

EMBAJADA DE LA REPUBLICA  
BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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The Honorable  
Christopher Dodd  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable  
Richard Lugar  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Dodd and Senator Lugar,

I received a copy of your statement in which you call for a hearing at the Organization of American States (OAS) to discuss a recent report that criticizes Venezuela for its human rights record.

Venezuela rejects the reports from the OAS's Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), because the IACHR is a politicized entity biased against Venezuela. The organization's Secretariat, for example, supported the coup against President Hugo Chávez in 2002.

The overwhelming majority of its allegations are simply based on interviews with members of the Venezuelan opposition and newspapers articles from the Venezuelan opposition media. Its reports are not about human rights. They lack the credibility of an impartial panel of human rights experts. Rather than contribute to a serious discussion on human rights in Venezuela, they are nothing more than fodder for the political and media campaign being waged against the legitimate and democratically elected government of Venezuela.

Hugo Chávez is the legitimate President of Venezuela. If we agree that the free will of the people to elect their representatives to be the bedrock of all political rights, then the Secretariat's failure to defend the legitimate President of the country during the coup in 2002 disqualifies it from being an impartial observer and promoter of the political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights enjoyed by the Venezuelan people.

The IACHR is not the proper space for an objective discussion of human rights in Venezuela. It is unfortunate that your reading of the report does not take into consideration the political manipulation of human rights by the IACHR with respect to Venezuela over the past eight years. Their reports are meant to discredit the government of Venezuela and to promote opposition politicians. That is not the legitimate role of a human rights observer.

Your reading of the report infers that the political rights of Venezuelans have diminished or are in danger now. This premise is quite false. Venezuelans enjoy a vibrant political system where they are free to express themselves through a variety of ways, including protests, elections and free access to the media. Opposition members that often and aggressively denounce the government are free to travel the world and probably even visit your offices in the Senate. They are not prevented from leaving or returning to the country to exercise their social, economic, political and cultural rights that the 1999 Constitution grants them. Some of them, far from being "persecuted" as your statement indicates, were even pardoned through the 2007 Amnesty Law, despite the fact that they had participated in the coup d'état against President Chavez in April 2002.

Your suggestion that the OAS Permanent Council exclusively consider human rights in Venezuela is tantamount to intervention. I wonder what the reaction in the U.S. Senate would be if Venezuela, or any other country in this hemisphere, made a similar call for the OAS Permanent Council to look at the challenges faced by the U.S. in terms of human rights.

If the U.S. Senate were truly concerned about human rights in the region, it should ask its mission at the OAS to promote a discussion regarding the case of Luis Posada Carriles. A fugitive from justice in Caracas, where he is wanted for 73 counts of first-degree murder in relation to the downing of a passenger plane, Posada roams free in the streets of Miami with fellow terrorists. Venezuela presented a formal request for his extradition on June 15, 2005, a request that President Bush ignored and to which President Obama has thus far failed to respond. Instead, the United States government continues to protect the terrorist who admits worked with the Central Intelligence Agency for decades.

The US Senate may also want to ask its OAS Mission to investigate how the US government protects two former members of the Venezuelan National Guard, Jose Antonio Molina and German Valera. Both stand charged with the planning and bombing of the Spanish and Colombian consulates in Caracas in 2003 in an attempt to destabilize and overthrow the government of President Chávez. Like it is doing with Posada Carriles, rather than extradite them to Venezuela the United States government protects them.

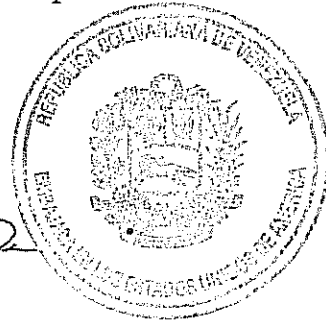
Is the United States not firm in its commitment to the battle against terrorism? Or is that instead an a la carte fight, where the US classifies some terrorists as good and others as bad? The Extradition Treaty that Venezuela signed with the United States dates all the way back to 1922, yet Washington fails to abide by it

when it is politically convenient, as is apparently the case with Posada, Molina and Valera.

Venezuela remains a vibrant, if raucous democracy. Since 1999 it has witnessed 14 internationally monitored national elections, with a 15th to be held this September. The Constitution of 1999, one of the most advanced in the world, grants additional rights to all Venezuelans, and as the Latinobarometro annual regional surveys have found, satisfaction with democracy has risen over the last decade. Additionally, Venezuela has made impressive strides in decreasing poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

I would be happy to discuss these matters with you both in person. Human rights are a matter that concerns us all. In fact, especially given the violation of human rights by the Venezuelan governments of the past, their promotion and protection is at the very core of Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution. You would see this for yourself if you went to Venezuela and spoke with a wide variety of social, economic, cultural and political actors.

Respectfully,



Bernardo Alvarez Herrera  
Ambassador