

Venezuela: Capriles appeals to OAS Human Rights Commission

September 10, 2013 ([BBC News](#))

The defeated Venezuelan presidential candidate, Henrique Capriles, has filed a request at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to declare the April election void.

Mr. Capriles alleges there was widespread fraud in the vote narrowly won by acting president Nicolas Maduro.

Please find attached the full Press Release by the Venezuelan Unity Platform.

Venezuela's withdrawal from the Inter-American Human Rights System

Venezuela's withdrawal from regional human rights instrument is a serious setback

September 06, 2013 (by [Amnesty International](#))

"This decision is an insult to the victims of human rights violations and places future generations of Venezuelans at risk. What's more, it goes against Venezuela's constitution, which guarantees access to international bodies to seek protection of their human rights," said Guadalupe Marengo, Deputy Director of the Americas Programme at Amnesty International.

HRW asks Mercosur to persuade Venezuela out of withdrawing from the IACHR

September 06, 2013 ([El Universal](#))

Non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch requested the founding members of Mercosur to persuade Venezuela to revert its decision to withdraw from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

[Letter to President Cartes on Venezuela](#)

[Letter to President Rouseff on Venezuela](#)

[Letter to President Mujica on Venezuela](#)

[Letter to President Fernández de Kirchner on Venezuela](#)

Political Issues

Cuban influence is to blame for border dispute

September 5, 2013 (by Reyes Theis, [El Universal](#))

The silence prevailing during the government of late President Hugo Chávez and President Nicolas Maduro, who visited Georgetown last week, with respect to the claims against Guyana over the disputed zone and Venezuela's Atlantic front is due, according to International Law Specialist María Teresa Blandria, to Cuban influence over Venezuela's foreign policies.

World Bank's ICSID Rules Venezuela Unlawfully Expropriated ConocoPhillips' Billion Dollar Investments

September 3, 2013 ([Latin American Herald Tribune](#))

ICSID international arbitration tribunal rules Venezuela unlawfully expropriated ConocoPhillips' significant oil investments in the Petrozuata and Hamaca heavy crude oil projects and the offshore Corocoro development project.

Click [here](#) to read the decision released by ICSID in ConocoPhillips Petrozuata B.V. et al. v. Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (ICSID Case No. ARB/07/30).

Maduro sends Obama a letter calling for peace in Syria

September 2, 2013 ([El Universal](#))

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro quotes a letter sent to his US counterpart, Barack Obama, rejecting a war and requesting the withdrawal of warlike machinery from Syria. "We say no to bombs and death," Maduro stated.

Civilians in the Venezuelan militia to add up one million

August 28, 2013 ([El Universal](#))

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro stated he hoped to increase to 400,000 the number of civilians joining the militia aimed at "defending the homeland."

Journalists Quit Venezuela TV News Channel in Censorship Row

August 21, 2013 (by Anatoly Kurmanaev and Corina Pons, [Bloomberg News](#))

Six senior journalists quit Venezuela's main television news channel Globovision yesterday in protest at alleged interference by the government of President Nicolas Maduro.

Venezuelan Doctors Fear Country Faces Health Emergency

August 21, 2013 ([Hispanically Speaking News](#))

In June a new regulation was passed to set prices for services offered in private medical centers, which angered the owners who say that providing service under these economic conditions is not practicable.

Russia Is Not Alone: Venezuela's Homophobic Tirade Against Capriles

August 19, 2013 (by Patricia Rey Mallén, [International Business Time](#))

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro may keep his private life surrounded in mystery, but his close allies have no problem attacking that of the opposition's leader. Congress member Pedro Carreño, a loyal government supporter, said, in reference to a dispute with former presidential candidate Henrique Capriles: "Answer, you homo. Accept the debate, you fag."

Venezuela recalls ambassador to Egypt

August 17, 2013 ([Africa Business](#))

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro recalled his ambassador to Cairo and called for Egypt's ousted president Mohammed Morsi to be reinstated.

Top Venezuelan official announces "Justice will go after" Capriles

August 14, 2013 (by Ewald Scharfenberg, [El Pais](#))

The Venezuelan government apparently plans to file criminal charges against the main opposition leader, Henrique Capriles Radonski, according to public statements made by the National Assembly speaker.

Venezuelan Leader Seeks to Boost His Power

August 13, 2013 (by Ezequiel Minaya, [The Wall Street Journal](#))

"President Nicolas Maduro took a page from his predecessor's playbook, saying he would seek fast-track legislative powers to let him enact laws by decree without the parliament, to aid his government's fight against corruption."

Venezuela's President Says He Sleeps in Hugo Chávez's Mausoleum

August 12, 2013 ([Fox News Latino](#))

Widely known for his devotion to late leader Hugo Chávez, now Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has revealed that he sometimes sleeps in the mausoleum where his mentor's remains are kept.

