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WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Council for Global Equality joins human rights colleagues around the world in strongly denouncing the recent U.S. military strike on Venezuela and the abduction of Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores. These actions violate numerous provisions of the UN Charter and the U.S. Constitution, including prohibitions on the unilateral use of force, international prohibitions on extrajudicial detention, and U.S. constitutional protections of due process and limits on executive war-powers.

Venezuelans have endured years of repression, corruption, and violence under Maduro, a dictator who maintained power through the systematic dismantling of democratic institutions. Too often, the international community failed to protect the rights and sovereignty of the Venezuelan people, especially Venezuelan refugees fleeing persecution. A unilateral U.S. response that disregards international law sets a dangerous new precedent.

Maduro was a tyrant, but his illegal kidnapping by U.S. forces undermines democratic norms and the rule of law, which are bedrocks of all human rights protections. Maduro's abduction normalizes the idea that powerful states may act without legal restraint or consequence to decide unilaterally when sovereignty applies and when it can be discarded. This logic will not remain confined to authoritarian regimes. It threatens *all* countries, including those with democratically elected leaders, and erodes remaining safeguards against arbitrary U.S. intervention in other countries that are in the crosshairs of the Trump administration, including Colombia, Cuba, Greenland, and Mexico.

As a U.S.-based advocacy organization that works closely with civil society across the Americas and the world to promote the human rights and dignity of LGBTQI+ persons, we recognize that this U.S. action endangers the safety and security of everyone in the region. When international law is abandoned, civilians pay the price. Instability, retaliation, and displacement disproportionately endanger marginalized communities, including LGBTQI+ people. Destabilization will force more people to flee and LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees are especially vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, sexual violence and face discrimination in obtaining housing and jobs.

The Council for Global Equality calls on the diplomatic community to press for a legitimate democratic transition in Venezuela, rather than propping up Maduro's remaining henchpeople in



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an attempt to extract the country's oil reserves without involving democratic institutions or securing the sovereign consent of its citizens. This must include the safe release of political prisoners; continued support for asylum and migrant reception; responsible public messaging that avoids polarization; and a renewed focus on protection and dignity for displaced Venezuelans. Accountability efforts during this transition must center the human rights violations of the dictatorship to ensure a meaningful and enduring transition. We also call on the United States Congress to reclaim and assert its sole and inviolable power to declare war and to hold accountable those who commit human rights abuses and violate the U.S. Constitution.

In this moment of rising authoritarianism and threats to international norms, the global LGBTQI+ movement must urgently mobilize to safeguard human rights and democratic values wherever possible. This extends to our own recognition, as a U.S.-based organization, that our tax dollars are funding this illegal set of actions in Venezuela, as well as the weapons used across the world in conflicts claiming additional civilian lives in Cambodia, Gaza and the West Bank, Lebanon, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, and Yemen. We join with the global majority in demanding democracy and equality over greed and imperialism in this era of interventionism.