

libertas

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY'S NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 20
NUMBER 1



JOHN HUMPHREY
AWARD 2010

VENEZUELA: A DEMOCRACY WITH AUTHORITARIAN TRAITS

By Marino Alvarado, Executive Director, PROVEA

CHARACTERIZING THE CURRENT FORM OF GOVERNMENT IN VENEZUELA is complex and contentious. We will start by asserting the prevalence of a democracy with increasingly authoritarian traits. From the formal point of view, Venezuelan democracy is a classic system of the division of public powers that enjoy full autonomy and exercise the necessary institutional checks and balances. In practice, the Executive Branch directs institutional action and the rest of the powers revolve around it and prop up National Executive decisions and even whims.

Democracy with authoritarian traits has reigned for decades. It is not an issue of President Chavez's government. Although accentuated with him, those who preceded him never guaranteed a complete democracy. The persistence of authoritarian traits has multiple expressions. One of them is the use of repression against political dissidence and social discontent. Before 1999, the country was scene to bloody repressive actions against groups which held positions critical of the government. Political prisoners filled many of Venezuela's prison cells. Hundreds of Venezuelan men and women were killed during the protest demanding rights and calling for more democracy.

During the events known as the caracazo in 1989, more than 700 people were killed due to the country's lack of a democratic law enforcement policy. Currently more than 2,500 people are on trial for exercising their right to demand rights; the nearly 50 political prisoners are one of the results of governing with the same authoritarian traits as in the past.

Venezuela was undergoing a profound crisis of its political system when President Chavez came to power. He is the result of this crisis. His rise was a consequence of the desire for change demanded by the majority who were fed up with corruption, ineffective public management, and unequal distribution of wealth, as well as the low level of credibility in political parties and a strong mistrust in State institutions. The rise to power of a new political elite headed by Hugo Chavez raised enormous expectations and hopes for economic, political and social change. This new elite had a large number of people with leftist ideas who had made their political careers by questioning previous governments' authoritarianism and demanding democracy as a form of government.

continued on page 3



Rights & Democracy

International Centre for Human Rights
and Democratic Development

1001 de Maisonneuve Blvd. East, Montréal, Québec H2L 4P9

Rights & Democracy is a non-partisan, independent Canadian institution created by an Act of Parliament in 1988 to promote democratic development and to advocate for and defend human rights set out in the International Bill of Human Rights. In cooperation with civil society and governments in Canada and abroad, Rights & Democracy initiates and supports programmes to strengthen laws and democratic institutions, principally in developing countries.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The existence of a democratic society with all that that entails—from the separation of public powers to the possibility for all citizens to participate in the political process, and of course the implementation of freedom of expression and association—is the guarantee of a society where the human rights of all are respected.

For over twenty years, the winner of the 2010 John Humphrey Award, PROVEA (El Programa Venezolano de Educación-Acción en Derechos Humanos or Venezuelan Program for Education and Action in Human Rights) has actively defended and promoted human rights as an integral part of a democratic society. Through its constant efforts to educate Venezuelans about the human rights situation in their country, to protect human rights, and to help victims of violations in their dealings with the courts, in conditions that are often hostile and even dangerous, PROVEA creates opportunities for discussion and open debate on the implementation of democracy and respect for human rights in the public sphere.

Last September I went to Caracas where I had the opportunity to meet members of PROVEA. The five days that I spent there helped me to better understand the historical, political and social life of Venezuela. The political situation in Venezuela is extremely polarized, which has implications for all institutions and all political decisions. But in recent years, a new trend seems to be emerging slowly in political circles. Several political figures, who for many years have supported the government in place, now want greater openness.

I had the opportunity to speak at length with Mr. Marino Alvarado, Executive Director of PROVEA, who helped to paint a picture of the political situation in the context of the September 26 elections, when citizens were asked to renew all seats in the National Assembly. Significantly, in a parliament dominated almost 100% by a single party, the elections marked the return of the opposition in the National Assembly, which could present a possible opening for dialogue. Mr. Alvarado and I also talked about recent practices of harassment and criminalization by the government towards civil society organizations. Moreover, a few days before my visit, over 100 NGOs and human rights defenders had collaborated in a joint statement denouncing such practices, and calling for the right to participation and the right to receive international aid.

This short trip also allowed me to better understand the reality of a complex country where many of the promised results and changes have been slow, because even though poverty has declined significantly, violence and crime are increasing, political institutions seem weak and civil society is kept out of decision-making bodies.

