



Operación Libertad Venezuela

Date: 7 April 2016

Subject: Request to protect the people of Venezuela

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To:
His Excellency Dr. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
United Nations Headquarters
1 United Nations Plaza
New York, N.Y. 10017

Cc:
Deputy Secretary-General, Dr. Jan Eliasson
Chairman of the General Assembly, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft
Chairman of the Security Council, Ambassador Liu Jieyi
Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Dr. Jennifer Welsh
Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng

Your Excellency:

On this the 22nd anniversary of the initiation of the genocide in Rwanda, and 83 years after the Holodomor in Ukraine, I am writing to call your attention to a new genocide unfolding in Venezuela. Maybe it has not yet reached the headlines, in fact, it has not yet reached genocidal levels, but it will, if forceful measures are not taken soon. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is executing a policy that is a close parallel to the one executed by the Soviet Union of Socialist Republics in Ukraine the winter of 1932/33. The predictable and inevitable result of such a policy is the death of a large number of persons, representing a significant percentage of the population in the targeted areas. In the case of Venezuela as in the case of the Soviet Union, the policy is without a doubt implemented to allow an unpopular regime lacking popular support to hold on to power by force. It is extermination, a crime against humanity. By targeting Venezuelans as a group it is also genocide. There can be little doubt that the regime of Cuba is playing a key role in guiding the Venezuelan regime, why this is also an international matter.

According to the universal principle of the right to self-defense, the Venezuelan people have a God-given right to defend themselves proportionally. Proportionally in the face of an attempt of extermination of course means the use of deadly force, as in an armed rebellion. However, it would almost certainly lead to a prolonged civil war since the heavily armed criminal gangs and terrorist groups harbored by the Venezuelan regime are not likely to give up their safe haven voluntarily.

It is in view of this that I would like to call your attention to the Responsibility to Protect, as expressed in paragraph 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document: *“In this context, we are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.”*

As a human rights activist with no personal connection to Venezuela, I have closely observed for over 5 years (by sitting in on planning meetings) how the Venezuelan civil society has used every conceivable method of non-violent struggle to depose the electoral dictatorship, only to see the regime continuously tighten civil liberties, banning free speech, harassing media, effectively closing the door for the peaceful change that the vast majority of the people wants. Many democracy activists have been thrown in jail, raped, tortured, and assassinated, ranging in age from teenage students to retired grandfathers.

In spite of this, the peaceful struggle against the dictatorship continued, and in December of 2015 the regime was forced to limit their election fraud and to give the opposition an absolute majority in the national parliament. However, after this setback of theirs the regime doubled down on repression, and initiated the final phase of the holodomor: Selective distribution of food.

The policy instruments of the Venezuelan holodomor are a parallel to what Stalin did when he exterminated many millions in Ukraine:

- Farms, production means, and food has been confiscated
- The regime controls food import and distribution
- It is illegal to store food at home (people have been jailed for it)
- It is illegal to transport food within the country (people have been jailed for transporting food from a permanent residence to a vacation home)
- The last step namely selective food distribution is being implemented since January of this year, starting in the state of Yaracuy but having also reached at least Carabobo and Guárico

The regime promise is that every household will be given a minimum food supply every few weeks after filling out a form and reporting on their political activism. At the same time, shops in affected areas are left without supplies, leaving no feasible alternative way to buy food. For weeks there have been protests in Yaracuy alleging they have been without food since January, irrespective of signing the form. This proves that we are dealing with selective food distribution. Further evidence for this was provided just today through a testimony from Yaracuy: The woman in the audio said that she had been given a chance to buy a bag of food, containing a few kg of rice, flour, cooking oil and such, but a further

condition for buying it was to sign a document rejecting the Amnesty and Reconciliation Law [of political prisoners] recently passed by the opposition-controlled parliament.

According to testimonies in social media, many have already been surviving on animal fodder for months. However bad this is, it is not the only crime against humanity that the regime is implementing. They are also systematically preventing the population from getting access to essential medicines. There are ample reports of deliberate acts on behalf of the regime to prevent people and hospitals from getting medicines. There is not a shadow of a doubt in my mind, because the testimonies are just too many and too coincident: This is a deliberate, planned, and orchestrated effort on part of the regime to deny people access to medicines. Many die after being denied appropriate medical treatment for political reasons.

I'd like your indulgence in bringing up my grandfather Knut "Attarparn" Nilsson, who was invited to Ukraine by Stalin in the winter of 1932/33 to see that all supposedly was well. However, he was suspicious and risked his life to investigate on this own. Thus he discovered that all they were shown were "Potemkin Villages." After surviving a murder attempt in the Kremlin he returned to Sweden and reported that Stalin had killed all the farmers in Ukraine, but by now we know that many were still alive at the time of his visit. They were dying slowly of hunger at home, and could still have been saved had the international community acted appropriately. Please note that the international community *did* act, but *not appropriately*. They sent help, but failing to understand that the starvation was deliberate they sent the food to the regime for distribution, instead of assuring that it reached those who needed it.

This is the issue with Venezuela as well: It will serve absolutely no useful purpose to send food aid to the Venezuelan regime. The international community must distribute the food and the medicines directly to the people, and be prepared to defend the supply system with all necessary force. I humbly urge you to put this obligation to protect at or near the top of your agenda.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Ulf Erlingsson
Liaison with Operación Libertad Venezuela

ⁱ Operación Libertad Venezuela (OLV) was founded on 9 February 2011 as a civil society project for restoring human rights, the rule of law, sovereignty, peace, and democracy in Venezuela. The leadership and membership is secret since the regime has a track record of neutralizing or buying out every visible opponent. For over 5 years OLV has strictly adhered to non-violent struggle to accomplish change through domestic civil struggle, but in the face of genocide and repression, OLV now believes that the human cost of continuing with non-violent struggle would be too high, and that force or the threat thereof is necessary in order to save lives. This is why an appeal to the International Community is now made for the first time.