

Hello everyone and thank you, Attorney General Barr.

As home to the largest population of Venezuelan nationals in the United States, my home, the Southern District of Florida, has a special connection to today's historic announcement of cases by Attorney General Barr. As I drive from my house in Miami to the US Attorney's Office in downtown Miami, I can literally see the fraud and corruption of Maduro's regime – from multi-million dollar condos on Fisher Island owned by corrupt Venezuelan executives and generals, to luxury yachts on Biscayne Bay and private jets owned by corrupt Venezuelan officials. Well, the party for these officials has ended.

My Office created a special unit in 2018 to target corrupt foreign officials, who use the US banking system to move their dirty money from South America to the United States, and further their corrupt schemes. Since its inception, our Office has charged more than a dozen current and former Venezuelan nationals (both government officials and civilians) who have helped the Maduro regime steal money from the people of Venezuela. We have also seized more than \$450 million from these defendants in connection with these cases. And, we are just getting started.

I am pleased to announce this morning that the Southern District of Florida just charged the current **Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Venezuela, Maikel Moreno**, with international money

laundering and conspiracy to commit money laundering. As alleged in the criminal complaint against him, an extensive investigation by Homeland Security Investigations revealed corruption that infected the justice system in Venezuela at the highest level. In Venezuela, civil and criminal cases are not decided in a principled way, based on evidence or what is right and wrong. Instead, decisions are based on whether you bribe the right person. An independent judiciary is the last line of defense against the powerful and corrupt stealing the financial assets, natural resources and other treasures of the Venezuelan nation. The charges against Chief Justice Moreno demonstrate that this last line of defense in Venezuela has crumbled, creating a system without the rule of law and without justice. In short, Venezuela has descended into state of corruption,

resulting in a massive treasure grab for the rich and powerful.

As alleged in the complaint, the Chief Justice demanded bribes on dozens of substantial matters before his Court to ensure the result sought by the corrupt bribers. For example, the defendant—as Chief Justice of Venezuela’s highest court—authorized a seizure of General Motor’s \$100 million auto plant in Venezuela in exchange for a percentage of the proceeds. This resulted in thousands of Venezuelans losing their jobs.

Similarly, in criminal cases, the defendant received large bribes to authorize the dismissal of charges or the release from custody of multiple Venezuelans

who literally stole billions of dollars from Venezuela's state-owned oil proceeds.

Why did he do it? As set forth in the complaint, he took these bribes to fill his United States-based bank accounts with millions of dollars and to finance his high flying life style, with flights on private jets and millions of dollars in purchases of luxury watches and other goods from the high-end stores throughout Miami.

This case is just one of several our Office has charged over the past 18 months, focused on rooting out the extensive corruption within the Venezuelan government – a system constructed and controlled to enrich those at the highest levels of the government.

It is a regime that has caused millions of Venezuelans to flee their country.

I thank the prosecutors from my office, AUSAs Michael Berger and Michael Nadler, and their supervisor Peter Forand, and the great work and efforts of HSI-Miami, DEA, and IRS which enabled my Office to investigate and charge these cases. Rest assured, this is only the beginning of our efforts against Venezuelan corruption – efforts which mark the beginning of the end for this criminal conduct.

Thank you. And thank you Mr. Attorney General.