

Edmonton, April 22, 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 presidency

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

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## Venezuela's Chavez backs Iraq insurgents against US

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez blamed U.S. President George W. Bush for violence in Iraq and sent a message of support to Iraqis he said were battling the U.S. "imperialist aggressor."

In one of his fiercest attacks against Bush, the left-wing leader once again accused Washington of trying to end his rule in Venezuela, a leading supplier of oil to the United States...

Source: <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N13520704.htm>

## Venezuela's Chavez Applauds Spanish Iraq Pullout

Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, a fierce critic of the U.S.-led war in Iraq, on Sunday applauded as "a big league decision" Spain's move to pull its troops out of the country.

Chavez, a leftist former army officer who often spars with Washington over its policies, last week backed Iraqis fighting the U.S. "imperialist aggressor" and blamed President Bush for the recent surge in Iraq violence.

"This can be called a big league decision, a sovereign decision, a courageous one," Chavez said in his Sunday television program after reading a bulletin on Spain's decision to withdraw its 1,300 troops from Iraq.....

Source: <http://www.reuters.com/newsArticle.ihtml?type=topNews&storyID=4857958>

## Venezuela is no Longer a Partisan Issue (By Alexandra Beech)

Florida Senator Bill Nelson blasted through Venezuela this week, predicting that Chavez would likely block the recall referendum, accusing the Venezuelan government of cavorting with Colombian rebels and of "ignoring a flourishing black market for passports and other official documents that could fall into the hands of terrorists."

...On Thursday, April 22, the Congressional Human Rights Caucus of the House of Representatives will hold a member's hearing titled "Venezuela: A Human Rights Update." ... the panel of expert witnesses will include Venezuelan Philharmonic Cellist Carlos Izcarray, who was recently tortured by the National Guard during the protests that erupted after the G-15 Summit, Carlos Victor Rodriguez Cedeno, a former Venezuelan Ambassador to UNHCR, and Eric Olson, Americas Advocacy Director, Amnesty International USA. The invitation, signed by California Democratic Representative Tom Lantos, Virginia Republican Representative Frank Wolf, and Florida Republican Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, states that according to a recent state department report, "the government of Venezuela still does not provide for consistently implemented laws that respond to human rights violations. Extra judicial killings, serious delays in prosecutions of human rights violations, death squads, torture and abuse of detainees, little or no tolerance for government protestors, corruption within the civilian judicial system and serious restrictions upon the freedoms of speech and press are reported by the State Department.

Source: <http://www.vcrisis.com/index.php?content=letters/200404220405>

## VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA

### Drowned soldier during cruel punishment

Robert Aguilar (24), died drowned during a punishment after being found sleeping on duty.

His father, Jesús Aguilar, denounced that his son and other 14 soldiers were forced to get into a pond of contaminated water. His son refused to follow the order, because he did not know how to swim, but he was beaten and forced to get in the muddy waters. Mr. Aguilar has also denounced receiving death threats for releasing this information to the media.

Sources (in Spanish):

- <http://www.eluniversal.com/2004/04/22/22284G.shtml>
- <http://www.eluniversal.com/2004/04/22/22A447911.shtml>

## VIDEO “The Useless Revolution” (English) available at:

<http://prohibidooldvidar.somosvenezuela.com/videos/the-useless-revolution-en.wmv>

### Status of the Referendum

- **Background:**
  - With the presence of international observer from 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
  - The Electoral Chamber has ruled 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.
  - 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.
- **Status**
  - The CNE has issued the “rules” for performing the “repairmen” of signatures under revision
  - The opposition is struggling between a process, which is a clear violation of the decision from the Electoral Chamber of the Supreme Court, and giving away the last hope of a peaceful solution to Venezuelan crisis. Should the opposition decide not to accept the terms proposed by the CNE, Venezuela would be going into a process of civil disobedience, repression and violence.

