



**VENTE given the presence of international terrorism in Venezuela:
"It must be contended at full blast"**

Terrorism must be contended with. The whole society and its institutions must fight it. Today, Latin America, and specifically Venezuela, have become fertile grounds for international terrorism, and a provider of funds for their illegal activities in the rest of the world. To a large extent, this is the result of western democracies' failure to understand the criminal and corrupt mafia network existing in our Country, due to the institutional fragility caused by the installation of a regime linked to terrorism. In spite of our continued calls of alert, the world repeatedly refused to recognize this situation.

Organizations such as Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, along with Hezbollah and other associated terrorist groups, are clusters of clandestine networks following an expansionist agenda in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and Latin America. These groups obtained support from Hugo Chávez during his regime, and later on from Nicolás Maduro. Today, they are allies and partners in criminal operations, such as money laundering, drug trafficking, strategic mining, and training of armed groups. Venezuela provides them with a demilitarized zone in violation of our sovereignty.

Our nation, territory and all its resources, have been deliberately used to facilitate a project attempting, not only against freedom and peace in the free world but against the very foundations of Western civilization. There are prominent members of the regime, who have been sanctioned by the United States, who act as liaison officers for Hezbollah and other criminal organizations. They offer logistical support and services, such as providing diplomatic and identification documents. Within recent hours, they have presented their condolences to the Iranian government and issued threats for the recent death of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani.

All this implies a flagrant violation of United Nations Organization's Security Council's Resolution 1373, a fact which has already been denounced by President Ivan Duque of Colombia. President Duque's action shows that the convergence of criminal and terrorist activities may not be contained within the physical borders of a nation and that the threat to Colombia and the rest of the hemisphere is growing every day. FARC's recent condemnation of General Soleimani's death, evidences the spread of international terrorism.

Therefore, we support the actions of our international allies in the fight against terrorism, which, unfortunately, has found a sanctuary in Venezuela. The governments of Argentina and Paraguay have announced the designation of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, showing a clear understanding of the present reality. Other governments, such as Brazil, Guatemala, and Honduras have announced their intentions of following this trend, joining other nations that have already done so, such as the United States, Israel, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France, as well as the Venezuelan National Assembly.

Vente Venezuela has repeatedly denounced the regime as a criminal organization with global terrorist links. We believe that this issue should be supported by the rest of the world, as the regime is a political force that manipulates and mocks multilateralism, institutions, and liberal democracies. Those who are struggling to rescue democracy in Venezuela must leave behind all the naiveté and complicity expressed in false negotiations and underhanded dialogues, carried out surreptitiously or under criminal cohabitation schemes.

It is time to assume with courage and responsibility the correct representation of the present situation: We are dealing with a criminal-terrorist regime that will only be defeated by unconventional political means. The risk to hemispheric security and stability represented by the regime requires an intense and immediate coordinated international action.

We are not dealing with politicians. We are dealing with criminals... and criminals only get the message when there is a credible, sustained threat that forces them to yield. Then, and only then, will we free Venezuela.