

Freedom is slavery, popular support is authoritarianism

The Mainstream Media's double-speak

By [Lizzie Phelan](#)

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A recent article by [The Washington Post by Juan Forero](#) entitled Latin America's new authoritarians is just the latest example of how the imperialist's media machine is relentlessly engaged in media warfare against sovereign nations in the South, in order to fertilise the ground for new or increased economic and military aggression against them. Such psy-op campaigns also seek to influence events on the ground in target nations, in this case in Venezuela ahead of the October elections where all signs point to another resounding victory for current President Hugo Chávez Frías.

The article is part of the psychological wing of what Nicaraguan based website [tortilla con sal](#) terms the West's "War on Humanity" in order to convince the world of the moral superiority of the minority (the Western elite/imperialists) over the majority so as to minimise the threat of a mass organised effort to challenge that minority's increasingly doomed attempts to achieve total global hegemony.

Their morals, the minority argues through its vast propaganda network which bombard the majority, are superior because they are universal and therefore must be defended and achieved regardless of the cost, including that of the destruction of entire nations, let alone millions upon millions of lives, whose governments stand in the way, Libya being the most recent example.

Inconvenient facts like the unrivalled criminal record of the imperialists powers who claim moral superiority, must relentlessly be legitimised, through the imperialist's media (including *The Washington Post*) and entertainment industry portrayal of NATO crimes as acts of freedom, while acts of resistance and self-defence by their adversaries which undermine that claim to moral superiority and the total hegemony agenda, are presented as crimes against mankind.

And so looking through Forero's lens, the sovereign nations of Latin America, that are consolidating their freedom from western domination through the continent's growing unification, are the emerging bogey man that the US government should do something about.

His hook is *Human Rights Watch's* recent onslaught against Venezuela in their report entitled *Tightening the Grip* which as the name screams out is a document arguing that Chavez has become more authoritarian than ever.

And in one fell swoop Forero takes all of the popularly elected leaders of sovereign, progressive nations on the continent down with the report on Chavez, with focus on those with the greatest support: Ecuador's Rafael Correa and Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega.

Forero/HRW and the evil Venezuelan judiciary straw-man

In Venezuela the crux of the article's venom, in line with the *HRW* report, is aimed at the country's judicial system. Neither the article nor the report make mention of the Venezuelan government's recently published plan for the next six years which has a section entirely devoted to the judicial system which outlines the government's intention to tackle that system's "racist and classist character...and impunity". In the west such admissions only come after lengthy, meek and costly public inquiries. Indeed those governments would never dream of acknowledging the racism, classicism and rife impunity so blatant in their own systems without, for example, scores of embarrassing racist murders, and sustained public pressure by victims' families as happened when a public inquiry "found" that the British police were institutionally racist in the wake of the scandalous trial of Stephen Lawrence's murderers.

To make his case Forero cites the cases of two former judges who have accused the Venezuelan government of rigging the judicial system. Top government officials, he says would call ex-magistrate, Eladio Aponte who has since sought exile in the US, and ask him for "favours". Forero conveniently fails to inform the reader that Aponte was dismissed from his [post because he faces charges of accepting money from drugs traffickers](#) and providing now jailed infamous drugs baron Walid Makled with an identity card. During Makled's trial he alleged that he paid approximately \$70,000 to Aponte. Nor does the article mention that Aponte first fled to Costa Rica to evade trial, from where he travelled to the US in a US Drug Enforcement Administration plane, no less. Aponte has denied the allegations but provided no evidence to support his denial. The Venezuelan authorities have said they will present the evidence of their charges against Aponte.

Forero devotes just one sentence to mentioning that former judge Maria Lourdes Afiuni, is facing trial after having "infuriated Chavez with one of her rulings". If more than 23 words had been devoted to the case of Afiuni than perhaps some facts would have got in the way of a good story, as the old adage goes. Because Afiuni, after making a ruling where no prosecutors were present (contrary to the law) that Eligio Cedeño, a financier who was charged with embezzling millions of dollars and playing a role in other huge cases of corruption, be set free immediately actually escorted him out of the courtroom and saw him off onto a motorcycle where he began his escape ending up finally in Miami. Regardless of the legality of Afiuni's ruling, she unilaterally violated the normal procedure of sending the defendant to the court's detention facility while the administrative procedures regarding his release were completed. It is that scandal of such grave proportions that infuriated the Venezuelan public and government, and for that that Afiuni is facing trial.

The *Washington Post* includes a disclaimer paragraph, conceding that "pro-American" leaders, like in Colombia have "weakened democratic governance". So Colombia is a weak democracy but Venezuela, Nicaragua and Ecuador are authoritarian regimes? This is another total inverse of the reality. Colombia, the continent's (and one of the world's) top recipients of US military aid, boasting access to seven US military bases, currently detains approximately [5,700 political prisoners](#) and has an eye-watering [3.6 million internal refugees](#). Such a bleak situation is totally incomparable with the reality in non-US client states like those *The Washington Post* and *HRW* have focused their ire on.

And indeed the most abysmal picture globally in terms of domestic abuse of the judicial system is at the hands of the US regime.

Unlike in Venezuela, Nicaragua and Ecuador, in the US you can be detained indefinitely without charge. [One in every 48 men of working age are behind bars](#) and that figure excludes tens of thousands of immigrants facing deportation, people awaiting sentencing. The US imprisons [five times more](#) people than Venezuela, six times more than Nicaragua and eight times more than Ecuador. While, the US tops the list of global prison population rates, the other three are far behind at number 98, 122 and 160 respectively.

Conditions inside US prisons are unrivalled, especially given that some 2.3 million people squander in them. Sexual abuse rates are staggering and corporations use inmates as cheap – to – free sources of labour. This is 21st century systematic slavery in the “developed” world and such a dangerous phenomenon means that there is actually a huge monetary incentive for the corporate elite which pull the strings of the US political system, to incarcerate more and more.

While Venezuela has pledged to tackle the racist character of its judicial system, and has supported the creation of an array of groups of African descent which will act as pressure groups to ensure that the struggle against racism progresses, the US has historically cracked down on African-American organizations that genuinely strive for such progress. There is nowhere on this planet where the treatment of Black people is worse than at the hands of the US regime, as exemplified by the fact that of the US’ 2.3 million inmates, [46 per cent are Black](#), despite that Black people make up just 13 per cent of the US population.

But neither *The Washington Post* or *HRW* dedicate a report to scrutinising the status of human rights in the US as they do with their sexy “*Tightening the Grip*” headline for Venezuela and mention of the US’ domestic abuses are buried in their annual world reports. That is left every year [for the Chinese to do](#).

While *HRW* has been busying itself propagandising for the fall of the Syrian government on the back of a bunch of shaky youtube videos purporting to show Syrian security forces using weapons against peaceful protesters, regarding which head of the UN Human Rights Commission investigating Syria, [Paulo Pinheiro said](#): “YouTube isn’t a reliable means of investigation... There is manipulation of the media”, there is no way it would mount a campaign for US regime change on the back of [this very real video](#), which only adds to the reams before it, of US police opening fire on unarmed protesters in California’s city of Anaheim.

Popular leader or repressive authoritarian?

Continuing with this drive to divert attention from who the greatest enemies of humanity are, the undertone of Forero’s article is that the Venezuelan masses who back Chavez are somehow not in full control of their mental capacities, and this therefore is another sign of how the power hungry Venezuelan government are hoodwinking its people.

And so he quotes one Venezuelan judge who talks about his loyalty to Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution and Chavez, as an example of how supporters of Chavez are everywhere, including in the country’s most important institutions. The ridiculous logic seems to be that popularity is dangerous because with people everywhere who support the government, there will be less people to stand in the way of its agenda, regardless of

whether that agenda is to improve the lot of all Venezuelans as it has proven hitherto to have done.

Forero patronisingly portrays the masses of poor Venezuelans like sheep under the spell of a “captivating, messianic leader,” as though they support Chavez for no other reason than being brainwashed by his charisma. Even more abhorrent, is the use of academic Javier Corrales, who authored a book about Chavez with the overtly racist title *Dragon in the Tropics*, as a source to add to the shrill of voices claiming that Chavez is abusing his popularity.

Never mind then that that popularity is a direct result of the facts that since Chavez won his first election in 1999, that country which had one of the world’s widest gaps between rich and poor has seen [poverty reduced by more than 50 per cent](#), illiteracy eradicated, tens of millions now able to access free health care, millions more participating in higher education for free, the creation of tens of thousands of communal councils that give the population the opportunity to *participate* in the political system, the emergence of 200,000 cooperatives, the emergence of an array of women’s, indigenous and as mentioned African descendant organisations and much more. These are the reasons why, like Nicaragua’s President Daniel Ortega, when Chavez speaks in open squares, something which the imperialists could never dare to dream of, millions flock to hear him speak. This is why they came again in their millions to defend him from the failed US backed coup in 2002 and this is why they repeatedly vote for him in their millions.

Far from consolidating power in few hands, both Nicaragua and Venezuela are steadily moving to strengthen and expand the organs of direct democracy. Venezuela’s communal council’s were cited above, while in Nicaragua the Citizen’s Power model continues to improve the ways in which local communities can make decisions about how government money is spent in their municipalities. The connection between that model and the recent statistics which showed the FSLN had managed to halve extreme poverty in the second poorest country in the Americas after Haiti, is clear. It is local people who know best the needs of their community and as such it is them who decide where government investment should be prioritised for huge infrastructure development, i.e. road, house, roof and electricity development, and social initiatives which have been targeted particularly at enabling Nicaragua’s poorest women to become self-sufficient. The ruling FSLN party has also expanded the number of local government representatives, while not increasing the budget for their salaries. This is a move which ensures more balanced representation and will cut the salary of civil servants, to improve the monetary/social service incentive of such a position in favour of the latter.

Addressing the material and spiritual needs of the poor and marginalised majority as the nations attacked by Forero have done and are doing, is key to ensuring that they enjoy the conditions that enable them to participate in democracy building. Meanwhile, in the US and England, for example, the idea that citizens should be able to have more say over policies that affect their local communities over and above choosing from two or three parties that all represent the same corporate interests every three or four years, which is really no say at all, is unheard of.

In Libya, the west’s preferred style of “democracy” has arrived on the back of white phosphorous and Tomahawk cruise missiles, at the expense of the system of direct democracy that was being built there, not to mention tens of thousands of lives, millions of livelihoods, stability and a level of development that brought the Libyan people the highest

standard of living in Africa.

Unmasking the missionary

But *HRW* has a track record of preferring to propagandise in favour of destroying such progress in countries where the balance of power is not in the favour of the NATO powers.

Since its founding in 1978 as *Helsinki Watch* by the *Ford Foundation*, *HRW* has consistently promoted humanitarian intervention in countries viewed as adversaries by the west. Most recently in Libya, *HRW* was a signatory to the document that led to Libya's suspension from the UN Human Rights Council, [in violation of the UN's own procedures](#), and the subsequent Security Council Resolutions that led to nine months of airstrikes supported by approximately 40 NATO countries.

Amidst its long and dirty history, *HRW* in 2010 [announced that they would be accepting \\$100 million](#) from George Soros who is the honey-pot behind some of the US' most powerful think-tanks, lobby groups and NGOs and therefore enjoys considerable clout in influencing the US' imperialist foreign policy.

Others amongst *HRW*'s long list of malignant backers include the Sandler Foundation which has given [approximately \\$30 million to the group](#). The foundation is the child of Marion and Herb Sandler who themselves have been key donors of Democrats and helped found a number of think-tanks and lobby groups including the Center for American Progress, also funded by Soros and headed by John Podesta, White House chief of staff under President Clinton. It is therefore unsurprising that the foundation has consistently promoted US meddling in the South including supporting the KONY2012 saga that called for military intervention in Uganda on an entirely bogus pretext.

In short, if you follow the money of the NATO countries vast network of think-tanks, lobbyists, NGOs, newspapers, news websites, news channels, music and film industry, that of *The Washington Post* and *HRW* included, it can almost always be traced back to a corporate or "philanthropic" elite that have a vested interest in promoting NATO countries global hegemony agenda.

I have noticed some surprise from people who discover the role of organisations like *HRW* and *Amnesty International*. The humanitarian-intervention discourse however is perhaps one of the oldest tricks in western empire's book, but it has only evolved its disguise. This *Global Research* article was right to call western NGOs modern ["Missionaries of Empire"](#) or as *Black Agenda Report* labelled *HRW*, ["Human Rights Warriors for Empire"](#). Accounts of the first English presence in Africa, like those given in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, show the insidious way in which missionaries following the first carve up of Africa at the Berlin Conference would embed themselves in African communities and prey on some points of tension as an opportunity to promote the idea to minority sections of those communities that their grievances with their community were examples of suffering of the gravest degree, the cause of which was the moral backwardness of their society and could be solved if they embraced the only correct moral path, the English church. This splitting of the community meant that by the time the disastrous consequences became clear to all, and true suffering of the gravest degree felt, it was too late.

NGOs operate in much the same way today, facilitating imperial designs which only bring war, instability and misery first to the majority people's of the South behind the mask of

those people's "human rights". It is a mask however that is being ripped off, first with the call by ALBA for member countries to expel US AID and its representatives, and then this week with Russian President Vladimir Putin signing a bill that will make all NGO's that receive external funding register as foreign agents, and most recently with Chavez pulling Venezuela out of the OAS' Inter-American Human Rights Court. The OAS is of course another tool of western domination of the region, a body that is supposed to promote democracy is itself undemocratic and continues to violate the majority will of its members to end the criminal blockade on Cuba.

Chavez' decision to withdraw, he said, came, "out of dignity, and we accuse them before the world of being unfit to call themselves a human rights group." It is not unheard of for such groups to be barred by governments in the South from their countries when they face actual military aggression. But the war against such sovereign countries begins long before direct military action. It begins in articles such as Forero's.

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