



Statement of the of the Board of Directors of the American Branch of the International Law Association

Regarding the United States Intervention in Venezuela

January 16, 2026

Whereas, on January 3, 2026, [President Donald Trump announced](#) that, at his command, U.S. war planes attacked Venezuelan defenses and military forces entered the country and captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, who were transported to New York to stand trial on federal narcotics charges.

Whereas, President Trump has further announced that the United States will “run” Venezuela for a transitional period and seize some of its oil “[in the form of reimbursement](#).”

Whereas, this followed [four months of U.S. airstrikes against more than 35 Venezuelan and Colombian-flagged vessels](#), including follow-up attacks to kill survivors; the imposition of a blockade of oil tankers going into, and out of, Venezuela; the seizure of several of those tankers; and the deployment of a large military force in the Caribbean near Venezuela.

Whereas, this action by the United States has been met with condemnation by the [American Society of International Law](#), the [International Bar Association](#), the [New York City Bar Association](#), and numerous leaders around the globe, including U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres, who said he was “[deeply alarmed](#)” about the “dangerous precedent” the United States was setting.

Whereas, the American Branch of the International Law Association (ABILA) is dedicated to the study, clarification, and development of International Law and the advancement of peace, human rights, and justice worldwide, and from time to time, the ABILA Board of Directors issues Statements on important matters of international concern that are related to the ABILA’s mandate.

Now be it therefore resolved by the ABILA Board of Directors:

1. The ABILA Board expresses grave concern that the actions described above constitute violations of customary international law as well as Article 2(4) of the U.N. Charter (which prohibits force against the territorial integrity of States except when authorized by the Security Council or in response to an armed attack), the 1958 Geneva Convention on the High Seas (which prohibits attacks on vessels outside of war), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (which prohibits the extrajudicial killing of suspected narcotics traffickers) -- treaties that the United States has ratified and with respect to which it is obliged to comply.
2. The ABILA Board further expresses alarm that these actions endanger regional and international peace and set a destabilizing precedent for the world.



3. While not condoning the Maduro regime, the ABILA Board rejects the Administration's justification for these actions, namely that they constituted a legitimate exercise of the right of self-defense in response to the threat posed by narco-terrorists and/or law enforcement action to arrest Maduro, as incompatible with international law.

4. The ABILA will do its utmost to educate Americans (including members of the Administration, Congress, and the Bar) about the responsibility of the United States to act consistent with, and to prevent further violations of, international law.

Adopted at its regular meeting on January 16, 2026, by a vote of 30 in favor, 0 opposed.