

# **Press Releases: Statement on Move To Indict Turkish Civil Society Leaders**

Press Statement  
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
February 23, 2019

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The United States is gravely concerned by reports that prosecutors in Turkey moved to indict 16 civil society, media, and business leaders. Exercising the right to freedom of expression should not result in an aggravated life sentence. The ability to exercise the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association is fundamental to any healthy democracy. We urge Turkey to respect these freedoms and to release all those held arbitrarily.

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# **Press Releases: The United States Pre-Positions Aid for Venezuelans on the Brazil-Venezuela Border**

Fact Sheet  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
February 22, 2019

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On February 22, the United States and its partners began pre-positioning additional humanitarian aid for Venezuelans in Boa Vista, Brazil in proximity to the Brazil-Venezuela border. This life-saving humanitarian assistance is made up of 178 metric tons of locally-procured food supplies and is ready to be delivered to Venezuelans suffering from severe food shortages inside Venezuela. This aid includes:

- **Food kits** containing rice, beans, sugar, and salt to feed nearly 3,500 people for 10 days; and
- **Additional rice** to feed an estimated 6,100 people for one month.

To save lives, this critical aid must be allowed to enter Venezuela. The U.S. government is coordinating with governments in the region and our regional humanitarian partners to ensure that the systems are in place to transport this aid into Venezuela safely and efficiently and to reach Venezuelans.

The United States applauds Brazil for working in partnership with us to make this aid delivery possible, and for providing additional contributions of humanitarian assistance.

The United States remains committed to helping the people of Venezuela, and this assistance is not the first – and will not be the last – that the American people send to help those in need.

Since Fiscal Year 2017, the United States has provided more than \$140 million – including nearly \$97 million in humanitarian assistance and approximately \$43 million in development and economic assistance – to support the generous efforts of countries in the region that are hosting the nearly 3.4 million people who have fled the chaos in Venezuela.

This includes more than \$10.5 million in humanitarian aid to assist Venezuelans displaced to Brazil, particularly in the border state of Roraima, reinforcing the Government of Brazil's emergency response efforts.

In addition, on January 24, 2019, Secretary Pompeo announced that the United States is ready to provide more than \$20 million in additional funding to support humanitarian assistance activities in Venezuela. This additional funding is being used, in part, to procure the humanitarian supplies being pre-positioned on Venezuela's borders with Colombia and Brazil.

We continue to assess humanitarian needs throughout the region to determine what additional assistance we can provide.

We greatly appreciate the generosity and compassion of countries throughout the hemisphere who are hosting the more than three million Venezuelans who

have fled crisis in their country. We commend the humanitarian contributions made by all donors, and encourage additional contributions to meet growing humanitarian needs.

Humanitarian assistance is critical to saving the lives of Venezuelans, but it will not improve the political and economic conditions that are responsible for this crisis. We continue to encourage the relevant authorities in Venezuela to implement immediately the critical economic and political reforms necessary to end the hyperinflation, supply shortages, and corruption at the heart of this crisis.

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## [Press Releases: Interview With Christina Londono of Telemundo](#)

Interview  
Michael R. Pompeo  
  
Secretary of State

Washington, DC  
February 22, 2019

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**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here with us. All eyes today are on the borders of Venezuela. The Maduro regime is not going to let the aid come in – that’s what they’re saying. When does U.S. patience run out, and what would that look like? (In Spanish.) Military intervention?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Christina, thanks for having me on. Tomorrow’s a big day, February 23rd. The United States and some other countries have provided an enormous amount of humanitarian assistance aimed at meeting an incredible crisis for the Venezuelan people. When you see the starvation, when you see

the inflation, when you see the absence of medical care, it breaks your heart. The American people have responded with a tremendous amount of aid that's now positioned around Venezuela. And tomorrow, we along with the, at the invitation of President Guaido, will work to move that aid to the people who so desperately need it.

You said that the Maduro regime has indicated they're not going to permit it in. We've heard those statements too. I truly hope that the Maduro regime is listening, that they're going to allow the Venezuelan people to receive food – I mean, it's just crazy to be talking about a government, a leader who would deny food for his own people and medical care, and I hope he changes his mind. I hope he permits this to move forward. It's a desperate need, one that has now begun to be met by the world. And what happens if he doesn't I think the Venezuelan people will ultimately decide.

**QUESTION:** If he turns on his people, are you guys ready to intervene? Is the U.S. ready to defend the Venezuelan people from their own government if something should happen? (In Spanish.)

