



A  
PROJECT  
OF



February 28, 2025

The Honorable Peter Marocco  
Director, Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Director Marocco:

I write to bring urgent attention to the misuse of U.S. taxpayer dollars under the previous administration—one that President Trump must not allow to continue.

For years, millions of taxpayer dollars have gone to the Dominican Republic, including towards so-called “rule of law” programs, with the claim that such programs would strengthen the Dominican justice system. Instead, corruption worsened, abuse surged, and the Dominican government continued to disregard due process—with U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents caught in the crossfire.

Over the last few years there have been a steady flow of reporting about these issues. Most recently, the Associated Press [pointed out](#) the serious crises within the Dominican Republic’s criminal justice system.

The United States should not fund a justice system that detains thousands without charges or trials. There has been a severe lack of accountability, oversight, and no effort whatsoever to track or free Americans trapped in this mess.

For over a decade, the Dominican Republic has been one of the top recipients of funding under the [Caribbean Basin Security Initiative](#) (CBSI). According to the State Department, the Dominican Republic received nearly 30% of all CBSI funding from 2015 through 2023. Yet, despite receiving tens of millions in U.S. aid, they have consistently failed to meet the core pillars of the CBSI—the reduction of illicit trafficking, improvement of public safety, and promotion of social justice.

USAID alone poured millions into “reform programs” that did nothing but empower corrupt prosecutors and turn Dominican prisons into U.S. taxpayer-funded [human warehouses](#). I strongly encourage you to see it for yourself. Meanwhile, the Biden

Administration ignored every warning sign, including their own [reports](#) exposing the lack of progress.

Here's what U.S. tax dollars were really funding:

- The incarceration of innocent [U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents](#) who are sitting in these jails today—an issue formally raised by Rep. Michael McCaul in a 2023 [letter](#) to Secretary Blinken.
- Over [60% of the Dominican Republic's prison population](#) being held without charges, trials, or due process. Some have been locked up for 20 years without ever being convicted of any wrong doing.
- The Dominican government's violation of its own laws, with [98% of all coercive measures](#) requested by prosecutors in 2024 resulting in preventive detention as confirmed by the National Commission on Human Rights.
- Over [26,000 inmates crammed into facilities designed for just 12,000](#)—many sleeping on urine-soaked floors, packed at 74 per cell, with no medical care.

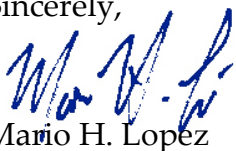
The Dominican Republic should not get a pass to continue the use of U.S. tax dollars with no oversight. We encourage your office to pursue:

1. A full accounting of how much U.S. foreign assistance—particularly through USAID—was directed to the Dominican Republic's justice system.
2. A freeze on all U.S. taxpayer dollars directed toward the Dominican government until they prove they are no longer violating due process or illegally imprisoning American citizens and legal permanent residents.
3. An immediate investigation into how much U.S. foreign assistance money has been used to fund the Dominican Republic's lawfare programs.

For over 25 years, international watchdogs have strongly condemned the Dominican Republic's blatant disregard for due process. Yet, despite years of warnings and billions in U.S. foreign aid, nothing has changed. The Dominican government took the money, ignored reforms, and kept violating the rule of law.

We urge you to condemn the use of preventative detention and other authoritarian measures, hold the Dominican Republic accountable, and end the use of American taxpayer dollars for these anti-democratic purposes.

Sincerely,



Mario H. Lopez

Hispanic Leadership Fund / Dominican Justice Initiative