



Obama to Sign Venezuela Sanctions Bill

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Last week, the U.S. Congress passed S. 2142 (the “Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014”) and presented the legislation to President Obama for signature. White House officials have indicated that President Obama plans to sign the bill into law.

The stated impetus of the legislation is to respond to reported acts of violence committed by members of Venezuela’s state security forces and intelligence services, and the use of Venezuela’s judicial system for the political persecution of members of the country’s civilian population. While the scope of the bill narrowly focuses on individuals targeted for sanctions in connection with their involvement in such abuses, U.S. businesses have raised concerns that the legislation could provide an incremental step towards broader sanctions against the Venezuelan economy, including the country’s oil industry. The bill directs the President to impose sanctions against any person, including any current or former official of the government of Venezuela or person acting on behalf of that government, who is determined to have:

- perpetrated, or is responsible for ordering or otherwise directing, significant acts of violence or serious human rights abuses in Venezuela against persons associated with the anti-government protests in Venezuela that began on February 4, 2014;
- ordered or otherwise directed the arrest or prosecution of a person in Venezuela primarily because of the person’s legitimate exercise of freedom of expression or assembly; or
- knowingly materially assisted, sponsored or provided significant financial, material or technological support for, or goods or services in support of, the commission of such acts.

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