

# Venezuela: Defeating Fascism Before it's too Late

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Global Research, March 23, 2014

Region: [Europe](#), [Latin America & Caribbean](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

*Captain Jose Guillen Araque, of the Venezuelan National Guard, recently gave President Maduro a book on the rise of Nazism, warning that “fascism has to be defeated before it’s too late”! In retaliation for his prophetic warning, the patriotic young captain was shot by a US-backed assassin on the streets of Maracay in the state of Aragua on March 16, 2014. This raised the number of Venezuelan soldiers and police killed since the fascist uprising to 29. The killing of a prominent, patriotic officer on a major street in a provincial capital is one more indication that the Venezuelan fascists are on the move, confident of their support from Washington and from a broad swath of the Venezuelan upper and middle class. They constitute a minority of the electorate and they have no illusions about taking power via constitutional and democratic means.*

*Captain Guillen Araque had stepped forward to remind President Maduro that the road to power for Nazi and fascist totalitarian groups has been littered with the corpses of well-meaning democrats and social democrats throughout contemporary history because of their failure to use their constitutional powers to crush the enemies of democracy.*

## The History of the rise of Fascism under Democracies

The term “fascist” in Venezuela is appropriately applied to the organized violent political groups currently engaged in mass terror in a campaign to destabilize and overthrow the democratically-elected Bolivarian government. Academic purist might argue that the Venezuelan fascists lack the racist and nationalist ideology of their German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese predecessors. While true, it is also irrelevant. The Venezuelan brand of fascism is highly dependent on, and acts as a proxy for, US imperialism and their Colombian warlord allies. In one sense however, Venezuelan fascism’s racism is directed against its multiracial African-Amerindian Venezuelan working and peasant classes – as demonstrated by their vitriolic racism against the deceased President Hugo Chavez. The essential connection with earlier fascist movements is found in its (1) profound class hostility to the popular majority; (2) its visceral hatred of the Chavista Socialist Party, winner of 18 of the last 19 elections; (3) its resort to the armed seizure of power by a minority acting on behalf of the domestic and US imperial ruling classes; (4) its intention to destroy the very democratic institutions and procedures which it exploits in order to gain political space; (5) its targeting of working class institutions – communal councils, neighborhood associations, public health and dental clinics, public schools, transport, subsidized food stores, political meeting places, public credit unions, trade union organizations and peasant co-operatives; (6) and its support of capitalist banks, huge commercial landed estates and manufacturing firms.

In Germany, Italy, Spain, France and Chile, fascist movements also began as small terrorist groups, who gained the financial backing of the capitalist elite because of their violence against working class organizations and democratic institutions and recruited primarily

among middle class university students, elite professionals (especially doctors) and active and retired higher military officers – united in their hostility to the democratic order.

Tragically and all too often, democratic leaders, operating within a constitutional government, tended to regard fascists as “just another party”, refusing or unwilling to crush the armed thugs, who combined terror in the streets with elections to gain state power. Constitutionalist democrats have failed or were unwilling to see the political, civilian arm of the Nazis as part and parcel of one organic totalitarian enemy; so they negotiated and debated endlessly with elite fascists who meanwhile destroyed the economy while terrorists pounded away at the political and social foundations of the democratic state. The democrats refused to send out their multi-million mass supporters to face the fascist hordes. Worse, they even prided themselves on jailing their own supporters, police and soldiers, who had been accused of using ‘excessive force’ in their confrontation with fascist street thugs. Thus the fascists easily moved from the streets to state power. The elected democrats were so concerned about criticism from the international and capitalist media, elite critics and self-appointed ‘human rights’ organizations, that they facilitated the takeover by fascists. The people’s right to the armed defense of their democracy had been subordinated to the pretext of upholding ‘democratic norms’ – norms that any bourgeois state under assault would have rejected! Constitutionalist democrats failed to recognize how drastically politics had changed. They were no longer dealing with a parliamentary opposition preparing for the next election; they were confronted with armed terrorists and saboteurs committed to armed struggle and the seizure of political power by any means – including violent coups-d’états.

