

Dear Sirs and Madams Foreign Ministers of states party to the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR),

As representatives of human rights organizations from across the hemisphere, we write to you requesting participation in the upcoming meeting of the Organ of Consultation of states party to the TIAR, which is due to take place on December 3, 2019.

In recent years the governments of our hemisphere have played a fundamental role in denouncing the ongoing assault by Nicolas Maduro against Venezuela's democratic institutions and repeated human rights violations, including violence against protesters, cracking down on dissent, and persecuting the democratically-elected National Assembly. In formal multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS), as well as ad hoc bodies such as the Lima Group and International Contact Group, our governments have focused international attention on the brutal reality of Venezuela's crisis.

However, in repeated meetings of many of these bodies, to date there have been limited efforts to incorporate the participation of Venezuelan and other regional civil society organizations. Considering that the TIAR Organ of Consultation was first convened following a [resolution of the OAS Permanent Council](#), we believe that this body should adhere to norms regarding the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the Inter-American System. We note with approval that the most recent 49th General Assembly of the OAS adopted [AG/RES. 2933 \(XLIX-O/19\)](#), which resolved to "continue facilitating the implementation of strategies, forums, and mechanisms for promoting, increasing, and strengthening participation by civil society organizations." We also point out that this General Assembly highlighted [CP/RES.759 \(1217/99\)](#), which states that "civil society organizations may attend the activities of the OAS, make presentations, provide information, and, at the request of the organs, agencies, and entities of the OAS, provide expert advice."

There is a clear hemispheric consensus that civil society is vital to strengthening democracy, development, and protection of human rights across the Americas. In this context, we ask that you support our request to create a space in the upcoming TIAR meeting in which civil society organizations may present information on relevant aspects of Venezuela's crisis and the appropriate international response. In particular, we request space to recommend that in their efforts to resolve the Venezuelan crisis, regional governments:

- **Refrain from supporting the use of force, and insist on a political, non-violent solution that restores democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela.** A military option would almost certainly prove bloody and disastrous for all involved. Moreover, keeping a so-called military option on the table as a possible policy alternative has not proven to be an effective pressure strategy. Instead it has divided opposition actors, and disincentivizes unified political organizing inside the country. What is more, any military confrontation would exacerbate the regional migration crisis.
- **Ensure that any sanctions are as targeted as possible, and avoid exacerbating the country's complex humanitarian emergency.** Research shows that general economic sanctions, in addition to contributing to widespread suffering, do not usually achieve their desired results. Instead, sanctions are most effective when they are tied to specific and concrete outcomes, and when the conditions for their relief are clearly communicated.



- **Support a more robust humanitarian response.** The international community should address the humanitarian crisis by supporting experienced actors that are working on the ground to meet humanitarian needs. This includes independent humanitarian organizations and United Nations agencies active in Venezuela. To date the UN Humanitarian Response Plan for the last quarter of 2019—which already fell short of the full needs of the population—has received just 14 percent of the US\$223 million needed for its implementation.
- **Use their voice at the United Nations to encourage the UN Secretary General to be more engaged in the Venezuela crisis.** We believe that the Secretary General has an important role to play in building support for a political solution in Venezuela, as well as in urging for a stronger humanitarian response both inside the country and to the needs of migrants and refugees.
- **Engage in all possible advocacy for the prompt restoration of human rights to the Venezuelan people.** It is imperative to continue insisting on Venezuelans' right to political and electoral participation, and on a solution which allows them to be consulted in a sovereign, free, transparent, and democratic way regarding their own fate.

We thank you for your consideration of our request, and look forward to your response. You or your office may reply directly to gramsey@wola.org or by calling +1 (202) 797-2171.

Cordially,

Signatories:

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