proposed the sanctions and nearly three months after President Obama signed into law Senate Bill 2142, the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014, which Rubio co-authored.

"The human rights crisis in Venezuela is getting worse every day, and these long overdue financial sanctions are important steps to hold Nicolas Maduro's regime accountable," said Rubio. "The U.S. government should expand the sanctions against more Venezuelan human rights abusers, including General Vladimir Padrino Lopez, the commandant of the Venezuelan Armed Forces and minister of defense. Among his offenses, General Padrino signed the recent order authorizing lethal force against peaceful demonstrators, an order which left a 14 year old boy dead. This general should be on this list, but the administration inexplicably left him off.

"Even as I welcome this round of sanctions, I question why President Obama is simultaneously moving to lift sanctions on Cuba, which has played a direct role in sowing unrest in Venezuela and has a human rights record even worse than the Maduro regime. Human rights violations in Venezuela stem directly from what the Cuban army and intelligence agency have taught the Chavez-Maduro regime.

"The authoritarian system that Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro have imposed in Venezuela have destroyed its economy and any semblance of democratic order in the country. Maduro has

ruined lives through both the misery his system has inflicted, but also the lives his regime has cut short in response to demonstrations over the past year. As long as Maduro and his thugs remain in power, economic conditions and human rights will continue to worsen in Venezuela."

Senate Bill 2142 directed the President to apply targeted visa and financial sanctions against individuals, including members of the government, public security forces, and armed civilian groups, who have perpetrated, ordered or directed acts of violence or human rights abuses against peaceful demonstrators in Venezuela, or have directed or ordered the arrest or prosecution of a person primarily because of the person's legitimate exercise of freedom of expression or assembly. S. 2142 also called for a report on obstacles to access objective media content in Venezuela, current efforts by the U.S. government to address these challenges, and a strategy for expanding existing programs.

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