

# *Solidarity activists in Washington form protection collective for Venezuela's embassy*

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Washington, April 23 (RHC)-- Solidarity activists from around the U.S. have formed a group called "Embassy Protection Collective" -- to protect the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington from the seizure of the building by the opposition. The group is currently inside the Embassy with the permission of the Venezuelan government to show solidarity with the Bolivarian people.

The opposition to the legitimate government of President Nicolas Maduro, with its illegal, pretend government, say they will attempt to take over the embassy this week after diplomats leave on Wednesday, as ordered by the U.S. State Department. The collective -- in a statement issued from inside the Embassy in Washington, DC -- said that if the opposition is successful, it will be a theft from the Venezuelan people who own the building.

The Embassy Protection Collective noted that in mid-March, the opposition took over the Venezuelan consulate in New York and the Military Attaché office in Washington, D.C. People feared the Venezuelan embassy in Washington, D.C. would be next and so they mobilized to prevent such a take-over.

The activists have been staying at the embassy 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They are calling for volunteers who can physically go to Washington to join their collective. The group is also requesting that people share information with their friends and family through the collective's Facebook page and using the hashtag #ColectivosPorLaPaz.

The Embassy Protection Collective is calling on U.S. citizens to contact their members of Congress -- (202-224-3121) -- and demand they intervene to stop the State Department from giving the embassy to the so-called "president" of Venezuela, Juan Guaido, who has been officially recognized by the Trump administration and other countries following Washington's lead. Constituents should let their congressional representatives know that U.S. citizens are staying in the embassy to defend the rule of law.

In a statement issued on Monday, the Collective said: "We view the struggle to prevent the takeover of the embassy as fundamental to stopping this new phase of U.S. imperialism in which the U.S. attempts a coup and fails, but goes ahead and acts like it succeeded. President Maduro remains in power and is actively serving as the president. Juan Guaido has no power, yet the U.S. is giving Venezuelan assets to him. It is truly Orwellian. If the U.S. succeeds in this farce, then no country is safe. Where will the U.S. turn next to appoint a president and give them power and assets? Nicaragua? Cuba? Iran?"

"We have joined together as the Embassy Protection Collective to show solidarity with the people of Venezuela and their right to determine their elected government. We are staying in the Venezuelan embassy with the permission of the legitimate Venezuelan government under President Nicolas Maduro. We seek to provide a nonviolent barrier to the threatened opposition takeover of their embassy in Washington, D.C. by being a presence at the embassy every day of the week for 24 hours a day."

"The Collective is working from the embassy, located in the heart of Georgetown in Washington, D.C. during the day and holding seminars and cultural events in the evenings, as well as sleeping in the embassy. Events include forums on Venezuela, its government, economy and the ongoing attempted coup. We are also holding seminars on U.S. foreign policy toward Africa, Honduras and Iran, the prosecution of Julian Assange and other issues."

"There is great cause for us to be concerned about a hostile takeover of the D.C. Embassy. On March 18, 2019, the Venezuelan opposition took over the military attaché building on 2409 California Street in Washington D.C., with the help of the D.C. Police and Secret Service. On that same day, the opposition also took over the Venezuelan Consulate in New York City. They have publicly threatened to take over the embassy itself."

"International law protects foreign embassies located in the United States. According to Article 22 of the 1961 Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations, foreign embassies should be protected by the United States government and their space should not be violated by the U.S. government. Specifically, international law requires:

The premises of the mission shall be inviolable. The agents of the receiving State may not enter them, except with the consent of the head of the mission.

The receiving State is under a special duty to take all appropriate steps to protect the premises of the mission against any intrusion or damage and to prevent any disturbance of the peace of the mission or impairment of its dignity.

The premises of the mission, their furnishings and other property thereon and the means of transport of the mission shall be immune from search, requisition, attachment or execution.

The Trump administration is violating the Vienna Convention by not only allowing the illegal seizure of diplomatic premises but by facilitating it. The Election Protection Collective is supporting the people of Venezuela by taking responsibility to ensure that Article 22 of the Vienna Convention is followed."

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