

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks on the Release of United States Citizens Detained in Venezuela and an Exchange With Reporters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin
December 20, 2023

The President. Hey, everybody. Look, as you probably already know, today 10 Americans have been released from Venezuela prison. They're in an aircraft—can you hear me?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. They're in an aircraft on their way home to the United States. And we've secured the release of every American being held in Venezuela—on their way home. And we have no higher priority than the release of detained and/or hostage—Americans being held hostage.

In addition to that, Venezuela thus far is keeping their commitment toward the democratic election. Not over yet, but they've made detailed commitments. We'll see if they hold them. But we're going to hold them accountable. And, matter of fact, one hostage being held—sent home is one who is going to be tried. But—and—what else did I want to say to you?

In total, Venezuela has released 20 political prisoners in Venezuela, on top of the 5. They're all Venezuelans that have been let out of jail. And they have a right to a democratic future.

That's all I wanted to confirm with you.

Israeli Military Operations in Gaza

Q. Could I—could I ask you about—[inaudible]? When would you like the Israelis to move toward a less intense phase in the war?

The President. Look, we're negotiating right now at the U.N. the contours of a resolution—excuse me, the sun is in my eyes—resolution that we may be able to agree to. That's still going on. I'd be happy to talk to you after it ends.

Venezuela

Q. Mr. President, has Maduro committed to you that he will allow all candidates to run in the next Presidential election in Venezuela?

The President. I have not spoken to Maduro. He's committed to our—we've laid down specific requirements for a democratic election. He's agreed to all of them.

Q. And——

The President. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, did President——

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:18 p.m. on the tarmac at Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport prior to boarding Air Force One en route to Washington, DC. In his remarks, he referred to Leonard G. "Fat Leonard" Francis, a Malaysian citizen who was released from detention in Venezuela, where, in 2022, he had fled after escaping from house arrest in the U.S. while awaiting sentencing on bribery and corruption charges; and President Nicolás Maduro Moros of Venezuela. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 21. Portions of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Release of U.S. citizens detained in Venezuela, remarks in Milwaukee, WI; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, Milwaukee, WI.

Locations: Milwaukee, WI.

Names: Francis, Leonard G. "Fat Leonard"; Maduro Moros, Nicolas.

Subjects: Gaza, conflict with Israel; Hostages and U.S. nationals detained overseas, repatriation efforts; Israel, military operations in Gaza; News media, Presidential interviews; Venezuela, democracy efforts; Venezuela, human rights issues; Venezuela, President; Venezuela, release of detained U.S. citizens; Wisconsin, President's visit.

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