I agree with Mr. Alvarado's argument in his article "Venezuela: A Democracy with Authoritarian Traits" that Venezuela is now facing a turning point in its history: it can either move forward towards a better functioning democracy or consolidate the authoritarian aspects of its current regime. It is within this context that we must see the importance of PROVEA's hard work to promote the inclusive nature of democracy and the interdependence of human rights.

Just as we begin a realignment of our programming towards democratic development, to better fulfill the two aspects of the mission entrusted to us by Parliament, Rights & Democracy is pleased to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of PROVEA, which works to create a democratic, just and participatory society in order to guarantee Venezuelans full respect of their human rights.

GERÁRD LATULIPPE

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY'S JOHN HUMPHREY AWARD

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY presents the John Humphrey Award each year to an organization or individual from any country or region of the world, for exceptional achievement in the promotion of human rights and democratic development. The Award consists of a grant of \$30,000, as well as a speaking tour of Canadian cities to help raise public awareness of the recipient's work in the field of democratic development or human rights. It is named in honour of the Canadian John Peters Humphrey, a human rights law professor who prepared the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The winner is selected by an international jury composed of five members of Rights & Democracy's Board of Directors. For further details, please visit www.dd-rd.ca.

PREVIOUS WINNERS



Photo : Marc Gibert

- 2009 — LA'ONF: Iraqi Non-Violence Network (Iraq)
- 2008 — Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (Zimbabwe)
- 2007 — Akbar Ganji (Iran)
- 2006 — Su Su Nway (Burma)
- 2005 — Yan Christian Warinussy (West Papua)
- 2004 — Godeliève Mukasarasi (Rwanda)
- 2003 — Kimy Pernía Domicó (Colombia) and Angélica Mendoza de Ascarza (Peru)
- 2002 — Ayesha Imam (Nigeria)
- 2001 — Sima Samar (Afghanistan)
- 2000 — Reverend Timothy Njoya (Kenya)
- 1999 — Cynthia Maung and Min Ko Naing (Burma)
- 1998 — Palden Gyatso (Tibet)
- 1997 — Father Javier Giraldo (Colombia)
- 1996 — Sultana Kamal (Bangladesh)
- 1995 — Bishop Carlos F. X. Belo (East Timor)
- 1994 — Campaign for Democracy (Nigeria) and Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (Egypt)
- 1993 — La Plate-forme des organismes haïtiens de défense des droits humains (Haïti)
- 1992 — Instituto de Defensa Legal (Peru)

VENEZUELA: DEMOCRACY WITH AUTHORITARIAN TRAITS



Voters line up outside one of Venezuela's largest polling stations in Merida

THEY TOOK THE PROPOSAL MUCH FURTHER. They added the concepts of democracy and citizen participation and proposed a different model of democracy, one that creates space for the participation of the poor majority who always had been excluded from public affairs. This democracy would coexist with a strong institutionalism and alongside ample consultation mechanisms and participation in the country's fundamental decision making. The political project, which won votes and popular support, was presented in this manner.

If democracy in Venezuela today is evaluated from a classical liberal perspective, we are going to encounter virtues and defects. Examples of virtues include having established a series of consultation and public management oversight mechanisms including the possibility of revoking the mandate of elected officials, even the President of the Republic, through popular vote. The promotion and design of forms of community and social organization which incorporate millions of people to participate in political life is another, as is the support and visibility given to millions of poor people who have been excluded for centuries and the encouragement for them to be agents of change and transformation. Attempting to make structural economic and social changes via traditional democratic methods, using the vote as an instrument of struggle and partially respecting the existing legal norms are others.

Among its defects is a form of government that concentrates power in the National Executive and converts the rest of public powers in its agents. The progressive restriction of democratic freedom reduces spaces for dissidence and progressively increases the risks for anyone who dares to think differently from the political elite which governs and for those who organize to demand their rights. The manner of exercising politics aimed at imposing socialism for the 21st century rather than convincing the majority of its positive aspects is another flaw. The Constitution is permanently violated; a legal framework which legalizes, but does not legitimize, a new State structure is being imposed. The growing militarization in society entails a vertical logic and obedience which weakens plurality and conscientious objection. And like the governments of the past, it uses political repression to placate social discontent and dissident voices.

