



InterAmerican Institute for Democracy

Instituto Interamericano por la Democracia

IID/93-17

Miami July 7th, 2017

STATEMENT ON VENEZUELA

The violent seizure of the siege of the Nation Assembly of Venezuela by government backed, armed and violent groups is yet another instance of the extremes to which the Maduro administration is ready to go to wrest away the right to self-determination of the people of Venezuela.

To be sure, the National Assembly was initiating the commemoration of the 206 anniversary of the declaration of Independence when the attack took place. The violent approach taken by the attackers contrasted with the complicity of the National Guard detail entrusted with the duty to protect the premises and guarantee the physical integrity of assembly members.

Meanwhile the country's Attorney General was intimidated by means of sending a heavily protected handpicked deputy sworn in by the Supreme Court to take over the Prosecution site. This in flagrant violation of the 1999 Constitution espoused by the people of Venezuela and promoted by late President Hugo Chavez Frias.

The incident unfortunately, is just one more link in the chain of terror and intimidation created by the Maduro administration. President Maduro, his followers and supporters cling to power through violent and illegal means given the government's loss of legitimacy arising from economic mismanagement and the deployment of social terrorism and political totalitarianism.

Should the international community remain unmoved by these advances of despotism in the Western Hemisphere, the peace and stability of the region will be severely compromised. Inaction will certainly be interpreted both by organized crime and the enemies of freedom and democracy as an invitation to enhance their efforts to expand their reach in Latin America and the Caribbean. Because as publicly unveiled by among other media the Wall Street Journal; The Washington Post; the New York Times and

reputed US based think tanks such as CSIS and the AEI, Venezuela today is both an occupied country and the hub of drug trafficking and money laundering for the region. Left unchecked the illegal entities promoting these activities and that operate in synchronicity with international terrorism will enhance their operations expanding through the region to sooner than later create a clear and present danger to US national security.

The incident should thus trigger collective action by UN Security Council in execution of the mandate given to that body by the UN Charter. Indeed, the **Security Council** has primary **responsibility**, under the **United Nations** Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and **security**. Other duties of the Security Council include:

- To investigate any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction;
- Recommend methods of adjusting such disputes or the terms of settlement;
- To determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken;
- To call on Members to apply economic sanctions and other measures not involving the use of force to prevent or stop aggression;

Should the Security Council refrain from executing its mandate Venezuela could easily take a turn for the worst falling into its collapsing spiral to resemble the situation of Somalia. It would then forcibly become a logistic platform for illicit activities to spring from its territory and permeate the hemisphere.

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