

# Activists at Venezuelan Embassy Offer State Department a Peaceful Resolution to Standoff

Activists protecting the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington have written to the State Department offering a way to peacefully end the standoff between themselves and an angry mob of Guaidó supporters.

*Activists who have lived inside the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington for more than a month protecting it from seizure by an illegitimate government have offered the State Department a solution to the crisis unfolding at the diplomatic compound. Last week the State Department pulled the credentials of Venezuelan diplomats—still recognized at the United Nations—preventing them from entering their place of work. Instead the U.S. recognized Venezuelan “diplomats” representing the self-declared “president” Juan Guaidó.*

*In an effort to evict the activists, police and the Secret Service have prevented anyone or even food from entering the building and have cut off electricity and water. They’ve also allowed an angry mob of Guaidó backers to intimidate the activists and their supporters on the street. Police have arrested supporters who have tried to toss food into open windows. Last week, Guaidó called for U.S. military intervention in Venezuela to install him in power after his failed coup attempt on April 30.*

*Here is the letter that has been sent on Monday to the State Department and the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry .*

**To:** U.S. State Department, Venezuelan Foreign Ministry

**From:** Embassy Protection Collective

**Re:** Exiting the Venezuelan Embassy

**Date:** May 13, 2019

This is the 34th day of our living in the Venezuelan embassy in Washington, DC. We are prepared to stay another 34 days, or however long is needed to resolve the embassy dispute in a peaceful way consistent with international law.

This memo is being sent to the U.S. and Venezuela as well as members of our Collective and allies. We are encouraging people to publish this memo as a transparent process is needed to prevent the U.S. from making a unilateral decision that could impact the security of embassies around the world and lead to military conflict.

There are two ways to resolve the issues around the Venezuelan embassy in DC, which we will explain.

Before doing so, we reiterate that our collective is one of independent people and organizations not affiliated with any government. While we are all U.S. citizens, we are not agents of the United States. While we are here with permission of the Venezuelan government, we are not their agents or representatives.

We are here in the embassy lawfully. We are breaking no laws. We did not unlawfully enter and we are not trespassing.

### **1. Exiting with a Protecting Power Agreement**

The exit from the embassy that best resolves issues to the benefit of the United States and Venezuela is a mutual Protecting Power Agreement. The United States wants a Protecting Power for its embassy in Caracas. Venezuela wants a Protecting Power for its embassy in DC. Such agreements are not uncommon when diplomatic relations are severed.

A Protecting Power Agreement would avoid a military conflict that could lead to war. A war in Venezuela would be catastrophic for

Venezuela, the United States, and for the region. It would lead to lives lost and mass migration from the chaos and conflict of war. It would cost the United States trillions of dollars and become a quagmire involving allied countries around the world.

We are serving as interim protectors in the hope that the two nations can negotiate this resolution. If this occurs we will take the banners off the building, pack our materials, and leave voluntarily. The electricity could be turned on and we will drive out.

We suggest a video walk-through with embassy officials to show that the Embassy Protection Collective did not damage the building. The only damage to the building has been inflicted by coup supporters in the course of their unprosecuted break-ins.

## **2. The United States violates the Vienna Convention, makes an illegal eviction and unlawful arrests**

This approach will violate international law and is fraught with risks. The United States would have to cut the chains in the front door put up by embassy staff and violate the embassy. We have put up barriers there and at other entrances to protect us from constant break-ins and threats from the trespassers whom the police are permitting outside the embassy. The police's failure to protect the embassy and the U.S. citizens inside has forced us to take these actions.

The Embassy Protectors will not barricade ourselves, or hide in the embassy in the event of an unlawful entry by police. We will gather together and peacefully assert our rights to remain in the building and uphold international law.

Any order to vacate based on a request by coup conspirators that lack governing authority will not be a lawful order. The coup has failed multiple times in Venezuela. The elected government is recognized by the Venezuelan courts under Venezuelan law and by the United Nations under international law. An order by the U.S.-

appointed coup plotters would not be legal.

Such an entry would put embassies around the world and in the United States at risk. We are concerned about U.S. embassies and personnel around the world if the Vienna Convention is violated at this embassy. It would set a dangerous precedent that would likely be used against U.S. embassies.

If an illegal eviction and unlawful arrests are made, we will hold all decision-makers in the chain of command and all officers who enforce unlawful orders accountable.

If there is a notice that we are trespassing and need to vacate the premises, please provide it to our attorney Mara Verhayden-Hilliard, copied on this memo.

We have taken care of this embassy and request a video tour of the building before any arrests.

We hope a wise and calm solution to this issue can be achieved so escalation of this conflict can be avoided.

There is no need for the United States and Venezuela to be enemies. Resolving this embassy dispute diplomatically should lead to negotiations over other issues between the nations.

**The Embassy Protection Collective**

**May 13, 2019**

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