

Miami 02 02 2010

Esteemed,
Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

The undersigned representatives of Independent Venezuelan American Citizens, Todos por Venezuela and Venezuelan Awareness, all of which are legally constituted organizations in the State of Florida and with a well known background, respectfully address you in order to express our deep concern for the repressive acts unleashed by the President of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, in response to the peaceful protest march carried out by members of the Venezuelan population and student groups in January 23, 2009 to protest the closing down of *RCTV Internacional*, a local TV network, which has no solid legal basis and constitutes a violation to freedom of expression, among other infringements to the letter and spirit of our Constitution.

Although the Venezuelan Constitution enshrines the right to peaceful protest (section 57 CN) as well as prohibiting the use of firearms and toxic substances to control peaceful protests (section 68 CN), when university students from different parts of the country gathered to express their disagreement with the order to shut the media outlet mentioned above, they were repressed, rounded up like animals, thrown into jail, physically battered and at least two people killed, according to preliminary figures. All of this without having acted in any way that merited the application of strong police repression, the use of firearms and the violation of public regulations by the police agents.

We are highly concerned by the use of actions like the foregoing by President Chavez in order to quell any efforts to denounce his anti-democratic desire to stay in power. In several occasions he has issued orders to clamp down on student protests and gatherings and, instead of ordering the investigation of any claims of excessive force by the police, he downplays the events in his speeches and, instead, orders the deployment of more police agents armed with weapons that should not be used against the same people said force is sworn to protect.

The fact that the Venezuelan government does not seem willing to investigate the claims of human rights infringement and police brutality is a severe indication of its unwillingness to restore the rule of law and to submit to humane law-enforcement practices. The firearms currently in use by the Venezuelan police forces violate international standards and have been used to shed the blood of innocent young protesters, obeying Chavez's public call to quell student demonstrations completely, no matter the cost.

In light of this brutal attack against our youth, the future of Bolivar's homeland, young men and women who valiantly defend the right to exercise their civil freedom as well as the need to return to a transparent democratic regime, we respectfully ask the following:
1.- Let a resolution be brought before the United States Congress and Senate, in condemnation of the brutal violations to civil law and liberties currently taking place in Venezuela, and the attacks against students and freedom of speech.

2.- Request the State Department, represented by Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton, to issue a clear and definite statement indicating the rejection by the people of the United States of America of the facts stated above.

3.- Request the American Ambassador to the Organization of American States, Ms. Carmen Lomellin, to study, on behalf of the United States government, the application of the Charter of Democratic Rights in Venezuela, given that it is being continuously and openly violated, both in letter and spirit.

4.- To support the initiatives to fight against human and civil rights violations in Venezuela brought forward by the undersigning organizations, and to bring them to the attention of the applicable authorities at the US State Department, White House and Congress levels.

Miami, February 1, 2010

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