

July 28, 2017

July 30 Constituent Assembly Elections in Venezuela
Support the Bolivarian Revolution!
Hands Off Venezuela!

Worldwide Twitter Campaign



Tweet with hashtags:
#VenezuelaCorazonDeAmerica
#VamosConLaConstituyente

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July 30 Constituent Assembly Elections in Venezuela

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July 30 Constituent Assembly Elections in Venezuela

**Support the Bolivarian Revolution!
Hands Off Venezuela!**



Mass rally in support of the constituent assembly, Caracas, Venezuela, July 27, 2017.

On Sunday, July 30, the people of Venezuela will elect a National Constituent Assembly. Nearly 20 million Venezuelans will choose from 6,120 candidates representing diverse sectors of society and areas of the country to represent them. Their aim is to consolidate the Bolivarian political process so as to resolve the country's problems peacefully and end the foreign-inspired violence and interference in the country's internal affairs.



Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro at July 27, 2017 rally in Caracas.

The Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) reiterates its support for the people of Venezuela and their government to solve problems through dialogue and the right of Venezuela to establish a Constituent Assembly as a principle of self-determination. CPC(M-L) calls on Canadians and their organizations to show their support for the people of Venezuela at this time and oppose the escalation of external aggression against Venezuela which is becoming ever more brutal. CPC(M-L) specifically condemns the unprincipled stand of the government of Canada which, in the name of high ideals of democracy, is spreading disinformation about what is going on in Venezuela and meddling to destabilize and overthrow the government.

The role Canada is playing to interfere in the internal affairs of Venezuela promotes foreign intervention and joins the litany of threats from the United States and several European countries, including Spain and Italy. Canada's Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland issued two statements, one on July 16 and another on July 26. All evidence to the contrary, she praises as highly successful the July 16 "national unofficial vote on the government's plan to rewrite the constitution and the political future of their country" -- a so-called plebiscite against the Constituent Assembly held by the opposition. This she claims is constitutional, but the election of a Constituent Assembly is not. In the statement issued on July 26, Freeland claims that "the process to create the Constituent Assembly is contrary to Venezuela's constitution and seeks to usurp the democratic rights of its citizens." This is simply not true. "The plan for the Constituent Assembly is neither in keeping with democratic principles nor representative of the Venezuelan people," Freeland says. "We call on the Venezuelan government to cancel the national Constituent Assembly and to take concrete actions, with the opposition, to restore democratic order," she says. This position is a reiteration of what the U.S. administration is saying. Besides threats issued by the CIA (see below), on July 17, U.S. President Donald Trump once again threatened "strong and swift economic actions" if the elections for the Constituent Assembly go ahead.

Canada is also instrumental in efforts within the Organization of American States (OAS) to condemn Venezuela and authorize external intervention, which have repeatedly failed. Meanwhile, the majority of governments of Latin America and the Caribbean reject the moves of the OAS and support Venezuela's right to self-determination. The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) issued a statement rejecting Donald Trump's July 17 interventionist threats. The statement condemns the threats of more sanctions as coercive and unilateral which violate international law and the sovereignty and independence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.



Toronto picket in support of the Venezuelan people, July 25, 2017.

According to the ALBA members, the announcement of imposing economic sanctions against the Venezuelan people constitutes an unacceptable interventionist implementation of U.S. laws, which in no way contributes to the solution of the situation in the South American country and also impedes its development.

The ALBA countries also reject the interference of those countries that not only ignore the Venezuelan legal system and the constitutional and legitimate government of the president, Nicolás Maduro, but also put at risk the status of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace reached at the Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2014. This weekend, leading up to the election of the Constituent Assembly, actions are being held in cities across the country to express the support of Canadians for the Venezuelan people and government. This includes a twitter campaign on Friday, July 28, under the hashtags **#VenezuelaCorazonDeAmerica** and **#VamosConLaConstituyente**.

