



OPEN LETTER TO OAS FOREIGN MINISTERS REGARDING VENEZUELA

We, the former heads of state and government who have signed declarations of the Democratic Initiative of Spain and the Americas (IDEA-Democrática), respectfully address the Honourable Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the Organization of American States, in order to express publicly our concern regarding the breach of constitutional and democratic order, as well as the systematic and generalised violation of human rights that is currently taking place in Venezuela under the government of Nicolás Maduro and its armed forces.

Recently broadcasted images, following the government's failure to recognise the constitutional powers of the National Assembly, and in the midst of an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, confirm the government's repressive practices. They include assassination, torture, mass arrest and intimidation of Venezuelans, primarily young people, at the hands of police and military authorities assisted by paramilitary groups. The sole reason for this repression is that Venezuelans are protesting in the streets of their country. According to the international press, there have already been 58 dead, thousands injured, 2 459 arrested and at least 275 civilians subjected to military tribunals.

The Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Luis Almagro, has published two, very detailed reports explaining the violation of the democratic and constitutional order in Venezuela. This includes an evident violation of all essential elements of democracy, and the fundamental components for its exercise under the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

Both the Venezuelan National Assembly and the Attorney General, Luisa Ortega Díaz, have also made official statements agreeing with this assessment.

Moreover, the OAS Secretary General's reports – validated by findings by international drug enforcement agencies – show that the crisis involving Venezuelan government officials, and cutting off electoral possibilities for resolution, is not a political or ideological question. It is instead the hijacking of the State by individuals connected to drug trafficking, corruption and terrorism, which explains the cruelty of the government's actions facing citizens peacefully protesting and suffering a severe food and medicine crisis, affecting legions of the poor and disenfranchised.

It is practically impossible for the Venezuelan people, who are courageously fighting to re-establish their democracy and find their path to well-being, to achieve their

legitimate goals by themselves and as victims of the State's disproportionate violence. It would also be inconceivable for the international community to look away or to remain neutral by arguing for the principle of non-intervention. This is because the same community has the legal and moral standing to protect the sovereignty that belongs to the people, who cannot exercise that right under an oppressive dictatorship.

We trust that you, Honourable Foreign Ministers, will be able to interpret the generalised clamour of the Venezuelan people and help mobilise the indignation of the international community. The Organization of American States (OAS) has a duty to take a step forward to defend the principles of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and to adopt measures that, based on the Charter, support the Venezuelan people's demand to recover their sovereignty through general and fair elections, to release political prisoners, to respond effectively to the humanitarian crisis and to respect the independence of powers. If we fail to do so, history will make us responsible for a tragedy that is unacceptable to any sense of humanity.

29 May 2017.

Oscar Arias, Costa Rica

José María Aznar, España

Nicolás Ardito Barletta, Panamá

Belisario Betancur, Colombia

Armando Calderón Sol, El Salvador

Felipe Calderón H., México

Rafael Ángel Calderón, Costa Rica

Laura Chinchilla Miranda, Costa Rica

Alfredo Cristiani, El Salvador

Fernando de la Rúa, Argentina

Vicente Fox, México

Osvaldo Hurtado, Ecuador

Luis Alberto Lacalle, Uruguay

Jamil Mahuad, Ecuador

Mireya Moscoso, Panamá

Andrés Pastrana A., Colombia

Jorge Tuto Quiroga, Bolivia

Miguel Ángel Rodríguez, Costa Rica

Julio María Sanguinetti, Uruguay

Álvaro Uribe Vélez, Colombia

Authentic:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Asdrúbal Aguiar', with a horizontal line drawn underneath the name.

Asdrúbal Aguiar

CEO-IDEA

Democratic Initiative of Spain and the Americas (IDEA-Democrática)

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