

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Document

URGENT MESSAGE TO CATHOLICS AND PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL IN VENEZUELA

1. With our affectionate greeting, the Bishops of Venezuela address the Venezuelan people. We reiterate our closeness in these difficult and hard times that we live. In a special way, we want to ratify our accompaniment to those who suffer the most. We pass them greeting and blessing of the Holy Father Francis, who, besides following closely the developments of our nation, invites us to seek urgent solutions in peace and harmony among all. We feel united and in full communion with him, who has pointed out to us: "In the voice of the Venezuelan bishops my voice also resounds."

"THE KNOWLEDGE OF MY PEOPLE IS HEARD FOR ALL THE COUNTRY"
(Jer 8:13).

2. We make our claims of people who feel beaten by hunger, lack of guarantees for health, difficult acquisition of medicines and insecurity in every way. Although the people maintain the hope and the capacity to overcome the difficulties, today it suffers much more. He asks that his democratic will be respected, as stipulated in the juridical and constitutional order, as well as the real possibility of living in harmony, peace, freedom and with a growing integral human development.
3. In our country it is clear that violence has acquired a structural character. Their expressions are varied: from irrational repression, with their painful share of dead and wounded, damage to dwellings and residential structures; And persecutions, to the neglect of the basic needs of the people. Official repression sometimes generates violent responses, which contributes to create a climate of tension and anarchy, with its dangerous consequences. We are facing a terrible escalation of violence. The arrest of many people, especially young people, for dissenting from the Government further aggravates the situation. There are serious allegations of torture and ill-treatment; There are detainees who are arbitrarily prosecuted before the military courts against the Constitution and laws and have been taken improperly to maximum security prisons (El Dorado and other penitentiary centers) as if they were dangerous criminals. There are also many detainees in military facilities and confined to unhealthy places and subhuman conditions. There is a disregard for human dignity expressed in the violation and continued denial of human rights by the authorities.

4. Many of our communities and institutions are being targeted by illegal paramilitary groups acting under the complaisant eyes of the authorities. An example of this is the events of July 5 in the attack on the deputies of the National Assembly, only seen in the assault of January 24, 1848 to the National Congress by order of President Monagas. The National Assembly, expression of "popular sovereignty", is heiress of the Congress of 1811. It has a real historical and real value. Therefore, the Bolivarian National Guard that resides there has the mission of providing security to the precinct and deputies and should not allow attacks by irregular groups.

"ANYONE WHO TOUCH MY PEOPLE, TOUCH THE GIRL OF MY EYES, SAYS THE LORD GOD" (Zechariah 2,13).

5. It is time for a change of course in the political orientation of the Government. Although the crisis that we Venezuelans suffer for several years, in recent months has been deepened by the initiative of the Government to convene a National Constituent Assembly, questioned and rejected by the majority of the Venezuelan people. This proposal has completely ignored that it is the people, in the exercise of their own sovereignty, who can and must summon it. We Venezuelans must remember that "sovereignty resides intransferably in the people" (CRBV, article 5). "The people of Venezuela are the depository of the original constituent power" (art. 347). Only they can convene a National Constituent Assembly.
6. The Constitution has been violated again, and the Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ) and the National Electoral Council (CNE) endorse what the Executive proposes, without taking into account the basic principles of participatory democracy established in the Constitution. The above-mentioned constituent project aims to impose a dictatorial regime on the country. In addition, by privileging, in its composition, sectorial commissions without legal support, the right of all to elect and to be elected and the constitutional principle (Art. 63 CRBV) of the proportional representation of the population according to its territorial distribution is violated. Likewise, the National Constituent Assembly would have a supraconstitutional power with the purpose of eliminating the present organs of the State, mainly the National Assembly, Legitimately chosen by the people. Neither do they establish limits in the exercise of their functions and extension in time. Everything suggests that what is sought is to establish a socialist, Marxist and military state with the disappearance of the autonomy of the powers, especially the legislative.
7. On July 16, promoted by the National Assembly, a popular consultation will take place that enjoys all legitimacy. We consider it a provocation on the part of the government and the CNE to convene, for the same day, a mock voting in some of the country's electoral centers, as it can generate unfortunate conflicts. The people continue to demand respect for their dignity and their own rights.

AS PASTORS CONCERNED BY THEIR SHEEP (EZEKIEL 34:12).

8. As pastors of the Church in Venezuela, echoing the cries of the vast majority of our people, we want to raise our voice and demand:
 - A) **THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT:** to withdraw its proposal of a Constituent Assembly, and make possible the realization of the elections established in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. It is time for the Government to recognize the autonomy of the public powers; To abandon the inhuman repression of the demonstrations of those who dissent, and to dismantle and sanction armed groups that, with their actions, fill large sectors of society with anxiety. The measure recently agreed in favor of a leading political leader of opposition factors should lead to the release of all those deprived of their liberty for political reasons.
 - B) **THE NATIONAL BOLIVARIAN ARMED FORCE:** that, according to the National Constitution, fulfills its duty to be at the service of all people in the respect and guarantee of the constitutional order and not simply a regime, party or ruler. "The people who serve in the armed forces have a specific duty to defend the good, the truth and justice ... The military is fully responsible for the acts they carry out, when they violate the rights of individuals and (Compensation of Social Doctrine of the Church , 502 and 503). We appeal to the conscience of all its members: do not forget that they are also part of the people and that they must render an account of their acts before human and divine justice.
 - C) **THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP:** that, in the exercise of its citizen vocation, it is always committed only with the people and never in the pursuit of their own interests. It is urgent to continue taking steps to ensure respect for the democratic will of all Venezuelan people and to seek transparent mechanisms for meetings and negotiations that will effectively lead to overcoming the crisis.
 - D) **THE EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS:** to collaborate to create political awareness and thus raise the socio-cultural level in all citizens.
9. Faithful to our pastoral ministry, we commit ourselves to continue to accompany our people, in particular the poorest and most excluded. In this sense we ask all members of the Church to act according to the criteria of the Gospel and the Social Doctrine of the Church, to illuminate and to break down every wall of division existing in our country and to contribute to the recovery of our nation, Social fabric and take steps for reconciliation in the fraternal encounter between all. We encourage all efforts that can be made in favor of peace and coexistence, based on the law of fraternal love. We accompany the youth and students, who are defenders with their own lives of freedom and the current Constitution.

10. We invite all members of the Church and people of good will to make the preferential option for the poor and excluded. In addition to sustaining with prayer, reflection and other initiatives every effort to end the crisis, we ask you to express solidarity with those who are hungry, needy and distressed. Strengthen the various works and actions that, from the social ministry, help many people in need of food, health care, protection of their rights, comprehensive education. The action of Pastoral Social-Caritas in its various fields (national, diocesan and parish) is a sign of our commitment to all, without exception of any kind.

11. We invite our brothers in faith and other believers to a Day of Prayer and Fasting next Friday, July 21, in order to ask God to bless the efforts of the Venezuelans for freedom, justice and peace. We implore the light of the Holy Spirit for each one of us, we ask God to continue to protect this people and that the maternal protection of Mary of Coromoto encourages us to continue to build peace and fraternal coexistence.

THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS OF VENEZUELA
CARACAS, JULY 12 OF THE YEAR 2017.

Translated from Spanish via Google Translate

Original document can be found at: <http://www.cev.org.ve/index.php/noticias/244-mensaje-urgente-a-los-catolicos-y-personas-de-buena-voluntad-en-venezuela>

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