An objective analysis of democracy in Venezuela, however, obliges us to incorporate a significant component which can be highlighted and verified if studied from a perspective that moves beyond the traditional liberal view. In a sense, Venezuelan democracy has been strengthened over the past decade. If we evaluate democracy based on considering the larger number of people participating in the enjoyment of the country's wealth and as beneficiaries of the democratization of this wealth, then today's democracy is more solid than in the past. The 35% reduction of poverty over the past ten years is undoubtedly a democratic element. The fact that today millions live in better conditions, not the best, but better than years ago, undoubtedly is another democratic factor. In countries with high levels of poverty and inequality and with deeply rooted social exclusion, democracy cannot only be evaluated from the perspective of voting, institutionalism and political plurality. It is important to incorporate factors like the enjoyment and benefit in the country's wealth, the level of social inclusion and the participation of population sectors who were never seen as social subjects but rather as objects of study and targets for public policy.

Including all the analytical components, we insist that Venezuela today lives at a crossroads. It can either move forward towards more democracy or it can consolidate authoritarian traits. With the start of the second presidential period, which began in 2006, it appeared that authoritarianism would prevail over democracy. Democracy still prevails. Yet there is a dangerous evolution of authoritarian traits that are expressed in the progressive restriction of democratic freedoms, attempts to weaken the society's plural character, a growing concentration of power which in practice dilutes the rest of public powers, and an effort to want to prioritize social issues at the cost of sacrificing civil and political rights.

The current struggle focuses on championing the interdependency of rights and the comprehensive essence of democracy. This includes continuing to demand more social justice with increased freedom, less poverty with more ample political plurality and greater inclusion without any sort of discrimination. The challenge is how to hinder the consolidation of authoritarian traits and avoid backtracking on progress made in favour of social inclusion and the democratization of wealth. The hope for a true democracy where freedom and social justice prevail continues.

Venezuela At-a-Glance



Official Name:	Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
Capital:	Caracas
Independence:	July 5, 1811 (from Spain)
President:	Hugo Chávez Frías (3rd term)
Next Elections:	December 2012
Population:	28.61 million (UN, 2009)
Currency:	1 CAN\$ = 4.29 Venezuelan Bolivares
Main Exports:	Oil, bauxite and aluminum, steel, chemicals, agricultural products
GNI per capita:	US \$9,230 (World Bank, 2008)
Internet Use:	25% (June 2008)
Gender Gap Index:	64th out of 134 countries
Seats in Parliament Held by Women:	17.5% (UN, 2010)
Human Development Index:	75 th out of 169 countries (2010)
Freedom of Press Indicator:	133 out of 178 countries (2010)

Political Context

Venezuela's reputation as one of the more stable democracies in Latin America came to an end in 1989 after 700 people were reportedly killed during riots in Caracas to protest an economic austerity program launched by then-President Carlos Andres Perez. Venezuelans were frustrated by traditional political parties, income disparities, and economic difficulties. In February 1992, Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez led a group of army officers in an unsuccessful coup attempt and was imprisoned until 1994. A second unsuccessful coup attempt by Chávez supporters followed in November 1992 and a year later Congress impeached Perez on corruption charges.

In December 1998, Hugo Chávez was elected president, promising broad reform, constitutional change, and a crackdown on corruption. Hugo Chávez was re-elected in July 2000 and again in December 2006 with 63% of the vote. He is working to implement his vision of "21st Century Socialism" in Venezuela and has pursued populist policies to help the poor with programmes that include free healthcare, subsidized food and land reforms. He has been criticized for leading Venezuela towards a Cuban-style authoritarian government with increasing state intervention in business. He asked the National Assembly to grant him special constitutional powers via an "enabling law" and used this authority to nationalize the telecommunications and electricity sectors, to finalize a majority government share in many oil projects, and to end term limits for all elected officials, paving the way for his re-election in 2012. He has survived a coup, protests, strikes and a referendum on his rule and is both loved and loathed among a divided electorate.



Venezuela: International Human Rights Treaties

The Venezuelan government has legal obligations under several international and regional human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights, to respect the rights to life, security of the person, and freedom of association, expression and assembly.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES	SIGNATURE	RATIFICATION
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	24 June 1969	10 May 1978
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	24 June 1969	10 May 1978
Optional Protocol to the ICCPR	15 Nov. 1976	10 May 1978
Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, aimed at abolition of the death penalty	7 June 1990	22 Feb. 1993
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	21 April 1967	10 Oct. 1967
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	17 July 1980	2 May 1983
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	17 March 2000	13 May 2002
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	15 Feb. 1985	29 July 1991
Convention on the Rights of the Child	26 Jan. 1990	13 Sept. 1990
Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention		20 Sept 1982
American Convention on Human Rights	22 Nov. 1969	23 June 1977

Canada-Venezuela Relations

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA MAINTAINS A DIALOGUE with the government of President Chavez, particularly on issues of democratic governance and economic and social development.



