



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

Fact Sheet: **CONSOLIDATING RELATIONS WITH THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN VENEZUELA**

In December 2008, President Chávez, along with the Presidents of Brazil and Argentina, signed a joint declaration against anti-Semitism, racism and all forms of discrimination. This followed an August 13th 2008 meeting between President Chávez and a Jewish delegation, led by Mr. Ronald Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), to deepen the dialogue between the Jewish community and the government of Venezuela, and to discuss efforts to end anti-Semitism and discrimination of any kind in Latin America.

SEPTEMBER 2010 MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT CHAVEZ AND MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

President Chavez held a meeting with Jewish leaders at the Presidential Palace in an effort to deepen ties and discuss the issues facing the Venezuelan Jewish community. President Chavez met with Salomon Cohen, president of the Venezuelan Confederation of Israeli Associations (CAIV) who raised concerns of anti-Semitic information in the media, the security of synagogues and diplomatic relations with Israel. President Chavez gave his full assurance that he would look into all the concerns raised.

After the meeting, Mr. Cohen said: "We are certain that this new dialogue with President

Chavez will bring positive results for coexistence, peace, and harmony for all of Venezuelan society."

Mr Cohen also thanked the Foreign Minister, Nicolas Maduro for his help in stepping up security at synagogues and other religious centres in Venezuela.

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**Salomon Cohen
President of the Venezuelan
Confederation of Israeli Associations
(CAIV) Salomon Cohen**

When a synagogue in Caracas was vandalised in February, both President Chavez and Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro both condemned the attacks, underlined their "respect" for the Jewish community in Venezuela. They also

highlighted the importance of freedom and equality for all religious and ethnic groups in Venezuela.

Allegations of anti-Semitism politically motivated

Allegations of anti-Semitism against Venezuela have been politicised in Washington as an attempt to isolate and sanction Venezuela.¹

Moreover, Venezuela's relation with Iran is often used by foes of Venezuela to justify these irresponsible and false accusations. However, Venezuela's relations with Iran and

¹ Jim Lobe, "US Neo-Cons Accuse Chavez of Anti-Semitism," *Inter Press Service*, January 13 2006,



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Israel are based on the principles of multipolarity and mutual respect.

Venezuela has never pursued anti-Semitic policies, and is a progressive state which constitutionally guarantees religious freedom. The country and its Government respect Judaism and the Jewish people, just as it respects the constitutional rights of all.

Venezuelans of diverse religions hold important posts throughout the government. In fact, Foreign Minister Nicolás Maduro has Jewish heritage, as President Chávez noted in the meeting.²

Therefore, it is important to clarify the following:

- The meeting between President Chávez and leaders of the world and Venezuela Jewish community resulted in plans to work together in the region to end any kind of discrimination.
- In the joint declaration, President Chávez expressed worry at the continued existence and global expansion of racism and anti-Semitism, and reaffirmed Venezuela's commitment to non-discrimination and equality.
- The Jewish community in Venezuela has deep roots and has made important historical contributions to the country.
- Venezuela has recognized Israel since its creation, respects its sovereignty and does not question its existence.

Policy disagreements are based on different conceptions of the best path towards achieving lasting peace in the Middle East.

- Relations between Venezuela and Iran have a long history based mainly on shared membership in important multilateral organizations such as OPEC.
- The ideals, constitutional principles, and realities of the Bolivarian revolution, including peace, equality, social justice and human rights, are completely at odds with allegations of any sort of discrimination, including anti-Semitism.

² Nestor Restivo, "Por un pedido argentino, Chávez recibió en Caracas a líderes judíos," Clarín.com, August 14 2008, <http://www.>