

United States: Eviction of Venezuelan Embassy Activists 'Will Violate International Law'

Wednesday 15 May 2019, by [Embassy Protection Collective \(Venezuelan Embassy\)](#) (Date first published: 14 May 2019).

With the threat of eviction, solidarity activists in the Venezuelan embassy in Washington DC released a statement saying that eviction and arrests would be unlawful.



Solidarity activists have mobilized to stop the Venezuelan embassy from being taken over by Guaido's representatives. (Popular Resistance)

On January 24, 2019 Nicolas Maduro ordered the closure of Venezuela's embassy and all consulates in the United States. In the wake of these closures Juan Guaido, self proclaimed President of Venezuela and leader of several attempts to usurp or make a coup on the Maduro government, appointed Carlos Vecchio to ambassador. Shortly thereafter US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo recognized Vecchio despite being appointed by an illegitimate president. On April 10th, at the invitation of the Maduro government, Code Pink and other organizations occupied the Venezuelan embassy in Washington D.C.. Supporters of Guaido have been emboldened by the Trump administration's support and over the course of the last week they have effectively cut power, water and access to food from the Embassy. On Monday May 13th the occupiers were served with an eviction notice, below we are publishing their statement here.

To: US 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 US 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 US 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 US 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 US 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 US-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 US 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 US 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.

May 14, 2019

The Embassy Protection Collective (Venezuelan Embassy)

P.S.

- <https://solidarity-us.org/eviction-of-embassy-activists-will-violate-international-law/>