The billion-dollar fraud

August 10, 2013 ([The Economist](#))

"When it comes to corruption, Venezuela has long languished near the bottom of the international league table. According to the latest index of perceptions of corruption compiled each year by Transparency International, a Berlin-based watchdog, only eight out of the list of 176 countries were seen as more graft-ridden. Even places like Haiti and Zimbabwe ranked higher."

Venezuela's supreme court dismisses presidential election lawsuit

August 7, 2013 (by Mery Mogollon and Chris Kraul, [Los Angeles Times](#))

"Venezuela's Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed opposition leader Henrique Capriles' lawsuit seeking the nullification of April presidential election results and alleging voter irregularities and levied a \$1,500 fine against him for "offensive and disrespectful allegations" against the court and other officials."

Venezuela's Birthers May Be Right, but That Doesn't Mean They're Helping the Opposition Out

August 1, 2013 (by Juan Nagel, [Foreign Policy](#))

"Even since before the election, fringe elements inside the opposition have argued that Maduro was actually born in Colombia, thereby making him ineligible to hold the country's highest office."

Economic and Social Issues

Latin America falling in global index

September 8, 2013 (by Andres Oppenheimer, [The Miami Herald](#))

"Venezuela, in turn, dropped eight places from last year's ranking, in line with a steady decline over the past decade. It now ranks alongside Uganda, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Haiti and Chad as among the world's least competitive countries."

Venezuela's press is dying from a paper shortage

September 5, 2013 (by Girish Gupta, [GlobalPost](#))

Thanks to the South American nation's currency controls and short supply of US dollars, editors and importers are unable to obtain the hard currency required to pay for newsprint manufactured abroad.

Power cut leaves most of Venezuela without electricity

September 4, 2013 ([BBC News](#))

A power cut has left 70% of Venezuela without electricity, including parts of the capital Caracas.

Venezuela's leader blames right-wing saboteurs for power outage

September 4, 2013 (by Mery Mogollon and Chris Kraul, [Los Angeles Times](#))

The blackout left Caracas and 17 states without power for hours. President Nicolas Maduro called it an 'electricity coup'. A consultant suspects human error."

Potential health care crisis in Venezuela

August 26, 2013 (by Liz Lauzon, [Southern Pulse](#))

"Exacerbating infrastructure concerns, new legislation put price regulations on services offered by private clinics. Set prices for certain services raises the concern among clinic owners that providing those services will no longer be economically feasible."

Venezuela: Refinery blast report highlights the increased PDVSA risks

August 23, 2013 (by Diego Moya-Ocampos, [Petroleum World](#))

"A report issued by the National Assembly of lawmakers from the Democratic Unity Roundtable (Mesa de la Unidad Democrática: MUD), a coalition of opposition political parties, has estimated the damages of an accident that occurred in August 2012 at the Amuay refinery amounting to USD1.8 billion. According to the report, the accident was caused by the ignition of a gas cloud created by an uncontrolled escape of olefins."

Chavez's Inflation Bites His Successor

August 26, 2013 (by Mary Anastasia O'Grady, [The Wall Street Journal](#))

"Hyperinflation and political witch hunts seem to go together. Just ask the Venezuelan opposition."

Surprising GDP results, inflationary economy and painful adjustments

August 26, 2013 (by Gustavo Rojas, [Polinomics](#))

The BCV announced that in the second quarter the GDP grew 2.6%, a figure well above that expected by the market consensus which anticipated a contraction (-0.6%). However, although this is a positive figure, it reflects an important deceleration with respect to the 5.6% recorded in the second quarter of 2012. According to Polinomics this surprising result is not sustainable.

Dramatic Statistics for Venezuela

August 21, 2013 (from the Editors of VenEconomy, [Latin American Herald Tribune](#))

"Four months after taking office, President Nicolás Maduro has increasingly demonstrated he does not have a nose for choosing the right time to embark upon a battle he wants to fight.

An evidence of this is the way he wants to face the ongoing crisis in the Venezuelan healthcare system, which means implementing a policy of price controls that will lead to the inexorable destruction of privately-run clinics."

Lightning Strike Sparks Fire at Unit of Venezuela's Amuay Refinery

August 20, 2013 (by Kejal Vyas, [The Wall Street Journal](#))

"It's the latest incident to hit Venezuela's oil industry, which this week will see the one-year anniversary of the deadly gas-leak explosion at Amuay that left at least 42 people dead. Amuay, as well as other facilities, have been plagued by frequent accidents and outages, which have weighed on Venezuela's processing capacity."

Venezuela to auction \$300 mln in bonds through SICAD forex system

August 20, 2013 ([Reuters](#))

The auction will offer bonds from state oil company PDVSA maturing in 2035 to participating businesses, marking the first time SICAD has auctioned debt rather than cash.

Venezuela's Currency Down 75% Since Hugo Chavez Died In April

August 16, 2013 ([Fox News Latino](#))

The value of Venezuela's currency has dropped by more than 75 percent since the death of President Hugo Chávez five months ago.

