

Resolution No.64

Submitted by:

The Honorable Manuel A. Diaz  
City of Miami

The Honorable Juan Carlos Bermudez  
City of Doral

The Honorable Martin J. Chavez  
City of Albuquerque

The Honorable Raul G. Salinas  
City of Laredo

The Honorable Angel L. Malave Zayas  
City of Cidra

**The Honorable Jorge A. Santini**  
**City of San Juan**

**THE UNDERMINING OF DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC CITY GOVERNANCE  
IN VENEZUELA**

1. **WHEREAS**, freely-elected mayors in Venezuela have been subjected to intimidation and persecution for standing in opposition to the ruling administration and national assembly; and

2. **WHEREAS**, these mayors and their families have been threatened such that the freely-elected Mayor of Maracaibo, Manuel Rosales, was forced into hiding and has been granted political asylum in Peru; and

3. **WHEREAS**, the freely-elected Mayor of Caracas, Antonio Ledezma, who defeated a pro-government incumbent, was blocked from entry to City Hall by supporters of the ruling national government following a transparent and lawful election in November 2008, and the Venezuela National Guard has prevented Mayor Ledezma from convening city council meetings, in contrast to those led by the previous progovernment mayor; and

4. **WHEREAS**, legislation recently passed by Venezuela's National Assembly, reorganizes the government of the city of Caracas without city resident consent and creates a new Caracas municipal authority that controls the Caracas municipal budget and the city's 7,000 city employees, and this law has the effect of eliminating most of the responsibilities of the elected office of the Mayor, and

gives control of an opposition-run city to an official appointed by the national executive; and

5. **WHEREAS**, Article 31 of the Venezuelan Constitution of 2000 places the capital city of Caracas under the political control of an elected mayor, and the ruling administration and national assembly are promulgating laws that undermine the constitutional authority of freely-elected opposition mayors and governors while legal proceedings are brought against leaders of the political opposition; and

6. **WHEREAS**, the President of Venezuela has named a vice president of his ruling party as the new executive with authority over Venezuela's capital city, and the elected mayor of Caracas has been subordinated to a city official appointed by the President; and

7. **WHEREAS**, such actions are directly limiting the authority of freely-elected political opponents and undermine constitutionally-guaranteed freedoms of speech and expression in Venezuela, and these actions must be clearly viewed as attacks on constitutional government and popular electoral expressions of citizen sovereignty, and

8. **WHEREAS**, such behavior undermines the rule of law and the principles of lawful, independent, local electoral processes in city governance, freely-elected city and local democratic governance; and

9. **WHEREAS**, in 2008 in solidarity with the democratic aspirations of the people of Venezuela, the United States Conference of Mayors highlighted and condemned the summary disqualification of 400 otherwise-eligible candidates for elected office by the administrative act of a government agency without affording due juridical process;

10. **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that The United States Conference of Mayors reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of the undermining of democratic governance and the principle of freely- and independently-elected city officials, governments and administrations in Venezuela; and

11. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that The United States Conference of Mayors unequivocally condemns the intimidation and persecution of freely-elected mayors in Venezuela who stand in political opposition; and

12. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this policy resolution be presented to the United States House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, the United States Senate

Committee on Foreign Relations, and the United States Department of State and that representations be made to the official representatives of the Government of Venezuela in the United States.