The reforms being brought in by President Chavez as part of the "Bolivarian Revolution" have markedly intensified since his re-election in December 2006. Canada is monitoring the process closely and paying particular attention to the impact these reforms may have on standards of democracy and human rights that have been endorsed by all OAS Member States, particularly in the Inter-American Democratic Charter. It is also Canadian policy to support civil society and foster its contribution to the democratic process in many countries around the world. Thus, Canada continues to support civil society organizations that are working in the areas of democracy and human rights in Venezuela.

Venezuela is Canada's fourth largest trading partner in Latin America and the Caribbean (excluding Mexico). Bilateral merchandise trade totalled \$2.6 billion in 2008. Merchandise exports reached \$890.1 million in 2008 making Venezuela Canada's 2nd largest export market in the region. Main exports to Venezuela included cereals, paper and paperboard, motor vehicles, machinery, mineral ores and vegetables. Imports from Venezuela totalled \$1.4 billion and included mineral fuel and oils, fertilizers, inorganic and organic chemicals, rubber.

Source: Government of Canada Website
Updated January 2010

@ LINKS WORTH BROWSING!

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Report on Democracy and Human Rights in Venezuela (2009)
<http://cidh.org/countryrep/Venezuela2009eng/VE09.TOC.eng.htm>

Amnesty International Annual Report 2010, State of the World's Human Rights, Venezuela page
http://thereport.amnesty.org/sites/default/files/AIR2010_AZ_EN.pdf#page=298

Human Rights Watch, A Decade Under Chávez: Political Intolerance and Lost Opportunities for Advancing Human Rights in Venezuela
<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2008/09/18/decade-under-ch-vez>

Hands off Venezuela/Société Bolivarienne du Québec
<http://www.sbgc.org/sbgqhov2/>

Interview with Liliana Ortega, Director of Venezuela's COFAVIC



The following interview was conducted by Lauren Ravon of Rights & Democracy in October 2010.

What is COFAVIC's mandate?

The Committee of Family Members of the Victims of the events that occurred in February and March 1989 (COFAVIC) is a non-governmental organization dedicated to human rights protection and promotion. COFAVIC emerged 21 years ago as an initiative by the victims, who in their pain united together to denounce and demand justice. Over time and with new human rights challenges, COFAVIC has grown and extended its aid to other victims in other cases. It is the founders' commitment to avoid a repetition of events like those of 1989.

What work does COFAVIC do in support of human rights?

Access to justice and impunity continues to be an issue of concern for victims' organizations and society in general. In Venezuela, eight out of ten cases of human rights violations do not reach the trial stage. COFAVIC tackles this problem through research, awareness-raising, training and the creation of spaces for discussion between civil society organizations, police officials and State institutions with competence in human rights. COFAVIC has conducted various studies and publications on human rights violations which compile life stories, victims' coping strategies and analyze the efficiency of the protection measures agreed upon at the domestic and international levels. Its conclusions on how impunity operates in cases of extrajudicial executions serve as a starting point for proposing guidelines for public policies and legislation to reduce violence and impunity in cases of the lack of citizen safety.

What characterizes the human rights movement in Venezuela?

What are its concerns?

Over the past decade, COFAVIC could note a moderate growth of human rights groups in Venezuela, with increased impact and strength of victims' groups. However, those that exist are still insufficient. They are faintly recognized and at times are threatened, criminalized, harassed and attacked for the role that they fulfill in society. There is also very limited participation of youth, academics and professionals.

What are the difficulties faced by human rights activists in Venezuela?

In Venezuela, important difficulties of access to justice exist and the system's effectiveness is very low. Furthermore, there are repeated acts of harassment, threats and attacks against victims, family members and witnesses who appear in judicial trials. The Venezuelan victims' protection system

is very weak and the network of assistance services, both at the public and non-governmental levels is very limited, particularly in the country's interior. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, in its report *Democracy and Human Rights in Venezuela*, highlighted its concern for the multiple governmental obstructions faced by organizations. There are restrictions for their participation in public affairs due to the origin of their financing and members or their organizational form. According to COFAVIC monitoring in this area, thirty-two human rights advocates (mostly women) have reported serious cases of threats and harassment; of these, an important number of cases are not even judicially investigated.

