



OPEN LETTER TO THE HONOURABLE PRESIDENTS AND PRIME MINISTERS OF THE CARIBBEAN STATES 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 Presidents and Prime Ministers of the Caribbean states, as well as the people of the Caribbean, in order to express our indignation and strong public condemnation of the flagrant and escalating repression by the dictatorial and military government of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela.

The images broadcast by social media and the international press confirm these repressive practices in public spaces. 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 the repression is that Venezuelans are protesting in the streets of their country. According to the international press, there have already been 49 dead, 13 050 injured, 2 660 arrested and at least 334 civilians subjected to military tribunals.

The right to peaceful protest is recognised under international human rights law. In the case of Venezuela, it is now the only legitimate and constitutional manner for citizens to express themselves since the Maduro regime refuses to allow democratic and electoral alternatives. This is because the Maduro government, supported by the Constitutional Chamber of the Venezuelan Supreme Court of Justice, refused to recognise the National Assembly, and instead decided to govern by decree, suspend elections and declare martial law.

The Secretary General of the Organization of American States declared a violation of the democratic and constitutional order in Venezuela. So did the Venezuelan National Assembly and the Attorney General, Luisa Ortega Díaz. The OAS Secretary General's reports have stated that the conflict is not political or ideological. It is instead the hijacking of the State by individuals connected to drug trafficking and terrorism, which explains the cruelty of the government's actions facing citizens peacefully protesting and suffering a severe humanitarian crisis, affecting legions of the poor and disenfranchised.

Venezuela is part of the Caribbean Basin and each and every Venezuelan democratic government has never failed to demonstrate solidarity and willingness to cooperate with Caribbean nations since their independence. From the 1970s, Venezuela and the

states of the Caribbean have developed diplomatic relations, cultural and economic ties, as well as cooperation agreements to reduce the effect of the volatility of increasing oil prices. The international community has praised these initiatives, led by different Venezuelan administrations and without restrictions, as they were the product of the Venezuelan people's democratic mandate, as well as their past, present and future sense of solidarity with their Caribbean brothers and sisters.

Today, at a time of material scarcity, curtailed liberties, and loss of fundamental rights in all areas, Venezuelans expect nothing less than the support of the people of the Caribbean, as well as the governments that represent them but that have remained quiet until now.

We, the undersigned former heads of state or government, have joined in this request for justice, without any hesitation, guided only by our ideals of liberty, democracy, respect of human rights and respect for the rule of law.

22 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, Costa Rica

Alfredo Cristiani, El Salvador

Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, Chile

César Gaviria, Colombia

Lucio Gutiérrez, Ecuador

Oswaldo Hurtado, Ecuador

Luis Alberto Lacalle, Uruguay

Jamil Mahuad, Ecuador

Mireya Moscoso, Panamá
Andrés Pastrana, Colombia
Jorge Tuto Quiroga, Bolivia
Miguel Ángel Rodríguez, Costa Rica
Fernando de la Rúa, Argentina
Álvaro Uribe Vélez, Colombia
Juan Carlos Wasmosy, Paraguay

It is authentic:

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

Asdrúbal Aguiar

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

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