***All Out to Support the Venezuelan People, Their President Nicolás Maduro
and the Election of the Constituent Assembly!
Hands Off Venezuela!***

Worldwide Twitter Campaign in Support of Venezuela

Social movements from around the world are participating in a twitter campaign using the hashtag **#VenezuelaCorazonDeAmerica** (which means Venezuela Heart of America), to support Venezuela's call for a National Constituent Assembly and to condemn attacks against the country's sovereignty. The hashtag **#VamosConLaConstituyente** is also in use. On July 28, a worldwide effort is taking place from noon to 7 pm.

The campaign was launched on July 24 to coincide with the birth of Simon Bolívar, the independence leader of South American countries colonized by Spain, which is now the Day of Integration of Latin America.

The campaign's main goal is to support Venezuela's right to self-determination by unifying the

online and social media battle, inviting individuals from all over the world to post photos, videos and testimonies on what Bolivarian Venezuela means to them, in addition to encouraging cultural activities and mobilizations internationally.

"This campaign has no owner, just the desire to join forces," Gonzalo Armua, member of the secretariat of ALBA Movimientos, told *TeleSur*, adding that the original proposal came from the Colombian chapter of ALBA Movimientos.

"As we did 200 years ago, in Latin America and the Caribbean, we are still struggling for our independence. What's happening in Venezuela today has to do with that same struggle," Armua continued.

He emphasized that the struggle is now centred around repelling "American and European imperialism, which operates in a more complex way than the colonialism of the 19th and 20th centuries, but with the same objective: to control our territories, to dominate the population and to appropriate our wealth."



Armua affirmed that the Bolivarian Revolutionary government of Venezuela is a victim of multiple attacks, including economic boycotts, communication sieges, and diplomatic hostilities, all of which are "articulated with the action of terrorists groups that even burn people alive." (According to Red58.org, at least 23 people have been burned alive by opposition supporters targeting Afro-Venezuelans and working class people, including innocent bystanders, government supporters and officials.)

"In the midst of this unprecedented siege, on July 30 the Venezuelan people will go to the polls to choose the composition of the National Constituent Assembly," Armua continued. "In this context, it seems to us key to unify communication efforts to make a different voice visible in international public opinion."

"Everything is fostered by the interference of the United States," Armua explained, "which wants to install an allied government, end the example of sovereignty represented by the Bolivarian Revolution and appropriate its oil."

Armua stressed, "Venezuela plays a major role in the destiny of Latin America and the Caribbean," concluding that this is why "all the artillery of the conservative sectors, in particular, the means of communication," is centred around providing support to those seeking to destabilize the country.

As proof, Armua cited recent statements made by U.S. President Donald Trump and Senator Marco Rubio, OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro, and continued destabilization plans elaborated by the right-wing opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable.

He noted that these acts clearly indicate that the groundwork for a "civil war and forcibly obtaining political power," is underway. In this context, he explained, it is fundamental to "unify communication efforts to produce an alternative voice that international public opinion can support."



Our America and the People of the World Stand with Bolivarian Venezuela

- *Network in Defense of Humanity* -



Popular assembly, July 26, 2017 in the El Calvario neighbourhood of Caracas, Venezuela.

The Network of Intellectuals, Artists and Social Movements in Defense of Humanity, condemns the renewed interference by the United States Government, led by Donald Trump, that is fully engaged in threatening the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. It is being carried out with an attitude that reveals Trump's arrogance and aggression that knows no limit and is incompatible with international law established to dictate the relations between States while firmly rejecting interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

On the eve of the elections to the Constituent National Assembly, to be held July 30, an escalation of violence has intensified in an attempt to prevent this democratic process and the participation and expected victory of the Bolivarian people.

This escalation of violence unleashed by the national and international right-wing against the people of Bolívar and Chávez, with the complicity of the media in their power, encourages and celebrates a fraudulent "plebiscite" organized by a National Assembly outside any constitutional legality and supports the heinous crimes of the terrorist *guarimbas*, which includes amongst other terrorist atrocities the burning of people alive. This same National Assembly has appointed, without any jurisdiction to do so, new judges to the Supreme Court in an attempt to falsely legitimize the spurious creation of a parallel government in opposition to the one legitimately established by the will of the people. The purpose is clear; to destabilize the country in order to prevent the victory of the election of the new Constituent Assembly, on July 30 and to create the conditions for a new stage in the subversive onslaught against Venezuela.

