



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

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August 13, 2008

H.E. Jose Miguel Insulza
Secretary General
Organization of American States

Dear Secretary General Insulza:

I am writing as president of the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM), an organization representing more than one thousand mayors, to express our grave concern and indignation regarding the disqualification of 272 otherwise eligible candidates from Venezuelan state and local elections next November.

This past June, the USCM unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the aforementioned summary and arbitrary disqualification of candidates without due process of law in Venezuela based on the American Convention on Human Rights. We denounce the subjugation of the Venezuelan constitution and the blatant disregard of a separated executive and judicial branches of government. I am attaching a copy of the resolution for your review and consideration.

The disqualification of these candidates, rubber-stamped by the Venezuelan Supreme Court, in spite of the absence of any formal charges against them, has confirmed the court's lack of judicial independence. It violates the Venezuelan constitution as well as the American Convention on Human Rights. This ban from the right to seek public office constitutes an affront to the democratic principles of the Venezuelan people.

Nevertheless, the people of Venezuela continue to believe strongly in their constitution, the rule of law, and the doctrine of separation of powers. Thousands are publicly protesting in fervent support of these principles and the disqualified candidates. One such candidate is Leopoldo López, Mayor of the Chacao district of Caracas, who is a political opponent of the current Venezuelan government.

Recent polls show that Mayor López is widely considered the most viable candidate for the mayoralty of Caracas, one of the most prominent elected offices in Venezuela. He has been an active leader in the Mayors' Hemispheric Forum, an annual gathering of urban mayors from throughout the Americas, designed to promote regional cooperation and integration.

The United States Conference of Mayors stands in solidarity with the democratic aspirations of our Venezuelan colleagues and the people of Venezuela to ensure that their democratic, civil and human rights are respected. We appreciate your consideration and support of Mayor Lopez' petition before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Manuel A. Diaz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Manuel A. Diaz, President
United States Conference of Mayors
Mayor of Miami

cc: Mr. Paolo Carozza, Chairman, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights