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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

December 20, 2017

The Honorable Nikki Haley
United States Permanent Representative
to the United Nations
United States Mission to the United Nations
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Dear Ambassador Haley:

I write to you today to express my grave concerns over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Venezuela. I appreciate your efforts to date to engage on Venezuela at the United Nations and leadership in facilitating the Security Council's Arrria formula meeting in November. However, I am concerned that without an international diplomatic surge to ensure humanitarian access, thousands of innocent Venezuelans will suffer and die needlessly.

As you are aware, the economic crisis in Venezuela is ravaging the country. Food, medicine and basic medical supplies have become scarce, resulting in thousands of preventable deaths, skyrocketing levels of malnutrition and an ongoing public health crisis. Official reports indicate that in 2016 there was a 76 percent increase in malaria, while maternal deaths increased by 65 percent and infant deaths increased by 30 percent. Food scarcity, which has been compounded by hyperinflation, has left millions of Venezuelans undernourished and forced thousands more to cross the border into Colombia in search of food. Tragically, children bear the brunt of this humanitarian crisis. In October, Caritas Venezuela warned that more than 280,000 children could die as a result of malnutrition.

The time to act is now. I urge you to call for an emergency special session of the United Nations Security Council to evaluate which UN mechanisms, including UN Security Council Resolutions, should be pursued to alleviate humanitarian suffering inside Venezuela. Whether or not the Government of Venezuela acknowledges the existence of a humanitarian crisis, the people of Venezuela are very much experiencing one. It is time for the United States to lead on this crisis, which is threatening the lives of millions of people in our own hemisphere.

I look forward to working with and learning more about your efforts in the UN Security Council to ensure humanitarian assistance reaches those in desperate need inside Venezuela.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
Ranking Member