The U.S. administration, with the complicity of puppet governments of the region and their main European allies, are preparing an armed invasion against the Venezuelan people -- an intervention that our Latin America and the Caribbean cannot accept. Being confronted with that possibility, intellectuals, artists, and social movements are obliged to denounce and counter with all the means and resources at our disposal.



Rally in Caracas, July 27, 2017.

The historical message of Bolívar, is today more valid than ever before. The epic continuance between the children of Bolívar and Chávez, is also ours, because it has been a long and unwavering battle for dignity, sovereignty and self-determination of our peoples.

At this crucial time in history, we claim as our own the patriotic anthem of the beloved Venezuela: "United by bonds / made by heaven / all America exists / as a Nation." As one people and with one voice, we will fight for it.

Long Live Bolívar!

Long Live Chávez!

(July 24, 2017)



Organization of American States Once Again Fails to Pass Resolution Undermining Venezuela's Sovereignty



Vancouver picket, July 7, 2017, defends Venezuela's sovereignty and opposes U.S. and Canadian interference.

Members of the Organization of American States (OAS) have once again failed to reach a consensus to "take action on Venezuela," *TeleSur* reported on July 26.

At a July 26 meeting of the Permanent Council of the OAS in Washington, DC, 13 countries read a declaration calling on the Venezuelan government to abandon elections to a Constituent Assembly taking place on July 30. That was two fewer member states than supported a similar resolution at the OAS foreign ministers' meeting on June 19, and five short of the number needed to pass a resolution, *TeleSur* reported. The report continues:

Lacking sufficient support, the sponsors of the latest declaration, including the OAS General Secretary General Luis Almagro, as well as the United States, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, declined to put it to a vote.



Houston, Texas, June 16, 2017.

OAS member states have already debated the situation in Venezuela various times. But Almagro and the group of countries pushing for action against Venezuela have never managed to secure a majority to condemn the government of President Nicolás Maduro. Instead, other member states have insisted on domestic solutions and national dialogue.

During the Permanent Council meeting, Dominican Republic representative Gedeón Santos said the group would not reach an agreement, especially after foreign ministers did not reach a consensus during their last meeting.

Santos said the situation in Venezuela "can only be resolved through dialogue and consensus-building among the parties, with full respect for sovereignty and self-determination."

Caracas has repeatedly accused the OAS and Secretary General Almagro of promoting intervention and destabilization in Venezuela, with tensions hitting a boiling point in April when Venezuela began the process of leaving the organization. The socialist government left on



San Francisco, July 19, 2017

the grounds that the regional body was threatening the country's sovereignty.

The United States has led the charge for increased intervention in Venezuela, including threatening various OAS members like El Salvador, Haiti and the Dominican Republic with diplomatic and financial action if they voted in favor of non-interference and respect for Venezuela's sovereignty.

Ecuadorean representative Marco Albuja criticized the organization for being excessively focussed on Venezuela while neglecting important topics affecting the region, such as hunger, illiteracy and inadequate medical care.

"We have no other issues, we live in paradise, we have no problem except for Venezuela," Albuja said in an ironic tone.

"Venezuela's problem must be resolved by Venezuelans."