There are repeated acts of harassment, threats and attacks against victims, family members and witnesses who appear in judicial trials.

In your opinion, what are the main problems related to women's human rights in Venezuela? What are the progress and setbacks in the field of women's rights in recent years?

According to COFAVIC data, women make up 74% of those who have reported human rights violations. Female victims or family members of victims of human rights violations are generally more active in the search for justice than men. In this context, women face additional barriers to present their petitions or to defend themselves within the judicial apparatus, which contributes to the growth of impunity. In this sense, working specifically with women is key. It is women who engage in investiga-

tive actions and pressure the competent bodies. They are the ones who promote alternative struggles based in their communities and organizations. They are the motor that gives life to judicial files, engage in the gathering of evidence and search for witnesses in spite of the harassment and threats which they tend to suffer. Furthermore, they are mothers, sisters, wives and daughters who also economically support their families and when faced with difficulties, assume responsibility for their protection and support.

What impact does the increase in the lack of safety have on women? How would you explain the increase in the lack of safety?

The situation of violence and lack of safety experienced in Venezuela severely affect women. According to data from the National Institute of Women (INAMUJER), in the last 5 months of 2006, 48 women died from abuse by their partners. In Venezuela, around 100 gender-violence-related cases occur daily and in nearly 70% of the cases, women who fight against impunity face harassment and threats. In this sense, the State reported to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission's Rapporteurship on the Rights of Women that the majority of cases of violence against women do not reach the trial stage, thus revealing the level of impunity which exists.

For more information about COFAVIC, please visit their website at www.cofavic.org.ve

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION IN VENEZUELA

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

THE 1999 CONSTITUTION OF VENEZUELA INCLUDES over 100 articles promoting and protecting human rights and citizen participation as the foundation of democratic coexistence and social peace. Many civil society associations have proliferated since 1999 and Venezuelans actively promote human rights and encourage popular participation. They make use of the right to protest; peaceful demonstrations are generally allowed with advance permission. They have lively public debates, where criticism and defense of the government are equally represented.

However, Venezuela is under increasing scrutiny by the international community which is alarmed by many serious threats to human rights, particularly freedom of expression and association. The government of Venezuela has targeted NGOs and journalists who oppose its views, using both restrictive laws and unwritten practices, such as extending the scope of the *desacato* (disrespect) laws and closing many radio and television stations for "incitement". Many activists, trade unionists and journalists have been facing a hostile climate of intimidation and harassment. The Chavez government emphatically denies these allegations.

In February 2010, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) released a report, *Democracy and Human Rights in Venezuela*, which expresses its concern that not all citizens are ensured full enjoyment of their basic human rights. Venezuela's ombudsman criticized the report's findings and said it makes unfair characterizations and undermines Venezuelan democracy.

In its report, the IACHR documents violations of the fundamental rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association in Venezuela, saying that "Venezuela lacks the conditions necessary for human rights defenders and journalists to carry out their work freely." The IACHR also notes a pattern of impunity in cases of violence, which particularly affects media workers, human rights defenders, trade unionists, participants in public demonstrations, people held in custody, campesinos (small-scale subsistence farmers), indigenous peoples and women.

In the Commission's opinion, it is the lack of independence and autonomy of the judiciary that has led Venezuela to persecute human rights defenders and criminalize peaceful social protest. It fears that the space for public debate is decreasing, as those who express their opinions are silenced through criminal charges. The IACHR and its Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression have called on Venezuela to avoid using direct or indirect means to silence critical opinions or allegations made against authorities of the government, however disturbing or offensive these may be.

The right to freedom of expression and association is guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights and the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The IACHR has called on the Venezuelan government to ensure their citizens enjoy the right to freedom of expression, including the right to speak against the government, and to take the steps necessary to ensure an independent judiciary that is "committed to applying the provisions of the Venezuelan Constitution and international treaties to which Venezuela is party."



RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY AND THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM

Rights & Democracy has long supported the strengthening of regional human rights mechanisms, principally the inter-American human rights system of the Organization of American States (OAS), which comprises the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR). We have worked for more than a decade to ensure the system is strong, well-funded, and autonomous. We have increased civil society participation at the OAS and supported the development of jurisprudence on indigenous peoples' rights.

The inter-American system is essential to strengthening democracy in the Americas. Numerous resolutions of the IACHR and IACtHR have enabled the consolidation of democratic transitions from authoritarian regimes, in particular with regard to amnesty laws passed by military governments in an attempt to guarantee impunity for serious violations of human rights. In the Andean region, despite the polarization of the debate, the inter-American system has had a major influence on focusing a human rights-based approach to democracy, such as highlighting the essential role of human rights defenders.

