

Venezuela Grants Snowden Asylum

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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On July 6, [Russia Today](#) headlined " 'Free from imperial persecution:' Venezuela offers Snowden asylum."

Days earlier, President Nicolas Maduro said asylum would be "seriously" considered if sought. Snowden deserves a "humanitarian medal," he added.

"If this young man is punished, nobody in the world will ever dare to tell the truth," he stressed.

He's a man of his word. It's official. Maduro granted Snowden asylum. He did so on Venezuela's Day of Independence.

On April 10, 1810, the First Republic of Venezuela was established. Venezuela's War of Independence began.

On July 5, 1811, Venezuela declared independence. Spanish colonial rule ended.

Venezuela was its first American colony to break free. Doing so reflected Bolivar's vision. He liberated half of South America. He advocated using national wealth responsibly, equitably and fairly.

He fought against what he called the imperial curse "to plague Latin America with misery in the name of liberty."

Chavez was his modern-day incarnation. Maduro carries his torch. Doing so responsibly matters most. Hopefully he's up to the challenge.

Chavez called him Venezuela's most capable administrator and politician. His leadership experience prepared him well. His credentials are impeccable.

He's ideologically left of center. He's a former union leader, legislator, National Assembly speaker, foreign minister, and vice president. On April 19, 2013, he succeed Chavez as president.

Venezuela's independence was short-lived. It lasted until July 25, 1812. Chavez restored Bolivarianism. It's institutionalized. It benefits all Venezuelans. It does so equitably and fairly.

Americans are cheated. They're deprived. They're denied. They're persecuted. State terror is policy. Police state justice targets challengers.

Neoliberal harshness punishes millions. Americans get force-fed austerity, growing poverty,

high unemployment, and unaddressed homelessness and hunger.

They get government of, by and for wealth, power and privilege alone. They're targeted for supporting right over wrong.

Venezuelans enjoy government of, by and for everyone. National wealth is equitably shared. On July 5, Maduro acted responsibly, saying:

"As head of state and of government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, I have decided to offer humanitarian asylum to the young American Edward Snowden."

"To be independent, we must feel it. We must exercise our independence and sovereignty. Our discourses are meaningless if they aren't exercised with force at the national level."

"I announce to the friendly governments of the world that we have decided to offer this statute of international humanitarian law to protect the young Snowden from the persecution that has been unleashed from the most powerful empire in the world."

"Let's ask ourselves: who violated international law? A young man who decided, in an act of rebellion, to tell the truth of the espionage of the United States against the world? Or the government of the United States, the power of the imperialist elites, who spied on it?"

"Who is the guilty one," he added. "A young man who denounces war plans, or the US government which launches bombs and arms the terrorist Syrian opposition against the people and legitimate president, Bashar al-Assad?"

Venezuela isn't alone. Bolivia suggested asylum would be granted. On Friday, Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega said he'll "gladly receive Snowden."

"We are open, respectful of the right to asylum, and it is clear that if circumstances permit it, we would receive Snowden with pleasure and give him asylum here in Nicaragua," he said.

On July 4, USASUR countries adopted the [Cochabamba Declaration](#).

Presidents of Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela, as well as delegations from Brazil, Chile and Peru reacted to France, Italy, Portugal and Spain denying Evo Morales airspace and landing rights.

Their Declaration states:

"Given the situation that the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Evo Morales, was subjected to by the governments of France, Portugal, Italy and Spain, we denounce before the international community and various international organizations:

- The flagrant violation of international treaties governing peaceful coexistence, solidarity and cooperation between our states, that took place is an unusual act,

unfriendly and hostile, configuring an unlawful act that affects freedom of movement and displacement of a head of state and his delegation.

- The abuse and neocolonial practices that still exist on our planet in the XXI century.
- The lack of transparency about the motivations of policy decisions that prevented air traffic for the Bolivian presidential vessel and its president.
- The injury suffered by President Evo Morales, which offends not only the Bolivian people but all our nations.
- The illegal spying practices that threaten the rights of citizens and friendly coexistence among nations.”

“In view of these denunciations, we are convinced that the process of building the Patria Grande (Integrated Latin America) to which we are committed must be consolidated with full respect for the sovereignty and independence of our peoples, without interference from global hegemonic powers, conquering the old practices of imposing first and second class.(status on) countries.”

