

Defense team for Venezuelan H.E. Alex Saab urge Cape Verdean authorities to honour international obligations

Africa is not a colony of the US and US cannot disregard the rule of law in African States and disobey the judgement of ECOWAS Court

PRAIA, CAPE VERDE, April 15, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The defense team of H.E. Alex Saab,

“

Cape Verde has refused any bilateral diplomatic dialogue with the Republic of Venezuela.”

Jose-Manuel Pinto Monteiro

Venezuelan diplomat, unlawfully arrested in Cape Verde, held a press conference this morning providing a timely update on the detention of HE Mr Saab, who has now been in captivity for 308 days.

The Press Conference was led by Africa’s leading Human Rights lawyer Mr Femi Falana, SAN, and by leading Cape Verde constitutional and criminal lawyer Dr Jose-Manuel

Pinto Monteiro, Mr Saab’s lead counsel in Cape Verde.

Mr Pinto in an emotional statement, having recently met with H.E. Saab, said that H.E. Saab had been deprived of his most basic human rights, humiliated, ill-treated and threatened. He said that H.E. Saab’s health had deteriorated. He also stated that “Cape Verde had refused and bilateral diplomatic dialogue with the Republic of Venezuela.”

“If every state behaved this way,” he added, “then there would be no international order.” Dr Pinto also noted that H.E. Saab wanted “to send a massive hug to my wife Camilla who has been my rock and also to all of my children who have been a huge source of comfort to me.”

Mr Falana echoed those views. When asked about a US frigate that had been sent last year to the coasts of West Africa, he accused the United States of America of trying to intimidate Cape Verde, and by extension Africa, by flexing its muscles : “We are calling on President Biden to walk the talk and when he talks of his commitment to restore law and order in his country, that this is also extended to other parts of the world.”

The lawyers felt the law was on their side and should Cape Verde continue to defy the ECOWAS court, the country risked economic sanctions and could see itself suspended from the community.

They also said that H.E. Saab did not risk early extradition until the higher courts had delivered their decision to the appeal that H.E. Saab lawyers had submitted.

The ECOWAS Community Court of Justice (ECCJ) in Abuja on March 15 2021, declared that H.E. Alex Saab should be immediately released, that the extradition process against him be terminated and that he be compensated for what it declared as his unlawful detention.

H.E. Alex Saab, a lawfully appointed Venezuelan Special Envoy, and Alternate Permanent Representative to the African Union, was detained by Cape Verdean authorities on 12 June 2020, in response it was claimed, to an international arrest warrant circulated by INTERPOL which had in turn been issued on the basis of an alleged Red Notice issued at the request of the United States. At the time of his arrest, neither the copy of the arrest warrant nor the alleged Red Notice were presented to H.E. Saab.

H.E. Saab is accused by US prosecutors in Miami of money laundering offences in connection with a contract to build houses for a social welfare programme launched during President Hugo Chavez's time in office. Those charges have been left looking politically motivated after money laundering charges against H.E. Saab, linked to the same contracts, were recently dropped by the Geneva Prosecutors for lack of evidence after a 3 year investigation.

The ECCJ noted in its ruling that the Red Notice was only issued after Mr Saab's arrest and that there was no arrest warrant, thus making the extradition request purely political.

On 16 March, in direct defiance of the binding ECCJ 15 March Ruling, the Cape Verde Supreme Court of Justice approved the extradition of Mr Saab to the United States. This action goes against the ECOWAS Treaty and various protocols which established the ECCJ. Continued failure to comply with the 15 March Ruling Cape Verde risks being sanctioned by ECOWAS.

The decision of Cape Verde Supreme Court of Justice is now being appealed to the Constitutional court of the Republic of Cape Verde.

It is pertinent to note that the Supreme Court of Cape Verde held that it is left to the Executive to take a decision on the diplomatic status of Mr Saab.

Both Mr Falana and Dr Pinto called for Cape Verde to honour its international treaty obligations and release the diplomat.

The African Bar Association's (AfBA) has also entered the debate and warned of serious consequences for ECOWAS's raison d'être and a potential splintering of the organisation if Cape Verde's non-compliance goes unchallenged by the regional group.

Legal Defense Team

Ambassador H.E. Alex Saab

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