

AMENDMENT NO. _____ Calendar No. _____

Purpose: To amend the preamble.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES—114th Cong., 2d Sess.

S. Res. 537

Expressing profound concern about the ongoing political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, urging the release of political prisoners, and calling for respect of constitutional and democratic processes.

Referred to the Committee on _____ and
ordered to be printed

Ordered to lie on the table and to be printed

AMENDMENT intended to be proposed by Mr. CARDIN

Viz:

1 Strike the preamble and insert the following:

Whereas the deterioration of basic governance and the economic crisis in Venezuela have led to an unprecedented humanitarian situation in which people are suffering from severe shortages of essential medicines and basic food products;

Whereas Venezuela lacks more than 80 percent of the basic medical supplies and equipment needed to treat its population, including medicine to treat chronic illnesses and cancer as well as basic antibiotics, and 85 percent of pharmacies are at risk of bankruptcy, according to the Venezuelan Pharmaceutical Federation;

Whereas, despite the massive shortages of basic foodstuffs and essential medicines, President of Venezuela Nicolas

Maduro has rejected repeated requests from civil society organizations to bring humanitarian aid into the country;

Whereas the International Monetary Fund assesses that, in Venezuela, gross domestic product will contract 10 percent and inflation will exceed 700 percent in 2016, accelerating to over 1,600 percent in 2017, the worst anticipated growth and inflation performance in the world;

Whereas Venezuela's political, economic, and humanitarian crisis is fueling social tensions that are resulting in growing incidents of public unrest, looting, violence among citizens, and an exodus of Venezuelans abroad;

Whereas Caracas continues to have the highest per capita homicide rate in the world at 120 per 100,000 citizens, according to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime;

Whereas the deterioration of governance in Venezuela has been exacerbated by widespread public corruption and the involvement of public officials in illicit narcotics trafficking and related money laundering;

Whereas, on August 1, 2016, General Nestor Reverol, Venezuela's current Minister of Interior and former National Guard commander, was indicted in the United States for participating in an international cocaine trafficking conspiracy;

Whereas, on November 18, 2016, Franqui Francisco Flores de Freitas and Efrain Antonio Campo Flores, nephews of President Maduro and Venezuelan First Lady Cilia Flores, were convicted by a United States Federal jury on charges of conspiring to import cocaine into the United States;

Whereas international and domestic human rights groups, such as Venezuelan organization Foro Penal, recognize more than 108 political prisoners in Venezuela, including opposition leader and former Chacao mayor Leopoldo Lopez, Judge Maria Lourdes Afiuni, Caracas Mayor Antonio Ledezma, former Zulia governor Manuel Rosales, and former San Cristobal mayor Daniel Ceballos;

Whereas the 1999 Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela serves as the foundation for political processes in Venezuela;

Whereas, in December 2015, the people of Venezuela elected the opposition coalition (Mesa de Unidad Democrática) to a two-thirds majority in the unicameral National Assembly, with 112 out of the 167 seats;

Whereas, in late December 2015, the outgoing National Assembly confirmed to the Supreme Court of Venezuela magistrates politically aligned with the Maduro Administration and, thereafter, the Supreme Court blocked four legislators, including 3 opposition legislators, from taking office;

Whereas, during the first year of the new legislature, the Supreme Court has repeatedly overturned legislation passed by the democratically elected National Assembly;

Whereas, in 2016, President Maduro has utilized emergency and legislative decree powers to bypass the National Assembly, which, alongside the actions of the Supreme Court, have severely undermined the principles of separation of powers in Venezuela;

Whereas, in May 2016, Organization of American States Secretary General Luis Almagro presented a 132-page report outlining grave alterations of the democratic order in

Venezuela and invoked Article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which calls on the OAS Permanent Council “to undertake a collective assessment of the situation”;

Whereas, in late October 2016, Venezuela’s state courts and National Electoral Council, which are comprised of political allies of President Maduro, halted efforts to hold a referendum pursuant to provisions of the Venezuelan constitution to recall President Maduro, thereby denying the Venezuelan people the ability to pursue a democratic solution to Venezuela’s crisis; and

Whereas, in November 2016, sectors of the opposition and the Government of Venezuela initiated a dialogue, facilitated by the Vatican, in an effort to pursue a negotiated solution to the country’s political, economic, social, and humanitarian crisis: Now, therefore, be it