Venezuela's Response to U.S. Interference

Government Rejects CIA Chief's Interventionist Admission

The following statement was issued by the Government of Venezuela on July 25, 2017.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela categorically rejects the declarations of the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States, Michael Pompeo, and denounces before the international community the systematic attacks against Venezuela from the USA, including:

1. The intelligence operations campaign being carried out at the highest level which seeks to overthrow the constitutional government of President Nicolás Maduro, as well as its collusion with the governments of Colombia and Mexico in order to force through a political transition in Venezuela, all of which corresponds to the actions that the governments of those countries have been leading at a regional level.
2. The financing and logistical support given by the United States to the Venezuelan opposition as a key part of the efforts of destabilisation of democracy in Venezuela, and its support of political violence.
3. The passing and renewal of the Executive Order, which names Venezuela as an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security of the USA and its foreign policy.
4. The imposition of unilateral and illegal coercive measures against high-ranking officials of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, including the Executive Vice-President, other ministers and magistrates of the Supreme Justice Tribunal (TSJ, in Spanish), with the aim of



submitting the Venezuelan State to the designs of the U.S. empire.

5. More than 105 hostile and interventionist activities have been carried out by the current U.S. administration, leading as well the intervention efforts emanating from the Organisation of American States (OAS), in full breach of international law, and threatening to adopt "severe and rapid economic actions" against all of the Venezuelan population. These collective sanctions are of the most obvious imperialist nature, and in serious contravention of international law.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela demands the immediate apology it is due from the U.S. administration, and warns the international community of the very real threat that hangs over our country, considering the terrible history of this intelligence agency in the harming of the sovereignty of independent countries, and in submitting entire peoples to suffering, and to the territorial disintegration of those countries not aligned with its imperial interests.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela informs that it will condemn, through the corresponding diplomatic channels, the governments of the USA, Colombia and Mexico before the organisations of CELAC, UNASUR, the Association of Caribbean States and the Non-Aligned Movement, as is our right as a free and independent country. This Sunday 30 July, the Venezuelan people will go to the polls in a peaceful manner in order to express their sovereign will through a direct, secret and universal vote, in exercise of their full democratic rights and direct sovereignty, for the election of the National Constituent Assembly.



Reply by Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Relations to July 17 White House Statement



"[President] Maduro, convoked us and here I am -- the National Constituent Assembly is the road to peace!"

At a press conference on July 17, the Minister of Popular Power for Foreign Affairs Samuel Moncada read the following statement from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, categorically rejecting the U.S. government's statements against Venezuela's democracy.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela rejects the unbelievable statement published today by the White House on 07/17/2017.

It is a document of a sort that has never been seen before, which, due to its poor level and awful quality, makes it difficult to intellectually understand the intentions of the assailant country. Without a doubt, the government of the United States is used to humiliating other nations in its international relations and believes that it will receive as a response the subordination to which they are accustomed. The trench that the government of the United States is digging in its relations with Venezuela makes it difficult to rationally predict its actions for the entire international community.

The government of the United States, unashamedly, shows its absolute bias towards the violent and extremist sectors of Venezuelan politics, which favor the use of terrorism to overthrow a popular and democratic government.

The moral ruin of the Venezuelan opposition has dragged President Trump to commit an open aggression against a Latin American country. We know not who could have written, let alone authorized, a statement with such a conceptual and moral poverty.

The thin democratic veil of the Venezuelan opposition has fallen, and it reveals the brutal interventionist force of the U.S. government, which has been behind the violence suffered by the Venezuelan people in the last four months.

It is not the first time that we denounce and confront threats as ludicrous as those contained in this unbelievable document.

We call on the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as on the free peoples of the world, to understand the magnitude of the brutal threat contained in this imperial statement and to defend the sovereignty, self-determination, and independence, fundamental principles of international law.

The original constituent power is contemplated in our Constitution and it only concerns the Venezuelan people. The National Constituent Assembly will be elected by the direct, universal, and secret ballot of all Venezuelans, under the authority of the National Electoral Council, as contemplated in our legal framework. It is an act of political sovereignty of the Republic, nothing and no one can stop it. The Constituent Assembly will go on!

Today, Venezuelan people are free and will respond united against the insolent threat posed by a xenophobic and racist empire. The anti-imperialist thought of the Liberator is more valid than ever.

"The United States seems destined by Providence to plague America with misery in the name of liberty."



