

111TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 428

Expressing concern about violations of civil liberties taking place in Venezuela and commending the people of Venezuela for their steadfast support of democracy.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 1, 2010

Mr. LEMIEUX (for himself and Mr. COBURN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Expressing concern about violations of civil liberties taking place in Venezuela and commending the people of Venezuela for their steadfast support of democracy.

Whereas since his election as the President of Venezuela in 1998, Hugo Chávez has systematically weakened democratic institutions in Venezuela by restricting individual rights and the activities of political parties, discouraging the free exchange of ideas, and centralizing and expanding the powers of the Executive over the other branches of government and the people of Venezuela;

Whereas article 57 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela guarantees the right of all citizens to freely express their thoughts and opinions;

Whereas article 68 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela guarantees the right of all citizens to peacefully demonstrate and prohibits the use of firearms or toxic substances to control peaceful demonstrations;

Whereas, on May 24, 2007, the Senate approved by unanimous consent Senate Resolution 211, 110th Congress, expressing profound concern about the transgression against freedom of thought and expression that was being carried out in Venezuela by the refusal of President Chávez to renew the broadcasting license of “Radio Caracas Televisión”, also known as RCTV;

Whereas, on May 24, 2007, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution criticizing the non-renewal of the RCTV license for undermining the right of the press to hold the authorities to account;

Whereas Venezuela and Cuba are the only 2 Western Hemisphere countries listed in the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom ‘Watch List’ as countries requiring close monitoring due to the nature and extent of violation of religious freedom engaged in or tolerated by their governments;

Whereas the 2009 Report of the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom states that in Venezuela, “religious communities and leaders viewed as political opponents are routinely targeted and harassed by government officials;

Whereas several international human rights organizations have consistently expressed serious concerns regarding weakening of respect for human rights in Venezuela;

Whereas, on January 24, 2010, President Chávez ordered what amounted to a shutdown of “Radio Caracas

Televisión Internacional” due to its failure to air one of his speeches;

Whereas on the night of January 25, 2010, 2 students were killed and 5 others were injured by gunfire during peaceful demonstrations against the order by President Chávez to shutdown RCTV Internacional;

Whereas the Government of Venezuela has increasingly failed to address the legitimate needs of its people for greater economic, political, and social opportunities and has aggravated political divisions in Venezuela; and

Whereas the Government of Venezuela has engaged in a military build-up that goes beyond the reasonable security concerns of the Venezuelan state and threatens to launch a destabilizing regional arms race: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) condemns the recurring and ongoing repression of peaceful demonstrators in Venezuela by security forces and government-affiliated groups;

3 (2) mourns the loss of life resulting from actions taken by authorities in Venezuela to violently disband peaceful protestors, including the students killed on January 25, 2010, during demonstrations against President Chávez’s decision to shutdown “Radio Caracas Televisión Internacional”;

4 (3) urges both the people and the Government of Venezuela to choose a path towards democracy, transparency, and tolerance in order to begin the

1 process of achieving national reconciliation and a re-
2 building of democratic institutions in their country;

3 (4) urges the people of Venezuela to remain
4 vigilant against further encroachments on their con-
5 stitutional and internationally recognized civil and
6 human rights;

7 (5) urges President Barack Obama to clearly
8 reject and call attention to the violent measures
9 taken by authorities in Venezuela against citizens
10 who are exercising their constitutionally guaranteed
11 civil liberties;

12 (6) urges the United States Ambassador to the
13 Organization of American States to call on the mem-
14 ber states of the Organization of American States to
15 investigate events taking place in Venezuela and
16 adopt the necessary measures to ensure the Govern-
17 ment of Venezuela abides by its commitments under
18 the Inter-American Democratic Charter; and

19 (7) urges President Obama to provide robust
20 support for peaceful civil society groups in Venezuela
21 and to take measures that protect the flow of uncen-
22 sored information among the people of Venezuela.

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