

Edmonton, May 05, 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

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

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Storm over Venezuela court reform

Opposition leaders in Venezuela have sharply criticised controversial new reforms to the Supreme Court.

The new law was passed by pro-Chavez majority in the parliament (about 55%) after a 16-hour session. It increases the number of Supreme Court judges from 20 to 32.

The opposition says the move will allow President Hugo Chavez to appoint more sympathetic judges and, in effect, dominate the judiciary.

It comes as the Supreme Court is considering an opposition bid for a referendum on Mr Chavez's presidency.

Critics of the reform include the governor of Miranda state, Enrique Mendoza, who called it "one more act of abuse that defines the totalitarian and centrist vision of this regime". The constitution states that reforms for supreme court and similar "independent" bodies have to be approved by the vote of at least 2 thirds of the congress.

International Venezuelan Council for Democracy warns US high rank officials about misinformation strategy on behalf of the Chávez regime

Houston, Texas.- The government of Hugo Chávez has paid more than a million dollars to one of the most influential lobbying agencies in Washington, DC to structure an aggressive campaign of misinformation oriented to disguise the Chávez regime ties with the Colombian narcoterrorists.

Patton Boggs, Attorneys at Law, has designed a political and communication strategy with the purpose of influencing 75 members of the US Congress, the Pentagon and the Department of State. The proposed campaign is available to the public domain through the following website http://www.uru.org/papers/20040430_PattonBoggs.htm including the list of personalities they consider "targets" for the deceptive propaganda campaign.

The efforts of the Patton Boggs lobbyists in favor of the Chávez regime have collapsed as a result of the recent public declarations of Senators Lugar and B. Nelson, President and member respectively of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the Annual Report of the Department of State on the war against terrorism where Chávez regime is described as "inconsistent" in his cooperation and ideologically similar to the Colombian narcoterrorists.

See document sent by IVCD to "targets": http://www.venezuelanuestra.org/Prensa2/ivcd_prensa2.htm

VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA

Private Pedreáñez passed away in an operating room

MONICA CASTRO (SPECIAL TO EL UNIVERSAL)

Burnt soldier dies of heart attack

The death of the soldier after 34 days in the hospital and a clear improvement in the last few days caused commotion in the family. Ángel Pedreáñez' parents said that their son died in mysterious circumstances. Their lawyer has a recording with his last conversation with the soldier, who revealed that the fire was started by someone outside of the cell

Ángel Ciro Pedreáñez, a soldier who suffered third-degree burns during a fire in a military prison in Zulia state, died Tuesday of a heart attack during a surgery.

Pedreáñez, who was being operated to replace parts of his burnt skin with healthy tissue, became the second soldier to die as a result of the March 30 fire in Fuerte Mara base, after private Orlando Bustamante passed away on April 4. They were in disciplinary arrest in a military prison cell for several reasons. The case has been controversial because of the debate about whether the fire was accidental or intentional and, if provoked, if it was the military authorities or the soldiers themselves who did so.

"My son was killed," said Énder Pedreáñez, the soldier's father.



However, Crispín Marín, director of the Coromoto Hospital, where Pedreáñez spent 34 days, explained that the soldier had always been in critical conditions, although they were stable.

"His conditions had improved up to the point that the mechanic ventilation (equipment) was removed. There were even reasons to be optimistic, but medicine faces imponderables that not cannot always be totally controlled," Marín said.

He explained there is no evidence explaining Pedreáñez' death because everything indicated that he was improving.

"I was always very careful in saying that the patient was not out of danger," Marín added.

The doctor also said that the Pedreáñez' room was under surveillance and no unauthorised person was ever allowed to access it, except for the physicians, the nurses, his family and his lawyer, who talked to him on Monday night.

They killed him

Pedreáñez senior blamed the government and military authorities for the death of his son, and said that nobody had explained him what happened.

"The military officers were all the time eager to enter (my son's room), they were always hiding and doing follow-up, and they surely entered and killed him, this is a dictatorial, delinquent and satanic government," he said, dominated by anger.

Elsa Pedreáñez, the visibly devastated mother of the dead soldier, recalled that his son wanted to go home to escape the harassment around him in the hospital. "They must be happy now because he is left," she said.

Pedreáñez' girlfriend, Natalie Portillo, fainted when she learnt the news.

The recording

Morly Uzcátegui, Pedreáñez' lawyer, insisted that he recorded his last conversation with the soldier, who revealed that the fire was started by someone outside of the cell, and the inmates did not receive assistance but much later.

The body of the soldier was taken to the Medical School of the University of Zulia for the autopsy, following orders of the state' Military Attorney General's Office. A judge was present during the operation.

Marianella Canga, Zulia's top judge visited the morgue to get information on the autopsy.

The body was delivered to the Pedreáñez by seven in the night.

(Translated by Edgardo Malaver)

Venezuela: Repairing the Recall Election against Hugo Chavez

By [Daniel Duquenal](#)

Thursday 29, April 2004 - During the last three days, there was really only one piece of news: after an anguished debate, [the Coordinadora Democrática, CD, has decided to go and try to re-validate](#) at the very least 600 000 of the signatures it claims it has collected.