Freedom of expression is a cornerstone upon which the very existence of a democratic society rests.

Inter-American Court of Human Rights

Strengthening the inter-American system moves beyond the debate between left and right-wing, and helps promote the work of human rights defenders no matter the country or government in power.

DID YOU KNOW?

This year's John Humphrey Award laureate, PROVEA, was invited by the Organization of American States to participate in a meeting called, "Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Americas" at the 40th regular session of the OAS General Assembly, held in Lima, Peru, from June 6-8, 2010.

2010 JOHN HUMPHREY AWARD LAUREATE

PROVEA

THE VENEZUELAN PROGRAM FOR EDUCATION/ ACTION IN HUMAN RIGHTS

THE 2010 JOHN HUMPHREY AWARD WINNER, PROVEA, is one of Venezuela's most respected, credible and effective human rights organizations. It has earned this reputation due to its balanced, apolitical approach and rigorous research methodologies. PROVEA works under difficult political and economic conditions in a country where politics are highly polarized and human rights activists are often the targets of harsh criticism and intimidation for speaking out about human rights concerns. PROVEA plays a key role in informing Venezuelans and the international community about advances, concerns and vulnerabilities within their country. Through its daily work, PROVEA has achieved important successes in balancing the power differential in cases of human rights abuses by attracting media attention and, more broadly, in raising the profile of human rights and democracy issues so that they may be debated and discussed more freely within public spaces.

What Does PROVEA Do?

PROVEA defends and promotes human rights—particularly economic, social and cultural rights—as an integral component of a democratic society. Based in Caracas, this NGO is independent and autonomous from political parties, economic groups, religious institutions, international organizations and government. It seeks to create a just and participative democratic society that guarantees Venezuelans enjoy full respect of their human rights. PROVEA's efforts are dedicated to improving Venezuela's human rights situation by preventing violations, strengthening the human rights movement, educating all spectrums of society, building alliances among civil society, and supporting victims of human rights violations. PROVEA is also involved in monitoring, documenting, researching and circulating information on the human rights situation in Venezuela; it publishes a highly respected annual report of the human rights situation in Venezuela, which is used as a primary reference tool both at the national and international levels.

PROVEA also accompanies victims and potential victims in the defence of their rights through legal mechanisms as well as extra-judicial proceedings. It works with partners to identify possible sources of funding in order to cover costs associated with judicial proceedings related to the defence of victims of violations of human rights.



With a view to developing sustainable solutions, PROVEA also actively promotes public policy and legislation that favours greater protection for human rights. It offers opportunities for Venezuelans interested in the promotion of human rights to assist in spreading a human rights culture, provides internships and workshops for university students, and is currently developing a digital and physical library of human rights related books and documents.

HOW TO CONTACT PROVEA

Programa Venezolano de Educación-Acción en Derechos Humanos
Bulevar Panteón, Puente Trinidad a Tienda Honda
Edif. Centro Plaza Las Mercedes, PB, Local 6
Apartado postal 5156, Carmelitas 1010-A Caracas, Venezuela

- ☎ 011 (212) 862.10.11
- ☎ 011 (212) 862.53.33
- ☎ 011 (212) 860.66.69

✉ provea@derechos.org.ve

🌐 www.derechos.org.ve

Follow Marino Alvarado on [twitter](https://twitter.com/marinoalvarado) @marinoalvarado



RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY'S NEWSLETTER

Libertas is available free of charge and is accessible electronically at www.dd-rd.ca. Articles may be freely excerpted, provided credit is given and a copy of the publication in which the material appears is sent to Rights & Democracy.

COORDINATION: Augie Van Biljouw

TRANSLATION: Gabriel Chagnon, Augie Van Biljouw, Madeleine Pérusse

EDITING: Augie Van Biljouw, Lise Lortie

PHOTOS: Venezuelaanalysis.com, Marc Gibert

GRAPHIC PRODUCTION: Cubik communication graphique

LEGAL DEPOSIT: 4th quarter 2010 • ISSN 1027-0884

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

1001 de Maisonneuve Blvd. East, Suite 1100

Montréal, Québec, Canada H2L 4P9

Telephone: 514-283-6073 • Fax: 514-283-3792

dd.rd@dd-rd.ca • www.dd-rd.ca

Printed in Canada by Club imprimerie Montréal inc.