For Your Information

Q & A: The National Constituent Assembly in Venezuela

- Venezuela Solidarity Campaign -

Elections for a National Constituent Assembly are being held in Venezuela on July 30th. Here are some common questions -- with the answers -- that are being asked about the Assembly.

What is a National Constituent Assembly (ANC), under Venezuelan law?

A National Constituent Assembly is essentially a constitutional convention, a gathering for the purpose of writing a new constitution or revising an existing constitution. Apart from the famous examples from the 18th century America and France, a range of other countries have employed this mechanism. In Venezuela, Article 347 of its constitution says:

"The original constituent power rests with the people of Venezuela. This power may be exercised by calling a National Constituent Assembly for the purpose of transforming the State, creating a new juridical order and drawing up a new Constitution."

Venezuela's constitution is itself the product of a constitutional convention held in 1999, convened at the initiative of President Chávez to draft a new constitution. The constitution was later endorsed by referendum in December 1999. New general elections were held under the new constitution in July 2000. This marked the transition from the Fourth Republic of Venezuela to the present-day Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Is President Maduro allowed to call for the setting up of a Constituent Assembly?

Article 348 of the constitution provides for how a National Constituent Assembly is to be instigated:

"The initiative for calling a National Constituent Assembly may emanate from the President of the Republic sitting with the Cabinet of Ministers; from the National Assembly by a two-thirds vote of its members; from the Municipal Councils in open session, by a two-thirds vote of their members; and from 15% of the voters registered with the Civil and Electoral Registry."

It is also important to note what Article 349 of the constitution says, bearing in mind (as explained later) that the right-wing opposition coalition, which has a majority in the National Assembly, is opposed to the calling of a National Constituent Assembly:

Article 349: "The President of the Republic shall not have the power to object to the new Constitution. The existing constituted authorities shall not be permitted to obstruct the Constituent Assembly in any way. For purposes of the promulgation of the new Constitution, the same shall be published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Venezuela or in the Gazette of the Constituent Assembly."

Why has President Maduro called for a National Constituent Assembly?

In a formal document which he signed in front of the National Electoral Council (CNE), President Maduro stated that the call for the Constituent Assembly was made in the context of the current social, political and economic circumstances in which there are severe internal and external threats against democracy and the constitutional order.

This refers to the right-wing opposition-led violence aimed at bringing down the elected Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. The violence began in early April, resulting so far in scores of deaths and over 1,200 people injured. A key tactic in the violent protests is the use of 'guarimbas' or street blockades created by masked protesters.

The current violence has involved attacks on state facilities and services such as maternity hospitals, electricity supplies, food depots and public transport, and also targeted assassinations of government supporters. A ramping up of the aggression occurred in late June when a police officer flying a stolen helicopter attacked the Ministry of Interior building and the Supreme Court, firing shots and dropping four grenades.

The purpose of the Constituent Assembly has been expounded on by former Education Minister Elias Jaua, who explained in an interview with Televen, a private Venezuela TV channel, that its aims were "to maintain political stability, to solve the economic issues, to broaden and to strengthen the system of social welfare [and] to heal the social wounds that have come up during the conflict."

When and how will the Constituent Assembly be made up?

Elections for Constituent Assembly are scheduled to take place on 30 July 2017.

Anybody, regardless of political persuasion, can be nominated or nominate themselves to be a candidate for election to the Constituent Assembly.

Candidates may be nominated in one of the following ways:

- by their own initiative.
- by the initiative of groups of voters and voters.
- by the initiative of the sectoral groups comprising 173 seats of the 545 seat Constituent Assembly

In order to run for office on their own initiative, 3% of voters and voters registered in the electoral registry of the municipalities are required to nominate the constituents. In the sector category, the candidates will be nominated by the corresponding sector, and should receive the backing of 3% of the sector to which they belong.

From these various ways of being nominated, there are over 6,000 candidates competing for Constituent Assembly seats.

In keeping with how previous elections have been organised, the National Electoral Council (CNE) organised a 'trial run' of voting arrangements for the Constituent Assembly, setting up nearly 2,000 voting booths in voting centres across the country, in order to be assured that on election day everything would run smoothly and efficiently.