First a reminder

The opposition needs 2.4 million valid signatures to force a Recall election on Chavez mandate (20% of the electorate). After a lot of huffing and puffing the opposition forced a Chavez controlled Electoral Board, CNE, to admit that it had collected 1.9 million approximately. Approximately because even though this result was announced March 2, to this very day nobody knows for sure what is the exact number of valid signatures. So let's assume that this 15.6 % of valid signatures is indeed valid. The first comment is that it is quite a result for the opposition. To remove Grey Davis from California took quite an effort to barely make it to 10%. The Venezuelan Opposition managed 15.4% in 4 days collection. Just to put some perspective.

Now the CNE has grudgingly accepted that 1.2 million signatures might be repaired, or claimed or re-validated. Whatever. And it will give 3 days, in about a month or so, for these 1.2 million folks to step forward and confirm that indeed they did sign up.

A large sector of the opposition think that the CD should have forced the High Court to decided between two contrasting rulings from two of its divisions, the Electoral Court and the Constitutional Court. Critics of this position point out that 1) the final result is not assured to favor the opposition, 2) the Electoral Court is aware of this and thus exhorted the parties to try to make a deal instead of waiting for a final ruling, and 3) who knows when the final ruling would come, probably too late for a Recall Election before August 19. Failing to meet this date will ensure the survival of the regime until 2006, even if Chavez is recalled.

The problems to overcome

The long negotiations between the opposition and the CNE to agree on some framework for the repairs have yielded a solution that has pleased few, if any. Regardless of the merits of the rules agreed upon, in the last few days [a few major issues have come forward](#), issues that must be resolved if the process has a chance to reach success. Some of them below:

Some people signed and do not appear anywhere.

Amazingly that even happened to some major political leaders from both sides. Ledezma and the vice president share that dubious distinction. And it is notorious that they signed as TV watched when they did so. Where are the forms that included their signature? Can the CNE be THAT disorganised? But more importantly, will these people be able to claim their citizen's right to have participated in the process? We are talking 0.3 million people her e.

Chavismo will "convince" people to withdraw their signature.

This gravest, and fascistic, breach of ethics is scandalous enough as it is. On the ridiculous side it confirms that no "mega-fraud" was committed since chavismo amazingly confesses that it must convince at least 0.25 million to withdraw their signature or not show up to re-validate it (they assume that 40% will not show up, that is why they need "only" 0.25 million). In other words they admit that indeed most of the 1.2 million that must be repaired are probably true signatures!!! $1.2 + 1.9 = 3.1$. So the fraud would have been 0.3 out of the 3.4 claimed originally by the opposition. Hardly "mega". But this could be left for the lore of Venezuelan politics if it were not carrying further meaning. Chavistas by these declarations claim that they have the right to "alter" the decision of people while the opposition cannot add more people if it could do so. This by itself illustrates quite well the ! real fraud that was committed by the pro-Chavez CNE. Can the CNE allow such blatant pressure on the electorate? Were there not rules emitted before about the point of taking finger prints as the only way to cancel one's signatures, by proving that someone else had signed for you? Unfortunately recent declarations of Rodriguez indicate that the job will be made easier for the chavista side.

People with "valid" signatures can withdraw.

This is of course an extension of the preceding consideration. And this does not seem to have been contemplated previously as it seems to be considered now. Besides allowing further pressure on public employees that signed, one side effect is that it raises all sorts of conspiracy theories. One example is the theory that the government is cloning a series of fake ID so that while people that have valid signatures stay at home peacefully, someone with a fake ID with their ID number goes to annul their signature. Not a large scale operation obviously but a few thousand could be removed this way. A few thousand here, a few there and voila! The magical 0.25!

The data is not complete.

When will this one be complete? The opposition needs the data so it has time to track its supporter to inform them. It will need it to prepare the necessary logistics. Every new delay of course complicates the task of the opposition.

What are the chances to succeed?

In front of such a possibility of treachery from the Chavez agents at the CNE one is justified in wondering if it is worth the effort. The divisions within the opposition are understandable. Unfortunately there is no other way right now. All the other options, ranging from hoping for a favorable high court ruling to plain civil disobedience can still be tried out if the Recall Election bid sinks in a sea of treachery. All have very high risks to lead to serious violence which is what the government seems to want, at least since February 2.

There is a simple truth that must impose its! wisdom right now to all factors within the opposition.

Since the CD has chosen the strictly legal and electoral path, the Chavez regime has been making mistakes and losing points. The road has been long but it has been paying off. If the opposition wants to use fraud as a reason for further action, in particular from the international community, it must let the fraud happen for all to see. Until now the administration, through the CNE, has been very careful when cheating: no massive fraud can be claimed. But it has also reached the moment when it will need to perform that massive fraud to stop once and for all the march to the Recall Election. For as hard as it will be to witness such a fraud, the opposition must take the chance for it to happen. It must grin and bear it to finally unmask the true nature of the regime, once and for all.

The Regime would be losing in both scenario. If it balks at the final massive fraud then it must go to the Recall Election and! we will know if people are behind Chavez as he claims. If he orders the fraud then he will have to deal with the consequences, internal and external.

I am rather pessimistic as for a favorable outcome of the validation process, but it has to be taken. The chance is slim but it exists and it is still better than marching against the tanks. We claim to hold the moral ground and we must prove it to the world by taking the chance and go through that hopefully last obstacle.