

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT VENEZUELA AND PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ

Before President Chávez was elected in 1998, human rights were trampled on for 40 years: a CIA-led secret police, torture, disappearances, killings, illegal arrests. In oil-rich Venezuela, 80% of the population was poor, one-third malnourished, schools and hospitals were crumbling.

TODAY, IN 2010, THERE IS A NEW VENEZUELA THANKS TO THE BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION

Human Rights

- Human Rights are the basis of the new Constitution
- Social Human Rights are included: right to health care, to education, to decent housing, to food security and clean environment
- There are no secret prisons, no secret police
- No displaced populations
- Colombian refugees (2 million people) are given full rights
- Now women, children, Indigenous peoples and minorities enjoy constitutional rights
- It is a participatory democracy in which Communal Councils decide projects and have the funds to do it

Oil used to build up the economy and create good jobs

- Highest minimum wage in the region
- Endogenous development – environmentally sustainable, geared to satisfy the needs of the people, not international markets

Poverty Reduction

- Poverty reduced to 39%
- Extreme poverty reduced to 9%
- A literate studious population

No more hungry people

- Real land reform, thousands of hectares distributed with credits and technical support to farmers
- Food distribution through 8,000 government subsidized stores and supermarkets
- Nearly all the population now has access to clean water

Workers Rights are respected and encouraged

- Many worker takeovers of firms
- Nationalization of key industries and banks
- PSUV, the government party, is a Socialist party, dedicated to the workers, not the capitalists

Indigenous Peoples

- For the first time have constitutional rights to their land language, culture, religion
- Have funds for their own projects and needs

Women now have solid constitutional rights

- Women who work at home have constitutional rights to benefits
- Micro-credits fully available through a bank for women
- Special health services for pregnant women, mothers and children

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Full access to public health care

- 80% of the population has access to first class health services
- 120 free medical drugs that cover 95% of illnesses are available
- AIDS patient get full coverage of drugs
- Government pharmacies sell medicines 30-40% lower prices

Minority rights are respected

- For the first time in Venezuelan history the rights of Afro-Venezuelans are respected and recognized
- For the first time in Venezuelan history the rights of homosexuals are respected and recognized

EMBARRASSING ACTIONS OF THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT AND LIBERAL OPPOSITION TOWARDS VENEZUELA

- Canada remained silent during and after the 2002 coup against the legitimate and democratic government of President Chávez, when he was kidnapped and nearly executed.
- In 2005 the Foreign Affairs Department invited to Ottawa Corina Machado – who signed the Carmona Decree during the coup that eliminated Parliament, Supreme Court, Ministers, and the Constitution- of the anti-democratic organization, Sumate.
- In 2005 Sumate received \$22,000 from the Canadian Embassy in Caracas.
- After President Chávez won the presidential elections of 2006 by 63% with huge voter turnout and with an election overseen by over 300 international observers, Canada and the USA were the only countries of the OAS to refuse to congratulate him.
- After visiting Venezuela in January 2010, Canadian Conservative Minister for the Americas Peter Kent (the same minister who refused to unequivocally denounce the military coup in Honduras) decried the so-called “shrinking of democratic space” in the country.
- In April 2010, Harper called Venezuela a “rogue state”.
- On April 21, 2010 Liberal MP Scott Brison, called President Chavez a “brutal dictator” in the press. The Liberal party allied itself with the Harper Conservatives to promote and ratify the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement, despite Colombia having the worst human rights record in the Americas.