



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on December 16, 2018

## On Bill of Rights Day, We Were Reminded That Venezuela Has no Second Amendment

In an unhappy coincidence, the addition of the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution in 1791 [was celebrated on Saturday](#), the same day that [Fox News reported](#) on the lack of such protections in Venezuela that have allowed tyrants to subjugate their citizens to virtual enslavement.



Alan Gottlieb, serving as the executive vice president of the Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) and the chairman of the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms (CCRKBA), issued a statement on Saturday pointing to the uniqueness of the Bill of Rights and especially the importance of the Second Amendment in securing them, stating: “Despite the efforts of lobbying groups and some politicians, the Second Amendment has retained its position as the cornerstone of our Bill of Rights. The individual citizen’s right to keep and bear arms protects all of the other rights.” Gottlieb added, “Our mission is that of any citizen who values the liberty and freedom our nation symbolizes above all other nations in the world. Our Bill of Rights is the envy of every other citizen of every other country.” Joining Gottlieb’s groups in the announcement was Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership (JPFO).

Gottlieb could have been speaking directly to two former citizens of Venezuela who have escaped the Marxist tyranny first installed by Hugo Chávez in 1999 and then expanded by his protégé, Nicolás Maduro after Chávez died in 2013. Now living outside the grasp of Maduro’s “collectivos” — motorcycle gangs hired, paid, and armed by him to “keep the peace” in the country’s barrios — Javier Vanegas, a former Venezuelan schoolteacher now exiled in Ecuador, and Omar Adolfo Zares Sanchez, a former mayor of a municipality in Venezuela, had their interviews published by Fox on the same day.

Said Vanegas: “Guns would have served as a vital pillar to remaining a free people, or at least able to put up a fight. [Maduro’s] government security forces ... knew they had no real opposition.... It was a clear declaration of war against an unarmed population.”



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Vanegas added that the people were too trusting of their government back in 2012 when the Chávez-controlled Venezuelan National Assembly enacted its “Control of Arms, Munitions and Disarmament Law” with the explicit purpose of disarming the citizenry. Said Vanegas:

Venezuelans didn’t care enough about it. The idea of having the means to protect your home was seen as only needed out in the fields. People never would have believed they needed to defend themselves against the government.

Venezuelans ... always hoped that our government would be non-tyrannical, a non-violator of human rights....

[But] if guns had been a stronger part of our culture, if there had been a sense of duty for one to protect their individual rights, and as a show of force against a government power — and had legal carry been a common thing — it would have made a huge difference.

Sanchez agreed: “Without a doubt, if there had been a balance of armed defense we could have stood up and stopped the oppression at the beginning.”

Without such a threat from an armed citizenry, Maduro’s tyranny has turned Venezuela from one of the most prosperous and free countries in South America into a virtual concentration camp run by Maduro’s thugs. The murder rate in the country is almost 100 per 100,000 (in the U.S. it is less than five), and the poverty rate is nearly 80 percent.

David Kopel, research director of the Independence Institute in Golden, Colorado, stated the obvious: “Venezuela shows the deadly peril when citizens are deprived of the means of resisting the depredations of a criminal government. The Venezuelan rulers ... viewed citizen possession of arms as a potential danger to a permanent communist monopoly of power.”

Kopel’s comment calls to mind (in)famous statements by two historical tyrants over that “potential danger.” Said Adolph Hitler: “The most foolish mistake we could possibly make would be to allow the subject races to possess arms. History shows that all conquerors who have allowed their subject races to carry arms have prepared their own downfall by so doing.” And from Mao Tse-tung, who ruled China as chairman of the Communist Party of China from 1949 to 1976: “All political power comes from the barrel of a gun. The communist party must command all the guns. That way, no guns can ever be used to command the party.”

Americans need to appreciate the paper-thin difference between Venezuelan captives and American citizens: That difference is Founders who knew their history and built protections into the Constitution to keep the central government from exceeding its proper bounds. The Second Amendment of the Bill of Rights was added as additional security.

The country’s first president, George Washington, explained that difference: “Government is not reason, it is not eloquence — it is force. Like fire it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master; never for a moment should it be left to irresponsible action.”

For Venezuelans, that lesson from history is being learned the hard way.

*Image: Olga Mendenhall via iStock / Getty Images Plus*

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