

Manifesto of solidarity with anarchists and social movements in Venezuela

International of Anarchist Federations

2007

In the first quarter of 2007, 23 popular demonstrations were repressed by the Venezuelan government and 99 activists were arrested. This data speaks of the growing unrest as well as the criminalization of social demands in the Latin American country, a reality covered up by the propaganda and mystification of a regime that advertises itself as the vanguard of "21st century socialism," with the support of different groups and figures linked to the authoritarian left throughout the world.

However, those who are interested in the real situation of the oppressed and exploited in Venezuela know the inconsistencies and contradictions of the populist government led by the military man Hugo Chávez. Far from making structural progress in reducing inequalities and increasing the possibilities of social development, the ruling government in Caracas continues to maintain one of the most unfair distributions of wealth on the continent, further deepening the role assigned to the country by economic globalization as a safe and reliable supplier of energy to the world market, with transnational oil corporations as pampered partners and main beneficiaries of the actions of the Venezuelan State. After 8 and a half years of government, with the highest fiscal income in national history due to high oil prices, the social results of the policies of Chavismo are mediocre, the most notable being the appearance of a new bourgeoisie parasitic on state favor, the "Bolivarian bourgeoisie."

According to recent government statistics and reports, over 5 million workers - 46.5% of the workforce - remain in the informal sector of the economy, 43% of workers receive less than the legal minimum wage - just over \$200 a month - 2.5 million people lack decent housing, 18% of the population suffers from malnutrition, the public hospital network presents deficiencies and limitations of all kinds, 90% of the indigenous population lives in poverty, more than 400 people die violently each year in prisons and an average of 15 people are killed each month by the repressive bodies of the State.

The Venezuelan government has been engaged in an intra-class dispute with certain traditional sectors of the local bourgeoisie for the past five years, amid a strong political-electoral polarization that has allowed the country's social movements to be divided, immobilized and recovered. Any criticism of the corrupt, inefficient and luxuriant official bureaucracy is immediately labeled as "serving imperialism" and, under the excuse of "confronting coups and reac-

tionary provocations,” various laws have been enacted that penalize street actions and strikes in basic state enterprises with greater rigor. These are part of the legal mechanisms that have been used since 2006 against popular mobilizations that, trying to recover their own demands, demonstrate every week for the right to personal security, decent housing, employment and decent working conditions. The government’s response has been with tear gas, pellets and arrests.

Faced with the deceitful polarization experienced in the country, and especially as a response to the presidential mandate to dissolve parties and other previously existing groups to join the single party of Chavismo, with the initials PSUV, various organizations in Venezuela are trying to build spaces of autonomy for social movements. Among these, the action of anarchist comrades stands out, who through different initiatives, such as the publication and dissemination of the newspaper El Libertario (<http://www.nodo50.org/ellibertario>), build an alternative alien to both the social democratic and right-wing opposition and Bolivarian state capitalism. But this anarchist effort to build options and consequently autonomous paths implies risks: El Libertario, for example, must face a systematic campaign of recriminations and discredit by fictitious groups paid for by the State, as well as increasing harassment against anti-authoritarian activism.

This manifesto wishes to remind our anarchist comrades within Venezuela, as well as other autonomous grassroots social organizations in that country, that they have our appreciation, support and solidarity. Our anarchist organizations and initiatives will denounce, to the extent of their possibilities, the demagogy and incoherence concealed under the alias of the “Bolivarian revolution,” activating the necessary support mechanisms in the face of each government attack against the concrete aspirations for social justice and freedom of the Venezuelan people.

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The newspaper *Tierra y Libertad* -mouthpiece of the Iberian Anarchist Federation- publishes in its # 227 of June 2007, this manifesto of the International of Anarchist Federations in support of those who today in Venezuela face both the bureaucratic capitalist project of Chavismo and its social democratic and right-wing opponents.

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