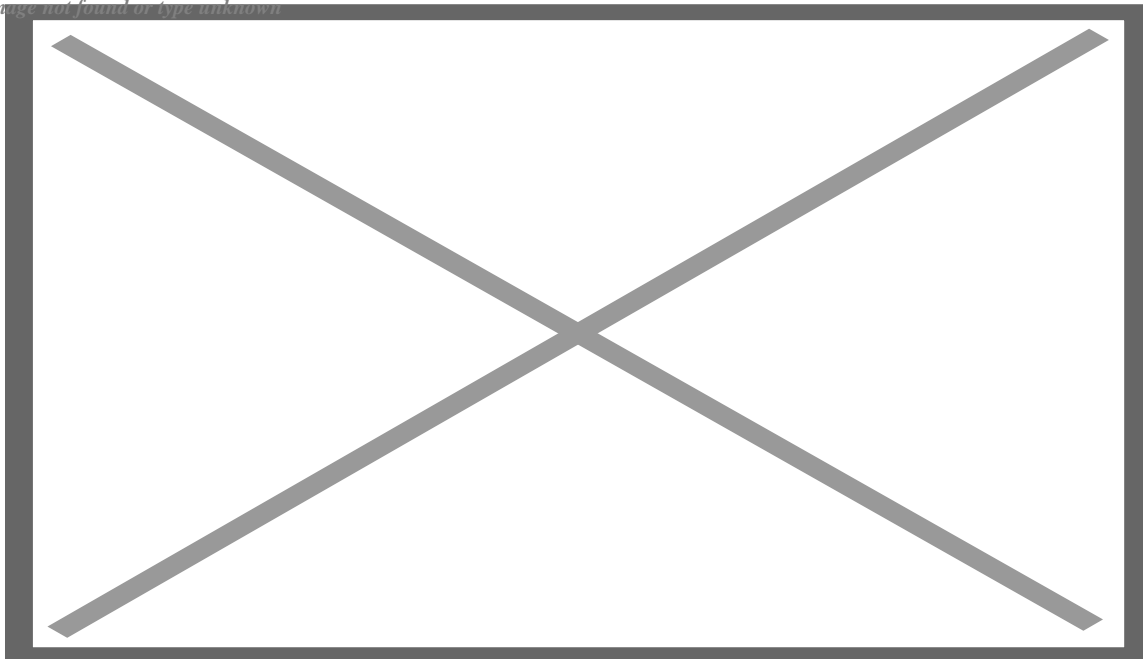


Venezuelan government announces release of diplomat Alex Saab

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Caracas, December 20 (RHC)-- The Venezuelan Government confirmed on Wednesday the release of diplomat Alex Saab, who was extradited to the United States in October 2021 from Cape Verde, after his detention and a process against him, described by his defense as illegal.

Saab is already on Venezuelan soil, after more than 1,280 days of unjust confinement in a U.S. detention center after having been unjustly detained. In a statement, the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry jubilantly celebrated the release and return of the diplomat to his homeland.

"The people receive him with pride after having suffered three and a half years of illegal detention under cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, violating his human rights and the Vienna Convention that confers diplomatic immunity," the text continues.

The Foreign Ministry defined Saab as "a victim of retaliation by the Government of the United States for his exceptional international efforts in the protection of the social rights of all Venezuelans, in the face of

the intensification of unilateral coercive measures".

It described his freedom as "a symbol of victory of the Bolivarian Diplomacy of Peace and of the thousands of manifestations of solidarity expressed from all corners of the world by social movements, intellectuals, artists and other fighters for justice".

Among other ideas, the Foreign Ministry's statement acknowledged "the courage and dignity of his wife, children and family, who accompanied him at all times in the denunciation and hope for his release". The Foreign Ministry added: "Today the link of this injustice is broken, which obliges us to reaffirm once again the unanimous demand of all of Venezuela for a definitive, immediate and unconditional end to the criminal blockade imposed by the Government of the United States against all the Venezuelan people."

Saab's extradition to the U.S. was denounced by the Venezuelan Government and international organizations as a kidnapping, with the complicity of the Cape Verdean authorities at the time. The diplomat was on a humanitarian mission, acting as Venezuela's special envoy, when he was arrested on June 12, 2020 in that African country, after making a stop there to refuel.

The Venezuelan Foreign Ministry explained, at the time, that "Saab was traveling to Iran as a diplomatic agent of the Venezuelan State, in order to facilitate the acquisition of foodstuffs in view of the impact of the Unilateral Coercive Measures (UMC) against the Local Supply and Production Committees (CLAP), a mechanism of articulation with the communities that distributes food to more than 7 million families".

The diplomat's wife, Camilla Fabri, denounced on several occasions the media campaign against Saab and his family, as well as the human rights violations suffered by her husband. In addition to managing foodstuffs, Saab promoted efforts for the shipment of medicines, another of the sectors in which the unilateral coercive measures caused deep damage, even in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, and deployed efforts to circumvent the illegal restrictions and bring fuels to Venezuela. In analyzing his case, experts from various international organizations, including the United Nations, asserted that there were flagrant violations of principles of International Law vital for the development of diplomatic activities.

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