



Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the UK and Ireland

Fact Sheet:

THE TRUTH ABOUT RECENT DISCUSSIONS AGAINST MEDIA TERRORISM

The international mainstream media has repeatedly misinformed the public regarding a current discussion in Venezuela on how to deal with media-terrorism. It has been falsely argued that the Public Prosecutor has proposed a Law with 17 Articles that would extensively restrict press freedoms in Venezuela or that “Hugo Chávez has put before the Venezuelan Parliament a proposed law that would impose prison sentences of up to four years”, in the words of Denis MacShane as articulated in The Guardian on August 3rd 2009.¹

Here are the facts:

1. Hugo Chavez has not put before the Venezuelan Parliament any proposed law that would impose prison sentences of up to four years.
2. **The Public Prosecutor’s Office has no legislative powers** and thus, has no standing to submit a law proposing jail time for “media crimes”.
3. The President of the Media Commission in the National Assembly, Manuel Villalba, said last week that **a proposal for a law, as claimed by some media, doesn’t exist** and that rather, the **Public Prosecutor, Luisa Ortega Diaz, had presented ideas to the National Assembly that should contribute to an ongoing discussion of how to deal with media-terrorism.**² In fact, there have been debates and forums across Venezuela for the last few months related to the topic of media terrorism or media dictatorship.
4. In her intervention on July 30th 2009, the Public Prosecutor, Luisa Ortega Diaz, merely contributed to a discussion about a “Special Law against Media Crimes”. **In her intervention Luisa Ortega Diaz did not mention any specific sanctions, such as imprisonment, for those who would engage in media-terrorism.**³
5. Furthermore Manuel Villalba, has been emphatic in pointing out that **“there is no consensus in Parliament [regarding the contributions of the Public Prosecutor]”**⁴, **therefore most likely a “Special Law against Media Crimes” will not be discussed anytime soon in the Plenary of the National Assembly.**
6. Concerning the fact that no law had been formally presented or proposed to the National Assembly, Villalba said, “All this just confirms that there are media owners who are systematically disseminating false opinions.”⁵
7. Legislator Desiree Santos said that it is important to guarantee the right of the people to be informed truthfully. “There has always been full freedom of expression [in Venezuela]” she said.⁶
8. Villalba pointed out that they will continue debating the contributions made by the Public Prosecutor, and that all social sectors are invited to take part in this discussion.

¹ MacShane, Denis, Chávez’s assault on Journalism, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/aug/03/hugo-chavez-venezuela-media>

² http://www.asambleanacional.gob.ve/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=22749&Itemid=221

³ For the Public Prosecutors full intervention in the Parliament on July 30th (in Spanish):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwsR9NVtzwQ&feature=related>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tq_WK79bsWU&feature=related

⁴ http://www.asambleanacional.gob.ve/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=22749&Itemid=221

⁵ <http://www.abn.info.ve/noticia.php?articulo=193464&lee=1>

⁶ <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/news/4694>