

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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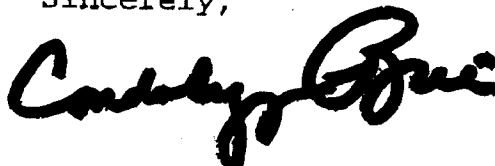
Dear Ms. Rubin de Ayala:

Thank you for your recent letter expressing concern for the well being of Alejandro Plaz, Maria Corina Machado, and Jose Luis Caleya. The political persecution of these individuals, and other members of SUMATE, is a disturbing development that requires the attention of all those committed to a peaceful, democratic, constitutional, and electoral resolution of Venezuela's political crisis.

The persecution of SUMATE's leadership is an act of intimidation designed to constrain the free exercise of political and human rights. The courage of Alejandro Plaz, Maria Corina Machado, Jose Luis Caleya, Luis Enrique Palacios, and other members of SUMATE, is admirable. It is a courage that has defined democratic movements throughout the world. It is a courage that has won respect and solidarity. We will continue to offer our support to such people and organizations. Intimidation, threats, and innuendo have no role in a free democratic process.

We call on the Venezuelan government to cease its harassment of these individuals and others and to dedicate itself to guaranteeing the free exercise of democratic rights.

Sincerely,



Condoleezza Rice
Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs

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