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** We've talked about the fact that every option's on the table, but we are very hopeful that the Venezuelan people and the Venezuelan military will come to understand that Maduro's days are past, that the regime that has created these conditions ought not be permitted to continue to inflict this kind of pain and desperation on the Venezuelan people, such desperation that 10 percent of the Venezuelan population chose to leave the country. This is a rich nation with a long and wonderful history, and with the right leadership can be so again. So my fervent hope is that the Venezuelan people will resolve this without violence, with a political solution that gets what the Venezuelan people so richly deserve: a free, democratic nation that can be on the road towards economic recovery with all the liberty that the Venezuelan people deserve.

**QUESTION:** But you're not ready to give them an ultimatum or give them a time table – this happens and we're going to take other measures?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** One of the things the Trump administration's been very clear about is we don't show our hand. We don't tell others what we may do. But I think the Maduro regime completely understands that America is committed to supporting President Guaido and the popular will of the Venezuelan people, and we're going to be hard at it, not only today and tomorrow as this aid begins to move across the borders, but in the days and weeks and months that follow. This is an objective that we have set to help the Venezuelan people succeed, and we're determined to achieve that outcome.

**QUESTION:** If you're moving against these regimes that are not democratic, many Nicaraguan people, Cuban people are saying, "Are you going to help us next?" (In Spanish.)

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Yes, President Trump's administration has done so and will continue to do so not just in Venezuela but certainly Nicaragua and Cuba as well. And you see that. You see that in the policies. They're very different from the previous administration. They recognize that these governments are

treating their people harshly, presenting real risks, security risks to the people, privacy risks, denying them basic liberties. And these are not the kind of things that ought to happen in the Western Hemisphere, and the United States under President Trump is working diligently in not just Venezuela but each of those two countries to achieve good outcomes for those people. The people need to lead those efforts. I'm convinced that they are determined to do it as well. The American people will support them.

**QUESTION:** So you're hoping for a domino effect?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I hope that each of those countries, that the citizens of those countries understand that the yoke of authoritarianism that has been foisted upon them is not necessary, that the corruption of those regimes is not necessary, that the bad behavior and difficult living conditions that those people find themselves in today is not necessary, that they can have a different life and that they'll contribute their efforts, their goodwill, and their humanity towards achieving a better political situation, both in Venezuela and Nicaragua and Cuba as well.

**QUESTION:** Last question: Mexico. I could not leave it out. They're not paying for the wall. There's still caravans of immigrants coming in. We haven't seen the new president, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, here in the United States yet. Are the relationship – is the relationship tense? Are there problems with Mexico? (In Spanish.)

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I think the relationship between the two leaders is great. I know they've had multiple phone calls. I speak with Foreign Minister Ebrard with great frequency, and we have a wonderful relationship. There are clearly disagreements on policy. We wish they frankly did more to help us in Venezuela. We think it's in Mexico's best interest to do that too. And then you highlighted other areas. President Trump has made unequivocally clear that he views the border as a national security threat, and the humanitarian crisis that follows from that is real. We're working with the Mexican Government. I've met a number of times with Foreign Minister Ebrard to make sure that we understand each other's policies and how we can execute that along the border. But there are so many things that the United States and Mexico work on together. We have a trade agreement that's been developed – hopefully will come into effect by the end of this year. Many good things are happening between the United States and Mexico. They're a neighbor, an ally, and a country that I've put a lot of time and energy into developing a good relationship with, and I'm confident that that will continue.

**QUESTION:** Are you pressuring for more cooperation from Mexico? (In Spanish.)

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** I always want more cooperation from everyone that I work with. Yes, and I'm sure there are things they'd like us to do, and we're working to make sure that we're delivering on those for the American people as well.

Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary, it's been a pleasure. Thank you so much.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Wonderful to see you.

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## **Press Releases: Intent To Nominate Ambassador Kelly Craft for U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations**

Press Statement  
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC  
February 22, 2019

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I am very pleased that President Trump has announced his intent to nominate Ambassador Kelly Craft to be our next U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Ambassador Craft has been an outstanding advocate for America's national security and economic interests in Canada and she is extremely well-qualified to do the same at the United Nations. I look forward to her confirmation and continuing to work with her at the United Nations.

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# Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Travel to Vietnam and the Philippines

Press Statement  
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
February 22, 2019

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Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo will travel to Hanoi, Vietnam February 26-28, where he will participate in the President's summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and bilateral meetings with Vietnamese leaders.

The Secretary will then travel to Manila, Philippines February 28-March 1, where he will meet with President Rodrigo Duterte and Secretary of Foreign Affairs Teodoro Locsin, Jr.

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