



Edmonton, April 14, 2004

- In Venezuela, Chavez's government violates the human and civil rights.
- Hundreds of Venezuelans have been wounded and imprisoned. Tens have been tortured and murdered.
- Venezuelan people ask for a referendum as established in the constitution. Millions of signatures were collected, but the government plays tricks to deny the referendum.
- The judiciary and the legislature have no independence from the

For background information visit: <http://www.avended.org/SOSVzla.pdf>

## Colombia requests application of Inter-American Democratic Charter to Venezuela

In a communiqué leaked to the press allegedly the Colombian Senate has requested the OAS, American countries and the international community in general to apply the OAS' Democratic Chart to the government of Hugo Chavez for what they consider as a continuous violation of Venezuela's constitution and for blocking the democratic attempts of the opposition to hold a recall referendum on his mandate.

The communiqué also asks the international community for total support in these dire moments for democracy in Venezuela. In their view the democratic opposition has fulfilled all the legal requirements set forth by the government of Hugo Chavez to celebrate the recall, effort that has been arrested in illegal fashion by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court and National Electoral Council's officials.

Source: <http://www.vcrisis.com/index.php?content=letters/200404141337>

## VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA

### Torture and Rape

Juan Carlos Zambrano was tortured and killed by the military in Zulia state, Venezuela. The military also raped his wife. His brother, Michel spent a week in detention, and now he is under protection by the Venezuelan Observatory on Human Rights. He and his brother were imprisoned tortured. He witnessed how soldiers wearing masks raped his sister in law. However, Michel has been able identified three of the soldiers who caused his brother's death. The report of the autopsy done on Juan Carlos Zambrano, "shows signs of malevolent cruelty; his arm and his pancreas were crushed, his testicles burned; he presented fractures in the collar-bone, the jaw, and the shoulder plate" said William Barrientos, chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Zulia State Legislature.

Sources:

- <http://www.eluniversal.com/2004/03/18/18260A.shtml>
- [http://caracaschronicles.blogspot.com/archives/2004\\_03\\_14\\_caracaschronicles\\_archive.html](http://caracaschronicles.blogspot.com/archives/2004_03_14_caracaschronicles_archive.html)

### Eight soldiers burned in a mysterious barracks fire

Venezuela's minister of information resigned on Monday (April 5) after the death of one of eight soldiers burned in a mysterious barracks fire whose injuries President Hugo Chavez dismissed in a national broadcast as only "light".

On April 4th. President Chavez in his Sunday program said that the "oligarchic" press had made a big deal out of a little incident calling it a "small fire", denying that it was set on purpose and calling the injuries "slight".

Almost immediately, relatives of one of those injured challenged the President to personally visit Angel Pedreanez, who had burns covering 52% of his body rejecting the President's statement that they were slight injuries. The sister of the soldier called her

EXAMEN FORENSE	
	<b>NOMBRE:</b> Juan Carlos Zambrano
	<b>LUGAR DEL DECESO:</b> Campo Turiaca, Lagunillas, Edo. Zulia
	<b>RESULTADOS AUTOPSIA:</b> ORGANOS INTERNOS HUESOS QUEMADURAS
<b>ORGANOS INTERNOS</b>	Estómago: se encontró excremento y pelo humano Bazo y páncreas destruidos
<b>FRACTURA DE HUESOS</b>	Mandíbula Clavícula Omóplato
<b>QUEMADURAS</b>	En testículos y espalda

brother condition “critical” while his father said that his son had been unconscious for the first 72 hours following the incident.

On Monday, Orlando Jesus Bustamante one of the injured soldiers died of the burns he had received. His family charged that they were never able to talk to him after he was hospitalised and was moved to Caracas without their consent, something that the Minister of Defense clearly knew on Sunday as Chavez spoke, given the mobilisation required to move the injured soldiers to Caracas.

Information Minister Jesse Chacon, a former comrade in arms of ex- paratroop officer Chavez (they both participated in the failed coups of 1992), said his ministry had been responsible for giving the president incorrect information. On Sunday 11, Chavez asked for forgiveness for saying the injuries were slight, but clearly showed that Chacon’s resignation was simply a smokescreen by “not accepting it”.

Maracaibo fire department had presented a report saying that the fire had been provoked and not like Chavez had explained was due to a cigarette butt falling on a mattress. Even the representative of the Peoples’ Ombudsman in Maracaibo raised a number of issues about the fire, questioning the fact that the soldiers were not allowed out and are actually not allowed to smoke in the stockade.

Doctors from the Maracaibo Hospital where the soldiers were first treated, said that the patients were moved against their opinion. This is another signs of how the Government was trying to cover up the incident.

While the Zulia representative of the People’s Ombudsman acted promptly, the People’s Ombudsman has yet to make a statement on any of these events. Similarly, the Attorney General/Prosecutor Isaias Rodriguez has actually said absolutely nothing about the whole affair, from the violations of human rights, through the lies and manipulations and the fact that evidence.

Sources:

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N05562453.htm>

<http://www.vcrisis.com/index.php?content=letters/200404131000>

**A video with images of excessive repression during public demonstrations, use of war weapon by government force is available at:**

[http://www.uru.org/gaitas/27f\\_2004\\_001.wmv](http://www.uru.org/gaitas/27f_2004_001.wmv)

## **Status of the Referendum**

### **Background:**

- With the presence of international observer form OAS and Carter Center, more than 3MM of signatures were collected.
- More than 800,000 signatures have been put aside “in revision” because of similarity in the handwriting of the signee data
  - This criteria was NOT mentioned in the official rules,
  - In order to assure neatness of the forms, many volunteers filled the forms with details of individuals who later reviewed, signed and placed fingerprints in the corresponding space.
  - The CNE is now producing new rules to artificially invalidate signatures

### **Status**

- Venezuela is at an impasse between rulings by the Electoral Chamber and the Constitutional. Chamber of the Supreme Court. On the one hand the Electoral Chamber has exerted its independence jurisdiction over electoral matters by ruling that the 870,000 signatures that are on the “Planillas Planas” should be included in the list of valid signatures, which would allow for the recall referendum to move forward.
- By attempting to over-rule the Electoral Chamber, the Constitutional Chamber is following the government’s line to obstruct the recall referendum and undermining the independence of the judicial system, by generating an institutional crisis in the Supreme Court.
- It is important to highlight that should the recall referendum take place after August 19, 2004, the Vice-President would complete the presidential term until the elections of 2006.