How will a new constitution emerge?

Once elected, the National Constituent Assembly will be convened within 72 hours and will get to work.

The Assembly will set its agenda for discussion on the basis of what it sees as national priorities. As convenor of the Assembly, however, the President has proposed nine topics for the Assembly to consider:

- the nation's right and need for peace
- improvements to the country's economy
- constitutional recognition of the various 'Missions' (government social programmes)
- an extension of the justice system's scope, to end impunity for crimes
- constitutional recognition of new forms of popular and participatory democracy in Venezuela,

such as communal councils and communes

- the defence of Venezuela's sovereignty and protection against foreign intervention
- reinvigorating the plural, multicultural character of Venezuela
- a guarantee for the future of Venezuela's youth through enshrining in the constitution their rights and the need to preserve life on the planet

What is the right-wing opposition's response to the National Constituent Assembly initiative?

Venezuela's right-wing opposition, the so-called 'Roundtable of Democratic Unity' (MUD) coalition, originally announced in May that it would boycott the National Constituent Assembly and denounced it as an illegitimate effort to rewrite the nation's constitution.

This is seemingly in contrast to the position it held in 2013, when 55 opposition leaders signed a joint statement in support of setting up a constituent assembly.

Considering the opposition's claim about the depth of the government's unpopularity, echoed by most of the media, it is puzzling that opposition candidates will not be contesting all Constituent Assembly seats.

Instead of taking part in this legitimate constitutional process, the opposition held on July 16 their own unofficial plebiscite, asking whether voters recognised or rejected the Constituent Assembly process. Turnout levels for this exercise have been hotly disputed, since the process was not conducted under the auspices of the National Electoral Council and the voting was not independently audited.

How does this Constituent Assembly initiative fit with current peace and dialogue initiatives?

The convening of a Constituent Assembly is a key part of ongoing efforts by President Maduro to engage in constructive dialogue with the opposition.

The dialogue process was launched last year between the government and opposition sectors, but the right-wing MUD coalition has refused to participate.

Some opposition parties have accepted the offer of dialogue. Seventeen Venezuelan opposition parties met with the government to discuss the Constituent Assembly in May 2017. The parties who accepted the invitation included Citizenship Movement, Mopivene Movement, Republican Democracy, Republican Movement, Labour Power, Red Flag, Civilian Resistance, Renewable Democracy, Ecological Movement, Young Party and the Stone Party.

In an attempt to pursue dialogue, in early June, Maduro sent a letter to Pope Francis asking him to mediate the political conflict with opposition sectors that have encouraged violence in the streets. Pope Francis has repeatedly urged dialogue between sectors in Venezuela, criticising part of the opposition for not being willing to sit down for talks, but without success. He has also called on Venezuelan bishops to denounce "any form of violence."

President Maduro has followed this by again renewing his call for the opposition to agree to dialogue and peace, in order that solutions can be arrived at to meet the needs and well-being of the Venezuelan people. He has emphasised that these solutions can only be arrived at through cooperation and peace.

(July 21, 2017)



Recent U.S. Actions Against Venezuela

- Venezuelan Embassy to Canada -



Rally in support of the Venezuelan people and against Canadian government's intervention, May 13, 2017.

I. On July 26th, the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Department of the Treasury added 13 Venezuelan high-level officials to the OFAC's SDN List, as part of a new set of unilateral sanctions against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

II. Last July 20, 2017, CIA Director Mike Pompeo answered a question posed by Venezuelan Vanessa Neumann as follows:

"At any time you have a country as large and with the economic capacity of a country like Venezuela, America has a deep interest in making sure that it is stable, as democratic as possible. And so, we're working hard to do that, I am always careful when we talk about South and Central America and the CIA, there's a lot of stories. (Laughter)