Venezuela battles shortages and inflation

August 12, 2013 (by Andres Schipani and Benedict Mander, [The Financial Times](#))

"Venezuelans are battling against a barrage of economic problems with inflation and shortages reaching record levels. At the heart of its woes are price and currency controls which together with problems in the oil industry have generated a shortage of foreign currency on which the import-dependent economy relies."

Worries After Venezuela Skips Bond Payment

August 08, 2013 (by Kejal Vyas, [The Wall Street Journal](#))

"Creditors of a nationalized Venezuelan steel company say they are surprised the firm defaulted on an interest payment last month and are asking the government to explain the situation in a case that some see jeopardizing the South American country's access to foreign capital markets."

Venezuela's international reserves fall to USD 22.9 billion

August 07, 2013 ([El Universal](#))

Venezuela's international reserves continue to decline as the Central Bank of Venezuela (BCV) disclosed that by August 5 they hit USD 22.9 billion, their lowest level ever since November 2004.

Social Actions

The fate of Lácteos Los Andes, cont.

August 21, 2013 (by [Gustavo Hernandez Acevedo](#))

"Back in April, State-owned dairy Lácteos Los Andes was in pretty critical shape, according to its workers. Almost four months later, it got worse.

Company-staff held a protest on Monday in front of the Vice-President's offices, asking the government to rescue the firm. They said Los Andes only has enough stocks to keep going for two more weeks."

"Street protests do not suffice in overthrowing governments"

August 10, 2013 (by Roberto Giusti, [El Universal](#))

"Protests are no substitutes for parties. Power is more likely to change hands through voting processes," according to Carlos Raúl Hernández.

Editorial

The economy, the worst nightmare of Venezuelans, and the Maduro Administration

(by Leopoldo J. Martinez)

Venezuela's has lived through several economic crises, but always in connection with a significant decline in oil prices, never the other way around. The most dramatic situation is the shortage of US dollars, which paralyzes the economy, when the oil markets signals an average price over the \$100 per barrel.

The key to understand the problem is the economic legacy of Chavez' social and political agenda, which after allowing Chavismo to remain in power, is now hunting the government.

Minister Nelson Merentes, a pragmatist now taking over the economy from ideologist Minister Giordani, has recently stated: "Chavismo has not yet scored an economic success". And this comes from the man whose first task, in trying to achieve that success, is to win the fight against the US dollar shortage that has brought products scarcity and higher inflation, in the verge of an inescapable new devaluation of the Bolivar (not so "Fuerte" anymore).

The situation is complex. Venezuela is currently more dependent to oil than ever. But the oil industry production is declining. In addition, a significant portion of the exportable production is committed to programs with Cuba and other Latin American allies, and close to 500,000 barrels per day go to repay borrowings from China under an Oil for Credit facility that undervalues the barrel of oil. This leaves Venezuela with probably half of the dollar cash from exports it could receive, which comes to the close to 800,000 barrels per day exported to the US "Imperio", the fictitious enemy of the "chavista" rhetoric.

But it doesn't stop there. Because the government has used the "official controlled rate of exchange" administered through CADIVI as an anti-inflationary tool, the controlled US dollar is the cheapest commodity in the market, making almost impossible to compete against imported goods: while creating all incentives to a foreign exchange arbitrage given the gap with the alternative official market of SICAD, or the black market that covers the supply deficit from the government controlled system.

To resolve the country's economic illnesses, the powerful Minister Merentes has implemented a dialogue with the private sector, in search for moderation and compromise, but without addressing the fundamentals. This might result in more expediency with CADIVI and SICAD, decriminalization of the proscribed "bonds swaps", and perhaps another devaluation by the end of the year or during the first quarter of 2014 (once the municipal elections of December 8th are passed), which will bring the official rate to probably no less than 9 VENE x 1 USD.

In the meanwhile, amidst the economic dialogue and moderation, the political front continues to be radicalized with prospects of escalation. One plausible explanation is that the government needs to destroy and persecute the existing opposition to reaffirm itself in this difficult economic environment. Indeed, a recent poll by IVAD shows growing discontent with 65% saying the economic situation has gotten worse than last year, bringing President Maduro's approval rate to 46%, but where 19,0% gives him a lukewarm support.

Therefore, in this weak political support scenario faced by the government their strategy is to harass and degrade the opposition, banking on Merentes' the pragmatist, whom is expected to deliver the economic success owed to the people by the revolution.

For the opposition, the challenge is to transform the December 8th municipal elections in a national referendum against Maduro.

The Center for Democracy and Development in the Americas (CDDA) -- a research and educational organization committed to provide a platform for new ideas and leaders to promote sustainable democratic change in the Americas -- launched its Venezuela Initiative in order to encourage discussion on Venezuela's current socioeconomic and political situation and its impact on the region.

The Venezuela Initiative brings together Venezuelan leaders, members of the Venezuelan Diaspora, foreign policy experts and opinion leaders interested in advancing democracy and promoting development in Venezuela.

