

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 26, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write to urge you to respect congressional intent and maintain strong U.S. funding for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as it carries out its mission to defend democracy, human rights and the rule of law throughout the Western Hemisphere. With human rights crises in Nicaragua and Venezuela, anti-corruption setbacks in Guatemala and additional challenges throughout the Americas, the United States must be able to continue to call on the Commission to hold bad actors accountable and promote our core values.

Cutting or eliminating funding for the Commission at this crucial moment would derail its crucial human rights monitoring processes in countries like Nicaragua and Venezuela. Following the violence that broke out in Nicaragua last April, the Commission and the Organization of American States moved quickly to establish the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI, by its Spanish acronym) for Nicaragua. In just six months, the GIEI was able to issue a detailed report and establish a highly sophisticated website documenting the alarming levels of violence that took place from April 18<sup>th</sup> through May 30<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to their crucial work, we can put names to the faces of the victims and hold Daniel Ortega accountable.

In Venezuela, the Commission played a critical role in holding the regime accountable by publishing a comprehensive report last year on human rights violations committed by Nicolás Maduro and his security forces. This report is considered the gold standard in examining the human rights crisis in Venezuela.

There are countless other examples that demonstrate just how vital the Commission is in supporting core U.S. values. We are grateful that in 2018 alone, the Commission issued several key statements on a wide array of human rights concerns in the Northern Triangle countries.

Perhaps most importantly, the Commission plays a crucial role in issuing “precautionary measures” requesting that governments in the region take steps to protect individuals whose security is in danger. In 2018, 120 requests for precautionary measures were granted. The two precautionary measures issued this year have been made to protect Juan Guaidó of Venezuela and a political prisoner in Nicaragua.

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Page Two

The United States cannot take a back seat when it comes to human rights violations in our own neighborhood. We therefore urge you to continue to respect congressional intent and provide the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights with the funding it needs.

Thanks for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your response.

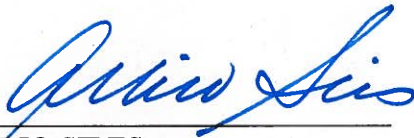


ELIOT L. ENGEL  
Chairman  
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Sincerely,



ROBERT MENENDEZ  
Ranking Member  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee



ALBIO SIRES  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on the Western  
Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and  
Trade



BEN CARDIN  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere,  
Transnational Crime, Civilian Security,  
Democracy, Human Rights, and Global  
Women's Issues