"MR. POMPEO: So I want to be careful with what I say but suffice to say, we are very hopeful that there can be a transition in Venezuela and we the CIA is doing its best to understand the dynamic there, so that we can communicate to our State Department and to others. The Colombians, I was just down in Mexico City and in Bogota a week before last talking about this very issue trying to help them understand the things they might do so that they can get a better outcome for their part of the world and our part of the world." [1]

III. Last July 23, 2017, the U.S. Embassy to Caracas published in its internet website a security alert that in a scaremonger manner advises *"taking appropriate preparatory measures, including gathering enough food and water for 72 hours"* (our italics). Further, such communiqué recognizes that they deem violent the protests that in other spaces and opportunities they consider peaceful: *"Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate into violence."*

IV. In a White House Statement, President Donald Trump threatened Venezuela as he said: *"If the Maduro regime imposes its Constituent Assembly on July 30, the United States will take strong and swift economic actions."* [2]

V. In an official communiqué, the Spokesperson of the Department of State attempted to legitimise the results of the opposition consultation exercise of July 16th, which lack any legitimacy as they

cannot be audited whilst she urged the Venezuelan Government to "abandon" the National Constituent Assembly, and requested the intervention of other countries to press Venezuela for such purposes. The statement reads: "*The vote by millions of Venezuelans was an unequivocal affirmation in support of free and fair elections as well as respect for the existing constitution.*" [...] "*We encourage governments in the hemisphere and around the world to call on President Maduro to suspend this process which only seeks to undermine democracy in Venezuela.*" [...] "*As the President stated earlier today, the United States is prepared to take strong and swift economic actions if the Government of Venezuela proceeds with the National Constituent Assembly action.*"[3]

VI. This year alone, over and above one hundred hostile statements have been issued or uttered by U.S. government spokespersons and by U.S. Congress members. Among those causing most concern to Venezuela for they entail U.S. aggression against our country are listed below:

- On April 6, 2017, Admiral Jefe Kurt Tidd, Head of Southern Command in his Southern Command annual report mentioned Venezuela in his written testimony before the U.S. Senate Armed Service Committee as follows:

"Overall the region is stable, although the gap between public expectations and government performance manifests itself in social protests, most often against corruption and mismanagement of public resources Bolivian [sic] citizens have engaged in mass protests to demand resolution to a severe water shortage, while Venezuela faces significant instability in the coming year due to widespread food, and medicine shortages; continued political uncertainty; and a worsening economic situation. The growing humanitarian crisis in Venezuela could eventually compel a regional response." (Our underlining and italics.)

Even though he did not talk of concrete actions and rejected that any action was being planned against Venezuela, it is noteworthy that Tidd takes for granted what John Kelly, Secretary of Homeland Security Department, a few years earlier, saw as a possibility of a "humanitarian crisis" to intervene in Venezuela.[4]

- On June 6, 2017, U.S. Ambassador to the UNO, Nikki Haley carried out a fringe meeting in Geneva under the title "Human Rights and Democracy in Venezuela" aimed at attacking our country in the realm of multilateral organizations. Among other accusations this U.S. Government spokesperson described the Venezuelan government in the following terms:

"The Venezuelan government is in the midst of destroying human rights and democracy in Venezuela. It is conducting a campaign of violence and intimidation against unarmed demonstrators, businesses, civil society, and freely elected political opposition."

and

"Since April, when demonstrations became a daily occurrence, more than 60 people have been killed. More than 1000 have been injured and nearly 3,000 have been detained, including over 300 civilians who are being charged criminally in military courts."[5] (Our italics.)

- On June 14, 2017, the Secretary of State Tillerson during the Department of State Budget Hearing at the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, answered a question posed by Congressman Mario Díaz-Balart as follows:

"With respect to Venezuela specifically, as you well know, it is extremely challenging there right now. I think we have made some important and significant progress within the OAS. We're going to continue to use the OAS as a vehicle to advance pressure on the regime to return to its constitution, return to its called-for elections."