In the lexicon of fascism, democratic conciliation is a weakness, a vulnerability and an open invitation to escalate violence; ‘peace and love’ and ‘human rights’ slogans are to be exploited; calls for ‘negotiations’ are preambles for surrender; and ‘agreements’ preludes to capitulation.

To the terrorists, the democratic politicians who warn about a “threat of fascism” while acting as if they were engaged in ‘parliamentary skirmishes’, become an open target for violent attack.

This is how the fascists came to power, in Germany, Italy and Chile, while the constitutionalist democrats, to the last, refused to arm the millions of organized workers who could have throttled the fascists and saved democracy and preserved their own lives.

#### Fascism in Venezuela: A Mortal Threat Today

The martyred hero, Captain Guillen Araque’s warning of an imminent fascist danger in Venezuela has a powerful substantive basis. While the overt terrorist violence ebbs and flows, the underlying structural basis of fascism in the economy and society remains intact. The subterranean organizations, financing and organizing the flow of arms to fascists-in-waiting remain in place.

The political leaders of the opposition are playing a duplicitous game, constantly moving from legal forms of protest to sub-rosa complicity with the armed terrorists. There is no doubt that in any fascist putsch, the political oligarchs will emerge as the real rulers – and will share power with the leaders of the fascist organizations. In the meantime, their ‘respectability’ provides political cover; their ‘human rights’ campaigns to free incarcerated

street thugs and arsonists earn 'international media support' while serving as 'intermediaries' between the open US funding agencies, and the clandestine terrorist underground.

In measuring the scope and depth of the fascist danger, it is a mistake to simply count the number of bombers, arsonists and snipers, without including the logistical, back-up and peripheral support groups and institutional backers who sustain the overt actors,

To 'defeat fascism before it is too late', the government must realistically assess the resources, organization and operational code of the fascist command and reject the overly sanguine and 'upbeat' pronouncements emanating from some ministers, advisers and legislators.

First, the fascists are not simply a small band confined to pounding on pots and attacking municipal workers in the upper-middle class neighborhoods of Caracas for the benefit of the international and corporate media. The fascists are organized on a national basis; their members are active throughout the country.

They target vital institutions and infrastructure in numerous strategic locations.

Their strategy is centrally-controlled, their operations are decentralized.

The fascists are an organized force; their financing, arming and actions are planned. Their demonstrations are not 'spontaneous', locally-organized actions, responding to government 'repression' as depicted in the bourgeois and imperial media.

The fascists bring together different cross currents of violent groups, frequently combining ideologically-driven right-wing professionals, large-scale smuggling gangs and drug traffickers (especially in border regions), paramilitary groups, mercenaries and known felons. These are the 'frontline fascists', financed by major currency speculators, protected by elected local officials, offered 'sanctuary' by real estate investors and high-level university bureaucrats.

The fascists are both 'nationals' and internationals: They include locally paid thugs and students from upper-middle class families; paramilitary Colombian soldiers, professional mercenaries of all sorts, 'contract killers' from US 'security' outfits and clandestine US Special Forces Operatives; and fascist 'internationalists' recruited from Miami, Central America, Latin America and Europe.

The organized terrorists have two strategic sanctuaries for launching their violent operations – Bogota and Miami, where prominent political leaders, like ex-President Alvaro Uribe and US Congressional leaders provide political support.

The convergence of highly lucrative criminal economic activity and political terrorism presents a formidable double threat to the stability of the Venezuelan economy and the security of the state . . . Criminals and terrorists find a common home under the US political tent, designed to overthrow Venezuela's democratic government and crush the Bolivarian revolution of the Venezuelan people.

