



LATIN AMERICAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS EXPRESS CONCERN OVER VENEZUELA'S DECISION TO DENOUNCE THE AMERICAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND WITHDRAW FROM THE JURISDICTION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

On the inauguration of the 146th period of sessions of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the undersigned civil society organizations wish to express our deepest concern over Venezuela's decision to withdraw from the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and request that the Member States of the Organization of American States (OAS) and Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza carry out all necessary diplomatic efforts to persuade the Venezuelan government of the need to reconsider this decision.

On September 6, 2012 the government of Venezuela notified the Secretary General of the OAS, Jose Miguel Insulza, of its decision to denounce the American Convention on Human Rights, which would imply –once implemented– the withdrawal of Venezuela from the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

The undersigned organizations, believe that within the framework of the on-going reflection process and strengthening of the Inter-American Human Rights System (IAHRS) that is currently being carried out within the Permanent Council of the OAS, this decision represents a grave regression placing the protection and defense of the human rights of thousands of Venezuelan citizens at risk.

It is worth remembering that this past December the Permanent Council of the OAS approved a special report on the functioning of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) which contained recommendations for the States as well as the IACHR. One of these recommendations urges OAS States to sign and ratify international human rights instruments, such as the American Convention on Human Rights, which once ratified, automatically activates the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court over that State. Furthermore, just a few months ago during the last General Assembly of the OAS held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, the States ratified their commitment to advance the universality of the IAHRs, among other items.

It is highly disturbing that a Member State of the OAS chose to denounce the Convention at a time when debates and activities are ongoing to review the functioning of the IAHRs with the goal of strengthening the system. The reflection process is being led by OAS Member States who by a broad majority expressed their willingness and political commitment to advance towards strengthening the protection mechanisms available at the IAHRs. Without a doubt, Venezuela's position is an open contradiction to the decisions and commitment expressed since the beginning of this process.

The undersigned organizations are users of the IAHRs not only via the litigation of cases but also through the use of other available mechanisms within the system. Furthermore, the research, analysis and dissemination of standards produced by the system's decisions, recommendations and reports are a part of our daily activities. Our work with the IAHRs bodies –Commission and Court– allows us to be witnesses to the extraordinary transcendence of the work carried out by both bodies and the value which their decisions represent for the victims in the region who find in the Inter-American system a last resort in their search for justice and reparation for human rights violations occurring in their countries. For this reason we urge the governments of the region and Jose Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the OAS himself, to carry out all necessary efforts to persuade the government of Venezuela of the importance of reconsidering this decision, a decision that not only goes against the strengthening of the IAHRs which it has committed itself to defend but also leaves thousands of Venezuelans vulnerable.

Those who adhere:

Instituto de Defensa Legal (IDL), Perú

Fundación para el Debido Proceso (DPLF), Estados Unidos

DeJusticia, Colombia

Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos de Perú (a network of 78 Peruvian human rights organizations)

Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe para la Democracia (a network of over 300 Latin American and Caribbean human rights organization)

Asociación por los Derechos Civiles (ADC), Argentina

Fundación Construir, Bolivia

Comisión Permanente de Derechos Humanos (CPDH), Nicaragua

Fundación de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho (FESPAD), El Salvador

Asociación Panameña de Derecho Constitucional (APADEC), Panamá

Fundación Myrna Mack, Guatemala

Centro de Derechos Humanos PRODH, México

Fundamedios, Ecuador

Defensa de Niños y Niñas Internacional, Costa Rica

Instituto de Justicia Procesal Penal, México

Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos (CENIDH), Nicaragua

Asistencia Legal por los Derechos Humanos (ASILEGAL), México

Alianza Ciudadana Pro Justicia, Panamá

Asociación Marianista de Acción Social (AMAS), Perú

Fundar, Centro de Análisis e Investigación, México

Instituto de Estudios Comparados en Ciencias Penales y Sociales (INECIP), Argentina

Alianza Regional por la Libre Expresión e Información (a network of over 20 Latin American human rights organizations)