"But we also have to work with the opposition to help the opposition become unified. That has been one of the great challenges of the past, is the opposition can't seem to be of one voice." (Our italics and underlining.)[6]

- On June 22, 2017, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence was Guest Speaker at a Conversation at the Washington-based Wilson Center on *U.S. Contribution to prosperity and security in Central America*. After stating that "[...] *Latin America is a priority for the Trump Administration. [...] Our partnerships and alliances throughout the region are critical to our national interests [...]*." Further, in addressing the recently announced new policy towards Cuba, he said about Venezuela: *"And rest assured, the United States of America will continue to support international efforts to restore freedom, democracy and the rule of law to Venezuela until freedom occurs."* (Min 19:00)[7] (Our italics and underlining.)

- On July 12, 2017, at The House of Representatives Western Hemisphere subcommittee hearing on "Advancing U.S. Interest in the Western Hemisphere: The FY 2018 Budget Request" USAID (a) Assistant Administrator, Sarah-Ann Lynch talked about the interventionist work performed by her agency in Venezuela:

"Yes, we have existing activities in Venezuela working with civil society organizations with -- for U.S.-based NGOs here and then 30 to 35 NGOs in Venezuela.

We'll continue to be working with those civil society organizations to increase awareness of what's happening on the ground, to increase the ability to report on human right abuses, corruption, things of that nature.

We're also working with the National Assembly to increase their ability to be legislators, doing training and capacity building there.

In addition, we're doing assessments to the extent we can on the situation on the ground in the food area, in the economic area in the financial area, and putting together those assessments so that should there be an opportunity to do more we'll be prepared to have a good response."[8]

VII. On January 13, 2017, President Barack Obama established *"that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13692 with respect to the situation in Venezuela."* Effectively, that is the Executive Order allowing for the application of sanctions on the country, based on its description of Venezuela as an *"unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States"* pursuant to the National Emergency Law.[9]

VIII. On April 12, the U.S. Embassy to Caracas published a "Security Message for U.S. Citizens: Easter Week Protests / Demonstrations (12-17 April, 2017)," containing a schedule with each of the demonstrations called by the opposition coalition (MUD), which per se is questionable because to convey an alert to U.S. citizens in Venezuela it is unnecessary to publish a calendar with the actions of the opposition scheduled. Further, the message reminded the U.S. citizens in Venezuela that *"protests can occur without notice; that they can quickly develop and may result in violence."* Ironically, the public discourse was to condemn public order actions and to name it repression, as though they were disproportionate actions for peaceful demonstrations. *This alert notice was eliminated from Internet.*

IX. *In 2017 alone, the United States has sanctioned Venezuela in two opportunities. Both of them in a unilateral manner, thus violating international law:*

- On February 13, 2017. The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned Vice President Tareck El Aissami by listing him as a "Specially Designated National." [10]

- On May 18, 2017, The OFAC further published the listing of 8 Magistrates of the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court of Justice as "Specially Designated Nationals," which includes blocking assets and interactions with the USA (corporations and individuals). The Magistrates sanctioned are: Luis Fernando Damiani Trujillo, Arcadio de Jesús Delgado Rosales, Gladys María Gutiérrez Alvarado, Juan José Mendoza Jover, Maikel José Moreno Pérez, Calixto Antonio Ortega Ríos, Lourdes Benicia Suárez Anderson, Carmen Auxiliadora Zuleta de Merchán. [11]

Notes

1. <http://aspensecurityforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/The-View-from-Langley.pdf>
2. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/07/17/statement-president-donald-j-trump>
3. <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/07/272645.htm>
4. https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Tidd_04-06-17.pdf
5. <https://geneva.usmission.gov/2017/06/06/ambassador-nikki-haley-remarks-on-venezuela-at-human-rights-council-side-event/>
6. <https://appropriations.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=394899>
7. <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/105056065>
8. <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/subcommittee-hearing-advancing-u-s-interests-western-hemisphere-fy-2018-budget-request/>
9. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/13/letter-continuation-national-emergency-respect-venezuela>
10. <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/as0005.aspx>
11. <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20170518.aspx>
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