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**U.S. CITIZENS AND NGOs JOIN WORLD LEADERS IN CALL FOR PRESIDENT OBAMA
TO RETRACT EXECUTIVE ORDER AGAINST VENEZUELA**

New York, April 2, 2015 – In an Open Letter addressed to President Barack Obama, over 119 U.S. academics, activists and NGOs called on their head of state to rescind his Executive Order declaring Venezuela “an unusual and extraordinary threat to U.S. national security”. On March 9, 2015, President Obama invoked his executive powers to decree a national emergency based on the alleged “threat” represented by Venezuela. The Executive Order also imposed sanctions on Venezuelan officials with potentially far-reaching consequences.

U.S. citizens and NGOs are joined by leaders from over 138 countries and prestigious multilateral organizations worldwide in their demand for President Obama to rescind his measures against Venezuela. Latin American and Caribbean nations have unanimously rejected President Obama’s Executive Order against Venezuela and have firmly called for its reversal. A powerful statement issued March 26, 2015 from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) which represents all 33 countries in the region, expressed “its rejection of the Executive Order issued by the Government of the United States of America on March 9, 2015,” considering “that this Executive Order should be reversed.”

The United Nations G77+China group, which represents 134 countries, also issued a firm statement opposing President Obama’s Executive Order against Venezuela. “The Group of 77+China deplores these measures and reiterates its firm commitment to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela...The G77+China calls on the Government of the United States to evaluate and put into practice alternatives of dialogue with the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, under principles of respect for sovereignty and self-determination. As such, we urge that the Executive Order be abolished.”

In addition, regional organizations -- such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) representing 12 South American states, the Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) representing 11 Latin American and Caribbean nations, and the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) -- issued powerful condemnations of President Obama’s measures against Venezuela. One hundred British parliamentarians have also repudiated the Executive Order and called on the U.S. government to rescind its actions against Venezuela.

More than 6 million people have signed a petition in Venezuela and online calling on President Obama to retract his Executive Order of March 9, 2015 and to cease interference in Venezuelan affairs. Even prominent members of the Venezuelan opposition have rejected Obama's designation of Venezuela as a threat to U.S. national security.

In a letter to the U.S. president by Venezuela's Lara State Governor Henry Falcon, known for his anti-government position, he writes, "Let me express to you clearly that Venezuela can't be considered a threat to any other nation on the planet. We have serious internal problems but we will solve them between Venezuelans."

This overwhelming international support for Venezuela comes just days before Latin American leaders will meet with President Obama at the Summit of the Americas in Panama City on April 9-10. While originally the summit was staged to be a historical event where Cuba would reunite with the organization after its forced exclusion by the U.S. over 50 years ago, now the forum will be overshadowed by Obama's latest move against Venezuela.

Heads of state from the region have made clear that they will not stand for U.S. government aggression against one of their neighbors. Bolivian President Evo Morales warned, "These undemocratic actions of President Barack Obama threaten the peace and security of all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean." Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa scoffed, "It must be a bad joke, which reminds us of the darkest hours of our region, when we received invasions and dictatorships imposed by the U.S....Will they understand Latin America has changed?"

Despite being the aggrieved party, President Maduro has repeatedly expressed his desire for "respectful dialogue on equal terms" with the Obama administration and has requested Ecuador, as chair of CELAC, play a key role in mediating these efforts. The upcoming Summit of the Americas may just provide the type of environment that could enable such a dialogue.

In this letter to President Obama, U.S. citizens and NGOs encourage their head of state to improve regional relations and show "our Latin America neighbors that the U.S. can relate to them in peace and with respect for their sovereignty."

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Open Letter to President Obama

President Barack Obama

White House

Washington, DC 20500

April 2, 2015

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned individuals and organizations, met your December 17, 2014 joint announcement with President Raul Castro of steps to normalize relations with Cuba with cautious optimism. For decades the US has been isolated in its policy on Cuba, both from the rest of the hemisphere and the rest of the world. For the 23rd year in a row, the UN General Assembly voted last October (188-2) to condemn the US embargo of Cuba.

The UN called on the US to refrain from promulgating and applying laws and regulations which violate the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, and the freedom of trade and navigation.

We were pleased that the US was finally taking steps to come into compliance with international law. Yet our optimism turned to renewed concern the following day, December 18, when you signed a sanctions bill against Venezuela which appears to perpetuate the same failed policy toward Venezuela that you had just rejected toward Cuba. You hardened that policy on March 9 when you issued an executive order declaring a national emergency with respect to the "unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by the situation in Venezuela." This action also verified that the US is stepping up its support for regime change in Caracas.

What is US hemispheric policy given this belligerent stance toward Venezuelan democracy? That is the question being asked by the world media and particularly by the sovereign States and multinational institutions of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Union of South American Nations ([UNASUR](#)), which represents every country in South America, said your executive order constitutes a "threat of interference" against Venezuela's sovereignty and calls on you to revoke the order. While politics in Venezuela is polarized and economic disruption caused primarily by the falling price of oil have caused long lines and falling poll numbers for President Nicolas Maduro, we see nothing that could conceivably be described as an "extraordinary threat" to the US or even to Venezuela's closest neighbors. We note that Colombia, the US's closest ally in South America and even the Venezuelan opposition have rejected US sanctions.

Compared to Mexico and Honduras where state violence is endemic and the rule of law tenuous at best, Venezuela is not at all outside the norm among nations.

Venezuela is not at war with any nation, does not have military bases outside its borders, and is helping to mediate an end to the war in Colombia; it is a champion

of peace in the region. To call it a national security threat to the US diminishes the credibility of your administration in the eyes of the world.

To those who know the dynamics in democratic Venezuela, this US policy stance is dangerous and provocative. To set the record straight, the Venezuelan government is democratically elected. Presidents Chavez and Maduro were both elected in what former President Jimmy Carter declared to be the best election process in the world. (The Carter Center monitors and reports on elections worldwide.) Your executive declaration, however, is likely to be taken as a green light to the most hard line and anti-democratic forces in the country to continue to commit anti-government violence.

We call on you, President Obama, to rescind your executive order naming Venezuela a US national security threat. We call on you to stop interfering through funding and reckless public statements in Venezuela's own democratic processes. And most of all, we encourage you to show to our Latin American neighbors that the US can relate to them in peace and with respect for their sovereignty.

Sincerely,

Noam Chomsky, MIT

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* For identification purposes only