

Resolution to Free Alex Saab, Venezuelan diplomat imprisoned by the U.S.

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Whereas, the National Lawyers Guild has a long history in defending political prisoners held in U.S. jails and in demanding an end to the sanctions regime deployed against Venezuela and other targeted nations by the United States, and

Whereas, Venezuelan diplomat Alex Saab Moran is currently imprisoned in the Federal Detention Center in Miami, in violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, and

Whereas, Alex Saab has been denied recognition as a diplomat and denied contact or consular visits from Venezuela because the U.S. has arbitrarily refused to recognize the legitimate democratically elected government of President Nicolas Maduro, and

Whereas, according to Article 36 of the VCCR, which the U.S. has signed, “consular officers shall be free to communicate with nationals of the sending State and to have access to them.” Foreign nationals who are arrested or detained must be given notice “without delay” of their right to have their embassy or consulate notified of that arrest, and “consular officers shall have the right to visit a national of the sending State who is in prison, custody or detention, to converse and correspond with him and to arrange for his legal representation,” and

Whereas, Saab was unlawfully detained, tortured and mistreated by masked interrogators while being held at the behest of the United States in Cape Verde in June of 2020 while serving as a Special Envoy for the government of Venezuela to Iran, and carrying papers identifying him as a Venezuelan diplomat. He was arrested by Cape Verdean authorities, initially without a warrant, at the request of the US District Court of Florida, and was eventually extradited to the United States despite a decision of the ECOWAS court prohibiting his extradition, and

Whereas, Saab’s responsibilities as a diplomat included the negotiation and execution of trade agreements, particularly with other sanctioned parties, to trade oil and gold for food, medicine, fuel and other items needed to support the Venezuelan people and their productive activity under heavy U.S. unilateral coercive measures, and

Whereas, the U.S. coercive economic measures targeting Venezuela are unlawful under international law and function as an act of war, and

Whereas, the U.S. presented eight charges against Saab, all related to economic actions aimed at defeating the unlawful sanctions, seven of which were later dropped. The only remaining charge, one of money laundering, carries a maximum prison sentence of 20 years, and

Whereas, in December 2022, the court hearing Saab's case rejected his diplomatic status, allowing the U.S. government arbitrary control over who is recognized as a diplomat, saying: "“Only the President may determine which governments are legitimate in the eyes of the United States and which are not[.]. It is clear that the United States does not recognize the Maduro regime to represent the official government of Venezuela. Instead, '[t]he United States recognizes Interim President Juan Guaid[ó] and considers the 2014 democratically elected Venezuelan National Assembly, which he currently leads, to be the only legitimate federal institution, according to the Venezuelan Constitution.... Maduro's regime has been deemed 'illegitimate.' Accordingly, any claim to diplomatic immunity asserted by a representative of the Maduro regime must also be considered illegitimate,” and

Whereas, the United States has no legitimate authority to dictate the policies of the government of Venezuela, nor to imprison diplomats by unilaterally declaring the governments of sovereign nations to be illegitimate, and

Whereas, NLG president Suzanne Adely and NLG member Audrey Bomse have met with Saab at the Federal Detention Center in Miami, and the Fact Finding Mission of the International People's Tribunal on U.S. Imperialism met with Saab's wife, Camila Fabri Saab, and the committee working for his release in Venezuela, and

Whereas, the President of the United States has the authority to negotiate prisoner exchanges with other countries,

Therefore, be it resolved, that the National Lawyers Guild calls for the immediate release and repatriation of Alex Saab and endorses the Free Alex Saab campaign, and

Be it further resolved, that the National Lawyers Guild will work to achieve the release of Alex Saab, including through a potential prisoner exchange for U.S. citizens detained in Venezuela, and

Be it finally resolved, that the NLG will continue its work to confront and challenge the U.S. unlawful coercive economic measures targeting Venezuela that aim to depose the democratically-elected government of Venezuela and to replace it with one that will open Venezuela's vast oil reserves to exploitation by US transnational oil companies.

Implementation of this resolution will be undertaken by the International Committee, which consents to this.