“The men and women heads of state and governments of countries of the Union of South American Nations, gathered in Cochabamba on July 4, 2013:

(1) We declare that the unacceptable restriction on the freedom of President Evo Morales, making virtually him a hostage, is a rights violation of not only the Bolivian people but of all countries and peoples of Latin America and sets a dangerous precedent for existing international law.

(2) We reject the actions that clearly violate norms and principles of international law, the inviolability of the heads of state.

(3) We call on the governments of France, Portugal, Italy and Spain to explain the reasons for the decision to prevent the presidential plane from the Plurinational State of Bolivia from overflying through its airspace.

(4) Similarly, we urge the governments of France, Portugal, Italy and Spain present the corresponding public apologies for the serious incidents that occurred.

(5) We support the complaint filed by the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for the serious violation of human rights and specific endangerment of the life of President Evo Morales; we also support the right of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to take all actions it deems necessary to the courts and relevant agencies.

(6) We agreed to form a monitoring committee, entrusting the task to our foreign ministries to perform the actions necessary to shed light on the facts.”

“Finally, in the spirit of the principles set forth in the treaty establishing UNASUR, we urge all the heads of state of the union to stand by (accompany) this declaration.

Similarly, we call on the United Nations and regional organizations that have not done so yet, to make a pronouncement on this unjustifiable and arbitrary

event.

Cochabamba, July 4, 2013”

On Friday, Maduro accused CIA officials of “order(ing) to the air traffic authorities, which gave the alert that Snowden was going in (Morales’) plane.”

He said Washington sent an extradition request. It came while Evo Morales was still in Moscow. Venezuela rejected it. Maduro was blunt and unequivocal saying:

Washington has “no moral authority to request the extradition of a young man who exposed the illegality under which the Pentagon, the CIA and the power of the US work. I reject any request they are making for extradition.”

He justifiably wants Luis Posada Carriles extradited. He conspired with Orlando Bosch. They’re responsible for downing Cubana flight 455. In 1976, all 78 passengers aboard died.

Bosch died in April 2011. Carriles remains free in Miami. He’s a former CIA operative. He admitted responsibility for numerous terrorist attacks. Washington protects him. It rejects Venezuela’s request for justice.

Bolivia got America’s extradition request. Its Foreign Ministry called it “strange, illegal and unfounded.”

At the same time, Morales threatened to expel US diplomats and close Washington’s embassy, saying:

“We don’t need the pretext of cooperation and diplomatic relations so that they can come and spy on us.”

Washington unjustifiably claims Snowden “unlawfully released classified information and documents to international media outlets.”

“The United States seeks Snowden’s provisional arrest should Snowden seek to travel to or transit through Venezuela. Snowden is a flight risk because of the substantial charges he is facing and his current and active attempts to remain a fugitive.”

It explained charges against him. They include:

- “Theft of Government Property
- Unauthorized Communication of National Defense

Information (and)

- Willful Communication of Classified Intelligence Information to an Unauthorized Person.”

Each charge carries a maximum sentence of 10 years imprisonment and \$250,000 fine.

Snowden's called "a fugitive who is currently in Russia. It urged Venezuela to arrest and hold him in custody. It wants items he has seized.

Maduro rejected Washington's charges. He did so responsibly. He exposed lawless NSA spying. He told the truth, Maduro said.

He deserves his just reward. He's free at last. Or is he? Traveling safely to Venezuela won't be easy. His flight route's important.

Attempting to overfly EU countries risks trouble. Flying east perhaps avoids it. A potentially safe route might be Moscow to Hong Kong, Beijing or Shanghai, then Caracas.

He needs proper travel documents. Without identity papers, they'll him cross international borders legally.

Russia must approve. So must an airline carrier. Private non-commercial travel's simpler. At issue is who'll cover costs either way. Traveling from Moscow to Caracas isn't cheap.

Commercial flights are expensive. Cost exceeds \$1,000. Who'll pay if Snowden can't? Wherever he goes, he's unsafe. Washington's long arm threatens him. Obama wants him silenced, imprisoned or dead. Snowden knows and said so.

He'll live every free day ahead like his last. Hopefully he'll avoid US injustice. He deserves his just reward.

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