

**Written contributions / Report prepared by the International Action Center for the
summary prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Universal
Periodic Review of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**

1. The International Action Center (IAC)/Centro de Acción Internacional is an organization founded in 1992 in New York City, United States of America. It has offices in 16 cities in the U.S. and works through all volunteer, grass roots members.

2. The purpose of the IAC is to be a source of information, activism and resistance to U.S. militarism, war and corporate greed, linking with struggles against racism, anti immigrant, anti union oppression and in support of political prisoners within the United States and in defense of people's movements. Since our founding in 1992, opposing the first war on Iraq, The IAC has been at the forefront against the U.S. conspiracy to re-colonize the Middle East and intervention in Latin America. For the last 19 years, the IAC has organized petitions, demonstrations, direct actions, picket lines, community forums & speak-outs and war-crimes tribunals, and published fact sheets, books, produced videos, internet material, traveling around the country and throughout the world.

3. The International Action Center/Centro de Acción Internacional uses this occasion with the Universal Periodic Review of Member States of the United Nations to present this written contribution to the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations on Venezuela. In particular, we hope that our experience will aide in exposing the condition of basic human rights in Venezuela.

4. As an organization that works on behalf of the betterment of the peoples both inside of the USA and the world, we pay particular attention to the status of those most vulnerable in society: women, children, the elderly and the sick. We examine, expose and struggle against war, racism, sexism, LGBT oppression and any form of oppression that can prevent the development of the peoples. Through the years, IAC delegations who have visited many countries, have witnessed both terrible instances of violation of human rights as well as wonderful examples of preservation and advancement of basic human rights.

5. The IAC/CAI has organized or joined several delegations to Venezuela since the year 2003. These delegations have been composed of women, men, lesbian women, youth and students, and trade unionists members of the IAC. Our combined experience while visiting Venezuela, from the year 2003 to date, is the basis of this report and involves different aspects of Venezuelan society.

6. We understand human rights as those inalienable rights that are universal and which offer the person the possibility of developing all of his or her potentials as a human being to be an active participant for the well being of society as a whole. A society whose members' human rights are respected, is a dynamic and happy people, regardless of the amount of wealth individually possessed. This aspect was revealed through many examples starting on the first delegation that visited Venezuela in the year 2003.

7. The passion and love with which the people spoke about the Bolivarian Revolution and its leader Hugo Chávez, is beyond words. During that trip, this writer was stopped several times on

the streets by Venezuelans who, when they saw me with a camera, wanted to talk about their revolution and make sure that I recorded their words. Even a nurse who identified herself as “middle class” stopped me going down a staircase causing a semi-congestion. When she knew that I was living in the United States, she wanted me to tell the people of the USA how much the Bolivarian Revolution had helped the people and improved their lives. She asked me to videotape the conversation but I had to decline since the batteries had already discharged.

8. There was nothing more moving than experiencing the thousands of people gathered in the avenue on April 13, 2003, singing the national anthem “Gloria al Bravo Pueblo” with their president Hugo Chávez. The impression this writer got was as if it were a conversation between the people and their president. This was truly a demonstration of support for a process that has elevated the condition of humanity of the Venezuelan people.

9. One of the fundamental rights is the access to education. This has been shown clearly in Venezuela. Through the different educational “Misiones”, the educational level of all citizens has been elevated. This writer visited several schools and spaces habilitated for classes and spoke with many students of all ages, including several elderly Venezuelans that for the first time were able to read and write. One woman, 90y/o, with tears of deep emotion and pride in her eyes, told this writer how happy she was for finally being able to understand written words. Another elderly man commented on his being able for the first time in his life to write his name. Classes were mixed, with students of different ages in the same room, which promoted at the same time, solidarity and closeness among the different age groups.

10. An African American youth from the IAC went in one of the delegations, to Chuao in the state of Aragua. He was impressed by the efforts the government made on behalf of the population of that small community composed mainly by Afro Venezuelans dedicated to fishing and the cultivation of Cocoa. The delegation had to reach the village by boat, which made the village quite inaccessible. The Bolivarian government had initiated the paving of roads, rebuilding houses, built a clinic and leased boats with very low interest to the people. A freezer was also built for this fishing village, thus facilitating the processing and storage of the fruit of their labor. A literacy campaign was initiated. The people were organized in a special group (círculo) who told the government their needs so the government would provide what was necessary. This action on the part of the government prevented the exodus of the people, particularly the youth, from leaving the town, a problem that until then had the effect of reducing the population.

11. The delegations have visited the Mercades, the special markets that provide affordable food products to the poorest segments of the population, visited health clinics and interviewed dozens of patients of all ages who stated that it was the first time they were able to be seen by a doctor because before the revolution they could not afford health care. We also have attended many workers meetings and conferences where the worker's control of their workplaces was discussed.

Women spoke in different occasions of the pride they felt in this new society. They felt it was theirs, of the people, women and men, and not of the rich owner of oil corporations.

12. These are just a few examples that only begin to show the enormous advancements in basic human rights accomplished in so little time by the Venezuelan government.

13. Overall, all the delegations have reported that the vast majority of the people of Venezuela feel that the country is theirs, that even though there are many things that have to be improved, they have a government that works on their behalf and respect their dignity as human beings, the cornerstone of human rights. Something that is impossible to put in terms of numbers or statistics: the right to housing, to education, to affordable health care; in short, to the pursuit of happiness seems to be guaranteed in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

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