



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on April 7, 2010

Chavez Regime Steps Up Attacks on Opponents

Venezuela's socialist "President" Hugo Chavez is attracting increasing criticism as his regime steps up arrests and intimidation of opponents despite a massive international outcry.

As reported by *The New American* in a recent article entitled "[Socialist Chavez Arrests More Critics](#)," the tyrant has been cracking down hard on perceived enemies. The piece detailed recent arrests of the chief of the last critical television network, as well as a popular former Governor. The arrestees allegedly insulted the chief executive and spread "false information" - serious crimes in Chavez' Venezuela.



Shortly after that report was published, the regime jailed an opposition lawmaker who had alleged that Chavez' brothers were involved in corruption. In an almost unprecedented decision, Wilmer Azuaje was stripped of his governmental immunity and charged with crimes stemming from an alleged scuffle with a police officer. But, he insists he did nothing wrong. "This is a political trial," he noted.

The nation's highest court has prohibited Azuaje from discussing the matter with the media, though virtually every news outlet that did not promote Chavez' propaganda has already been shut down anyway amidst accusations of involvement in a "conspiracy" against the regime. The arrest, and those before it, have prompted a furor among the socialist leader's critics.

Even the *New York Times* provided some much-needed exposure of the regime with a recent article entitled "[Criticism of Chavez Stifled by Arrests](#)." The piece tells the story of a Venezuelan judge who was arrested late last year after irritating Chavez with a decision he did not approve of.

Judge María Lourdes Afiuni "conditionally" freed a businessman accused of circumventing currency controls, who had also financed opposition candidates. He had been rotting in Venezuela's squalid prison system for three years with no trial. But after judge Afiuni's ruling, the socialist despot exploded, going on [television](#) saying that she deserved 30 years in prison — even if it required new laws — and that in earlier times, she would have been executed by firing squad.

Even the United Nations — home of myriad unsavory tyrants — blasted her arrest, [calling](#) it "a blow by President Hugo Chávez to the independence of judges and lawyers in the country." The global body called for judge Afiuni's immediate release and labeled the imprisonment of the banker she freed "arbitrary." But Chavez was not moved: He called on prosecutors and judges to give her the stiffest possible penalty to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Following the wave of political arrests, human rights groups across the globe have condemned the Venezuelan regime's oppression and brutality. "Charges brought for political reasons against critics are being used to silence dissent and prevent others from speaking out," explained Amnesty International's deputy director for the Americas, Guadalupe Marengo. "President Chavez must stop persecuting those



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who think differently or speak out against his government.” Countless other organizations have issued similar pleas. But the tyrant does not care.

Unfortunately, Chavez is part of a much bigger problem spreading throughout the region, documented in an article for *The New American* entitled “[Resurgent Communism in Latin America](#).” Working together behind the scenes through the Foro de São Paulo (São Paulo Forum), Chavez and other socialist regimes are leading a revolution financed by oil and drug money. Just this week it was [announced](#) that the tyrant would be purchasing billions of dollars in weaponry from Russia, as well as collaborating on nuclear energy and other areas.

If there is a bright side to the madness taking place in Venezuela, it’s the fact that Chavez provides the world with an ongoing lesson in the dangers of socialism and unrestrained government power. Arresting critics, judges, and political opponents while shutting down non-cooperative media are merely side-effects of the ideology Chavez represents.

Granted, very few of the world’s governments are good role models. But the socialist tyranny emanating from Venezuela is particularly brutal. For the sake of the Venezuelan population, the people of the world should continue to expose the regime for the dangerous pariah that it is. Chavez cannot yet censor the Internet, so there may still be hope.

Photo of Hugo Chavez: AP Images



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