

Venezuela: Socialists Prepare for Party Congress

By [Federico Fuentes](#)

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean](#)

Global Research, November 19, 2009

[Green Left Weekly](#) 19 November 2009

(November 11th) — Activists from the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) are preparing for the party's second congress, scheduled to start on November 21.

Led by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, the PSUV, initiated in 2007, has become the mass party of the Venezuelan revolution with a membership base of 7 million people.

On November 15, active PSUV members will vote on delegates to the congress. The delegate selection process has been marked by growing discontent among members over unclear and ever-changing rules — and internal jostling for positions.

In some cases, frustration over such disputes has led to abstention and decreasing participation by the membership. In others, it has sparked rebellion from the ranks.

A big part of the debate is over what sort of party the PSUV should be — an electoral machine or a revolutionary organization.

Chavez called for the formation of the PSUV in December 2006 after his landslide re-election on a platform of advancing the revolution towards socialism. In mid-2007, a mass membership drive took place.

The party has become an important outlet for millions who wish to see unity among pro-revolution forces.

The PSUV held its founding congress in early 2008. About 1600 delegates elected from local "battalions" (300 members selected by the national leadership on a geographical basis) approved two documents: a party program and document of principles.

No statutes were approved due to differences over what the party's structure should be.

This year, the PSUV began a process of restructure. Party militants were called upon in August to form "patrols", based on the sectoral and territorial grassroots units that successfully campaigned in the February 15 referendum to allow all elected officials to stand for re-election.

At a territorial level, patrols are made up of 20-30 self-selected activists who lived in the same neighborhood. In the workplace, 10-20 workers can form patrols.

Officially, more than 105,000 territorial patrols and some 15,000 workplace patrols have been created. However, many believe these numbers are inflated due to some sections of the party creating fake patrols to gain votes and influence.

In Falcon state, about 300 worker patrols have been established. A source in the regional Workers' Socialist Front of the PSUV said 225 of these were initiated by the local police force, with name and signatures of activists submitted in the same handwriting.

Only 57,767 territorial and 6,279 worker patrols have proposed candidates for delegates to the congress. Some of these never met to discuss and nominate candidates, and some had their details usurped by others to nominate themselves or allies.

Participation was also affected by the fact that norms for proposing candidates were ambiguous. They changed at least four times during the week set aside for patrols to nominate candidates.

The initial norms meant the final list of candidates for delegate positions would be decided by regional leaderships. Also regional vice presidents, appointed by the national leadership, were to handpick the electoral commissions.

In Caracas, an assembly of local delegates rebelled. They rejected the appointed commission and voted for a new one made up of local activists not standing as candidates and who did not have government or party leadership positions.

Miranda activists told Green Left Weekly that in some areas, patrols refused outright to even discuss the possibility of any local councilors being nominated as delegates due to their poor track record.

The widespread protests against the norms, included from within the PSUV national leadership, and a poor vote for many candidates seen as tied to various power blocs, resulted in norms being changed so all those nominated as candidates for delegate positions could stand for delegate elections.

The PSUV national leadership has said proposed party statutes, along with other documents, will not be presented until the congress itself.

With delegates not being elected on the basis of positions on documents presented to the congress, many view the delegate elections as initial campaigning for pre-selection for PSUV candidates for National Assembly elections in late 2010.

The battle over whether the PSUV will be a revolutionary party or an electoral vehicle reflects a deeper struggle over the direction of Venezuela's revolution, which has significantly decreased poverty and introduced various experiments in popular power.

Will the revolution continue its radical path towards socialism or will this path be blocked by the vested interests of various power blocs within the state and also the PSUV?

This struggle will continue at the congress.

The original source of this article is [Green Left Weekly](#)
Copyright © [Federico Fuentes](#), [Green Left Weekly](#), 2009

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

Become a Member of Global Research

Articles by: [Federico Fuentes](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca