



Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United States

Policy Update – Venezuela’s Position on Libya’s Crisis

Considering some misinformation in the press regarding the position of the government of President Hugo Chávez on Libya’s current internal crisis, the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the United States clarifies the following:

- Venezuela has shared open relations with Libya since the founding of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries over 50 years ago.
- Considering the information coming from different sources regarding the crisis in Libya, Venezuela has kept a prudent position and warned of the potential for a civil war.
- The government of Venezuela shares the global concern over the conflict in Libya with the consequent loss of lives -which must be investigated—, but any real interest in the sustainable resolution of this crisis has to consider its nature. And the nature of the internal conflict in Libya is clearly political, as far as different groups of that society are fighting to control the government of the country. Therefore, the options are some kind of mediation to build a sustainable peace or the possibility of a protracted civil war, as even Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has mentioned.
- Understanding the political nature of the internal crisis in Libya, Venezuela actively supports efforts to peacefully and internally resolve Libya’s ongoing crisis and it strongly opposes any and all military intervention in Libya. The problems currently being experienced by Libya will not be more quickly or sustainably resolved by foreign military forces, nor by encouraging different factions in Libya to take up arms.
- Venezuela decries plans for any foreign intervention in Libya and has denounced the interest of some U.S. sectors and other international powers to take advantage of the confusion to “justify” an intervention in Libya that would allow for the control of its oil. It is worth noting that news agencies have reported that U.S. and Brent crude oil futures briefly fell further Thursday in choppy trading after Venezuela said that Libya has accepted a proposal for an international commission to seek a negotiated solution to its crisis.
- On February 28, President Chavez called for the creation of an international commission to help address Libya’s ongoing internal turmoil. In a speech, President Chavez asked, “Instead of sending weapons and tanks against the Libyan people, why don’t we send a multinational goodwill commission to peacefully plead for a solution to the conflict?”
- President Chávez has proposed the peace commission in an effort to foster the option of a peaceful resolution. Venezuela has not stated that it has to lead the effort of a possible international peace commission for Libya.
- On March 1, President Chavez spoke to Col. Gadhafi about the need and possibility of such a commission. After the conversation, President Chavez stated, “We hope to help to create a multinational commission that can go to Libya to speak with the government and with leaders of the opposition.” The Venezuelan leader said such a commission should be made up by member-states of the ALBA bloc in Latin America and other countries in Europe, South America and the Arab world.
- According to a March 3 report on the Al Arabiya television network, Col. Gadhafi has accepted President Chavez’s proposal for an international peace commission. The Spanish news agency EFE confirmed that [the Arab League “was studying”](#) President Chávez’s proposal. EFE also pointed out that the [Foreign](#)



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Minister of Spain, Trinidad Jiménez said that it was a “good” proposal insofar as “it can help somehow”. On March 4, the minister of Foreign Affairs of **the government of Col. Gadhafi authorized** the formation of a multinational commission, comprised of countries from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Additionally, the member-states of the ALBA bloc committed to work on the conformation of this peace commission in a meeting of ALBA foreign ministers held in Caracas on March 4.

- **Venezuela chose to reserve its vote** on the proposal to remove Libya from the UN’s Human Rights Council (Venezuela didn’t vote for the measure, but it didn’t vote against it), considering that the information available about what was really happening in Libya was unclear and had not been verified – as even U.S. spokespeople recognized before the Senate on Wednesday. Venezuela stressed that an investigation of the events was necessary before making any decision.
- Venezuela’s own historical experience is instructive in this case. In 1989, the Venezuelan military, under orders of then President Carlos Andres Perez (who was widely supported in the U.S.), opened fire on Venezuelans protesting severe economic austerity measures. Hundreds were killed or disappeared. At the time, President Chavez was a mid-level military officer, and he later said that the event taught him that the armed forces should never be turned on the people. President Chávez stated recently that the 1989 protest in Venezuela known as “Caracazo” were like the recent popular protest in Egypt that forced the removal of Hosni Mubarak. Venezuela strongly opposes the use of military forces against the peaceful people of any country.
- The prudent position of Venezuela is also explained by its own experience. Since President Chavez’s election in 1998, Venezuela has been subjected to destabilization attempts by extremist and undemocratic sectors of the opposition, with the support of international forces. In 2002, they launched a coup that briefly undid Venezuela’s elected and constitutional democracy, and in late 2002 and early 2003 they sabotaged the country’s oil industry. Both of these events took place with the knowledge and at least tacit support of a foreign power – the U.S. under the Bush administration. The coup initially was portrayed in the media as popular protests repressed by the government. Later, the international media acknowledged that both pro-government and opposition supporters were killed by snipers and a local police controlled by the sectors leading the coup.
- Venezuela firmly believes that the practice of diplomacy requires respect and disposition towards dialogue – Venezuela is willing to work with other countries to facilitate a peaceful discussion with all actors in the current crisis in Libya.

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