The backward and forward inter-linkages between criminals and terrorists inside and outside the country, between Washington senior policymakers, street drug pushers and contraband 'camels', provides the international elite mouthpieces and the muscle for street fighters

and snipers.

Terrorist targets are not chosen at 'random'; they are not products of an enraged citizenry protesting social and economic inequities. The carefully chosen targets of terrorism are the strategic programs which sustain the democratic administration; first and foremost the mass social institutions forming the base of the government. This explains why terrorists bomb health clinics for the poor, public schools and centers for adult education in the barrios, the state subsidized food stores and the public transport system. These are part of the vast, popular welfare system set up by the Bolivarian government. They are key building blocks in securing massive voter support in 18 out of the last 19 elections and popular power in the streets and communities. By destroying the social welfare infrastructure, the terrorists hope to break the social bonds between people and government.

Terrorists target the legitimate national security system: Namely, the police, National Guard, judges, public prosecutors and other authorities in charge of safeguarding citizens. The assassinations, violent attacks and threats against public officials, the fire-bombing of public buildings and public transport are designed to create a climate of fear and to demonstrate that the state is weak and incapable of protecting the everyday life of its citizens. The terrorists want to project an image of 'dual power' by seizing public spaces and blocking normal commerce... and by 'governing the streets through the gun'. Above all the terrorists want to demobilize and curtail popular counter-demonstrations by blocking streets and sniping at activists engaged in political activity in contested neighborhoods. The terrorists know they can count on their 'legal' political opposition allies to provide them with a mass base via public demonstrations, which can serve as a shield for violent assaults and a pretext for greater sabotage.

## Conclusion

Fascism, namely armed terrorism directed at violently overthrowing a democratic government, is a real and immediate threat in Venezuela. The day-to-day, ups and downs of street fighting and arson are not an adequate measure of the threat. As we have noted, the in-depth structural and organizational supports underlying the rise and growth of fascism are far more important. The challenge in Venezuela is to cut-off the economic and political basis of fascism. Unfortunately, up until recently the government has been overly sensitive to hostile criticism from overseas and domestic elites who rush to defend fascists – in the name of "democratic freedom". The government of Venezuela has enormous resources at its disposal to root out the fascist threat. Even if firm action causes an outcry from overseas liberal friends, most pro-democracy advocates believe it is incumbent upon the government to act against those opposition officials who continue to incite armed rebellion.

Most recently, there have been clear signs that the Venezuelan government, with its powerful democratic and constitutional mandate, is moving with awareness of the fascist danger and will act with determination to stamp it out in the streets and in the suites.

The National Assembly has voted to strip Congresswoman Corina Machado of her immunity as a deputy in the National Assembly so she can be prosecuted for inciting violence. The President of the National Assembly Diosdado Cabello has presented detailed documentary evidence of her role in organizing and promoting armed rebellion. Several opposition mayors, actively involved in promoting and protecting snipers, street thugs and arsonists, have been charged and arrested.

The majority of Venezuelans confronted by the rising tide of fascist violence support the punishment of these high officials engaged in or supporting sabotage. Without firm action, Venezuelan intelligence agencies as well as the average citizen agree that these 'opposition' politicians will continue to promote violence and provide sanctuary for paramilitary assassins.

The government has realized that they are engaged in a real war, planned by a centralized leadership and executed by decentralized operatives. Legislative leaders are coming to grips with the political psychology of fascism, which interprets Presidential offers of political conciliation and judicial leniency as weakness to be exploited by further violence.

The most significant advance toward stopping the fascist threat lies in the government's recognition of the links between the parliamentary and business elite and the fascist terrorists: financial speculators, smugglers and big-time hoarders of food and other essential commodities are all part and parcel of the same fascist drive for power together with the terrorists who bomb public food markets and attack the trucks transporting food to the poor neighborhoods. One revolutionary worker said to me after a street skirmish: "Por la razon y la fuerza no pasaran!"(Through reason and force they will be defeated)...

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