

Treasury Sanctions Governors of Venezuelan States Aligned with Maduro

February 25, 2019

Treasury targets government officials as humanitarian aid is prevented from entering Venezuela

Washington – Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated four officials aligned with the illegitimate regime of former President Nicolas Maduro. This action, taken pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13692, targets the Governors of four Venezuelan states involved in endemic corruption and in blocking the delivery of critical humanitarian aid, thereby exacerbating the ongoing humanitarian crisis caused by the illegitimate Maduro regime.

“The illegitimate Maduro regime’s attempts to blockade international aid intended for the Venezuelan people are shameful. Treasury is targeting four state governors aligned with former President Maduro for standing in the way of severely needed humanitarian assistance and prolonging the suffering of the Venezuelan people,” said Treasury Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin. “The United States fully supports the efforts of Interim President Juan Guaidó to address the endemic corruption, human rights abuses, and violent repression that has become the hallmark of the illegitimate Maduro regime, and looks forward to the restoration of a democratically elected government for the people of Venezuela.”

As a result of today’s action, all property and interests in property of these individuals, and of any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, 50 percent or more by these individuals, that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons are blocked and must be reported to OFAC. OFAC’s regulations generally prohibit all dealings by U.S. persons or within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of blocked or designated persons.

U.S. sanctions need not be permanent; sanctions are intended to bring about a positive change of behavior. The United States has made clear that the removal of sanctions is available for persons designated under E.O. 13692 or E.O. 13850 who take concrete and meaningful actions to restore democratic order, refuse to take part in human rights abuses, speak out against abuses committed by the former Maduro regime, and combat corruption in Venezuela.

The following four individuals designated today have been determined to be current or former officials of the Government of Venezuela:

- **Omar Jose Prieto Fernandez (Prieto)** is the Governor of Zulia State, Venezuela, a position he has held since December 2017. Zulia, located in northwestern Venezuela on the border with Colombia, is known as a hub for organized crime, where narcotics trafficking and murder-for-hire is commonplace. Sophisticated and prolific criminal structures exist throughout Zulia State, penetrating even the border police force under Prieto's governorship, as several border police officers and the local Zulia police unit have come under investigation for their roles in drug and illegal weapons trafficking. As the Venezuelan people suffer from a lack of access to daily essentials, on February 12, 2019, Prieto threatened to visit the homes of opposition leaders who permitted access to humanitarian aid in Venezuela. Additionally, in response to mass protests, Prieto recently threatened to declare Venezuela's "oil state" of Zulia independent should a new transition government take power in Venezuela. Known for its massive oil fields below Lake Maracaibo, Zulia is amongst the highest energy-consuming states in Venezuela, but has been experiencing severe electricity shortages, leading to electricity rationing in the midst of the ever-worsening humanitarian crisis.

- **Ramon Alonso Carrizalez Rengifo (Carrizalez)** is the Governor of Apure State, Venezuela, a state along Venezuela's border with Colombia. Carrizalez was the Vice President of Venezuela from 2008 to early January 2010, as well as the Minister of Defense from 2009 to early January 2010. As of January 2019, there have been growing, massive presences of military and police forces in the streets throughout Apure State, threatening violence and attacking protestors. Carrizalez is accused of endorsing this blatant repression of democratic actors. In 2014, Carrizalez said that Apure State is infested with drug gangs, and that he believed that ranches along the border of Apure were involved in money laundering.

- **Jorge Luis Garcia Carneiro (Garcia)** is the Governor of Vargas State, Venezuela, a position he has held since 2008. Garcia was previously the head of the Venezuelan Army from January 2003 to January 2004, then became the Minister of Defense and held that position until December 2006. Additionally, Garcia was a former Minister for Social Development and Popular Participation. As of January 2019, Garcia rejected Juan Guaidó's position as the Interim President of Venezuela. Garcia said that the people of Vargas State will continue the fight and stay in the streets to show support for former-President Maduro.

• **Rafael Alejandro Lacava Evangelista (Lacava)** is the Governor of Carabobo State, Venezuela, a position he has held since October 2017. Lacava formerly served as Mayor of Puerto Cabello, the municipality that is home to Venezuela’s largest port, and was previously the Venezuelan Ambassador to Italy, a position he was appointed to in February 2007. Lacava has long been a friend and significant intermediary of former-President Maduro, and continues to act on his behalf. In early 2018, Lacava was accused of hiding funds in Switzerland and Andorra.

For information about the methods that Venezuelan senior political figures, their associates, and front persons use to move and hide corrupt proceeds, including how they try to exploit the U.S. financial system and real estate market, please refer to FinCEN’s advisories [FIN-2017-A006](#)

 , “Advisory on Widespread Public Corruption in Venezuela,” and [FIN-2017-A003](#)  , “Advisory to Financial Institutions and Real Estate Firms and Professionals.”

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