



Peace and Justice Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR
April 30, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Berkeley Peace and Justice Commission
 Submitted by: Igor Tregub, Chairperson, Peace and Justice Commission
 Subject: Resolution: No U.S. intervention in Venezuela

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution that affirms the sovereign right of the Venezuelan people to negotiate their political differences free from foreign intervention, and urges that the U.S. government withdraw its illegal, unilateral financial sanctions and refrain from military, economic, or diplomatic intervention in the internal affairs of the sovereign state of Venezuela.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

None.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Trump administration officials have openly declared their intention to overthrow the duly elected government of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Years of U.S. sanctions have contributed to a severe economic crisis, following a decades-old pattern of destabilization of U.S. adversaries.

Using the crisis it helped create as a pretext, the U.S. administration recognized opposition leader Juan Guaidó as interim president of Venezuela, launching a diplomatic front to the campaign to undermine the elected government. Administration leaders have called on Venezuelan armed forces to mutiny, and have threatened that all military options are on the table to achieve regime change.

At its regular meeting on March 4, 2019, the Peace and Justice Commission recommended the Council of the City of Berkeley affirm the right to self-determination of the Venezuelan people, and urge that the U.S. government refrain from intervention in the internal affairs of the sovereign state of Venezuela.

M/S/C: Bohn/Lippman

Ayes: al-Bazian, Bohn, Chen, Gussman, Lippman, Meola, Morizawa, Pierce, Rodriguez, Tregub

Noes: Maran

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Abstain: None

Absent: Han, Pancoast

BACKGROUND

At its regular meeting on March 4, 2019, the Peace and Justice Commission recommended the Council of the City of Berkeley affirm the right to self-determination of the Venezuelan people, and urge that the U.S. government refrain from intervention in the internal affairs of the sovereign state of Venezuela.

The City of Berkeley has long expressed its opposition to U.S. military intervention and economic destabilization of sovereign nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no identifiable environmental impacts or opportunities associated with the subject of this report.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The City of Berkeley has acknowledged that foreign interventions have a disastrous impact on life in cities such as Berkeley. The mandate of the Berkeley Peace and Justice Commission finds that: "The intentional destruction of cities in war is the rule and not the exception. The wealth to help the poor, heal the sick, house the homeless, educate the children, and care for the elderly is now spent on ever more costly weapons of mass destruction...Our best protection lies in initiating, devising, and promulgated peaceful and just policy alternatives." (Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 3.68.010). As Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. put it in 1967, "The bombs we drop in North Vietnam are exploding in the ghettos and barrios of the U.S."

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager takes no position on the content and recommendations of the Commission's Report.

CONTACT PERSON

Igor Tregub, Chairperson, Peace and Justice Commission

Breanne Slimick, Commission Secretary, City Manager's Office (510) 981-7018

Attachments:

1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

NO U.S. INTERVENTION IN VENEZUELA

WHEREAS, the Peace and Justice Commission advises the City Council on all matters relating to the City of Berkeley's role in issues of peace and social justice (Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 3.68.070); and

WHEREAS, Trump administration officials have openly declared their intention to overthrow the duly elected government of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro,¹ have urged the Venezuelan military to overthrow the Maduro government, has recognized a self-appointed opposition politician as president and vetoed any possibility of dialogue despite the efforts of Maduro, the governments of Mexico and Uruguay, and Pope Francis; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. has tightened illegal unilateral economic sanctions,² including the seizure of Venezuela's oil properties and bank accounts in the United States and financial sanctions that prevent Venezuela from producing its oil or securing credit or refinancing debt, thereby increasing the hardship on the people of Venezuela by preventing them from accessing imported foods and medicines, while hypocritically seeking to promote a military confrontation by forcing truckloads of aid across the Brazilian and Colombian borders;³ and

WHEREAS these unilateral sanctions are in violation of the UN and OAS⁴ Charters; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. has historically used its economic power to destabilize independent-minded countries, most famously Chile in the early 1970's, making the economy "scream,"⁵ as well as Nicaragua in the 1980's, and then using the peoples' economic misery as a pretext for military intervention;⁶ and

WHEREAS, Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world, and leading administration foreign policy officials have made clear the Trump administration's intention to turn Venezuela's oil over to U.S oil companies for exploitation;⁷ and

WHEREAS, Elliott Abrams has been named President Trump's Special Envoy to Venezuela, and is notorious for his central role in the 1980's as a top advisor to Presidents Reagan and Bush in the Iran-Contra scandal, which led to his conviction on criminal charges, and the arming of the Nicaraguan contras, the Salvadoran death squad government, and the genocidal regime in Guatemala responsible for the massacres of hundreds of thousands of indigenous people in that country;⁸ and

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WHEREAS, the U.S. campaign of regime change in Venezuela is in violation of international law,⁹ against the interests of the people of Venezuela and the people of the United States;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Berkeley affirms the sovereign right of the Venezuelan people to negotiate their political differences free from foreign intervention, and urges that the U.S. government withdraw its illegal, unilateral financial sanctions and refrain from military, or diplomatic intervention in the internal affairs of the sovereign state of Venezuela; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Berkeley requests the City Clerk to send a copy of this resolution to Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, Senator Dianne Feinstein, Senator Kamala Harris, President Trump, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.



[Commission Name]

¹ “Trump's declaration on Venezuela sets stage for 'confrontational moment',” CNN, January 24, 2019,

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/23/politics/venezuela-us-showdown/index.html>

² “Coercion, whether military or economic, must never be used to seek a change in government in a sovereign state,” [said](#) Idriss Jazairy, a UN special rapporteur concerned with the negative impact of sanctions." From article: “The US is orchestrating a coup in Venezuela,” Marjorie Cohn, professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, deputy secretary general of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, February 2, 2019, <https://truthout.org/articles/the-us-is-orchestrating-a-coup-in-venezuela/>

³ The United Nations and the Red Cross have refused to participate in Washington’s controversial aid plan to Venezuela. “We will not be participating in what is, for us, not humanitarian aid.” From article: “Red Cross, UN slam ‘Politicised’ USAID Humanitarian Assistance to Venezuela,” February 11, 2019, <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/14316>

⁴ OAS Charter--Article 15: “No State or group of States has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State. The foregoing principle prohibits not only armed force but also any other form of interference or attempted threat against the personality of the State or against its political, economic and cultural elements.”

ARTICLE 16: “No State may use or encourage the use of coercive measures of an economic or political character in order to force the sovereign will of another State and obtain from it advantages of any kind.”

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20119/volume-119-I-1609-English.pdf>

⁵ “Measures were undertaken in 1970 to try to prevent a free and democratic election. There was a huge amount of black propaganda about how if Allende won, mothers would be sending their children off to Russia to become slaves-stuff like that. The US also threatened to destroy the economy, which it could-and did-do.

“Q: Nevertheless, Allende won. A few days after his victory, Nixon called in CIA Director Richard Helms, Kissinger and others for a meeting on Chile. Can you describe what happened?”

“A: As Helms reported in his notes, there were two points of view. The "soft line" was, in Nixon’s words, to "make the economy scream." The "hard line" was simply to aim for a military coup.

“Our ambassador to Chile, Edward Korry, who was a Kennedy liberal type, was given the job of implementing the ‘soft line.’ Here’s how he described his task: ‘to do all within our power to condemn Chile and the Chileans to utmost deprivation and poverty.’ That was the soft line.”

Secrets, Lies, and Democracy, Noam Chomsky, 1994, <https://chomsky.info/secrets04/>

⁶ “These sanctions have cut off the means by which the Venezuelan government could escape from its economic recession, while causing a dramatic [falloff](#) in oil production and worsening the economic crisis, and causing many people to die because they can’t get access to life-saving medicines. Meanwhile, the US and other governments continue to blame the Venezuelan government — solely — for the economic damage, even that caused by the US sanctions,” Noam Chomsky, former UN Rapporteur Alfred de Zayas, Phyllis Bennis, Boots Riley, and some 65 other academics and experts, January 24, 2019, <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/01/24/open-letter-over-70-scholars-and-experts-condemns-us-backed-coup-attempt-venezuela>

“The threats, the economic war, the financial blockade and the sanctions violate both the UN Charter and the OAS Charter.” February 23, 2019, <https://dezayasalfred.wordpress.com/2019/02/23/open-letter-to-the-united-nations-secretary-general-antonio-guterres-and-to-the-high-commissioner-for-human-rights-michelle-bachelet/>

⁷ Perhaps most brazenly, [National Security Adviser John] Bolton appeared in [an interview on Fox Business](#) and disclosed that the U.S. government was in talks with American corporations on how to capitalize on Venezuela's oil reserves, which are proven to be the [world's largest](#). We're in conversation with major American companies now," he said. "I think we're trying to get to the same end result here. ... It will make a big difference to the United States economically if we could have American oil companies really invest in and produce the oil capabilities in Venezuela," Time Magazine, January 30, 2019, <http://time.com/5516920/inside-john-boltons-month-long-p-r-campaign-against-venezuelas-government/>

⁸ "Why Ilhan Omar and Elliott Abrams Tangled Over U.S. Foreign Policy," <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/14/us/politics/ilhan-omar-elliott-abrams.html>

"Guatemalan Army Waged 'Genocide,' New Report Finds," <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/26/world/guatemalan-army-waged-genocide-new-report-finds.html>

⁹ UN Charter—Article 2: "All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered." <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/>

See also OAS Charter, above