



## THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

### ADDRESSED TO THE VENEZUELAN AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES, concerned over the dangerous institutional, political, social and economic situation in the nation, estimate that it is our duty to pronounce ourselves over the reestablishment of peace based on the provisions in the Constitution of the republic and the rule of law in force.

For the academies the results of recent surveys are a reason for great concern since they reflect an increase in poverty in Venezuela that purportedly affects 82% of the population, half of which falls under the category of extreme poverty. A consequence of flawed economic policies implemented throughout several decades which have led to the sustained devaluation of the local currency and the highest inflation rate in the world in the past few years, to the extent that the basic family basket in May reached almost one million five hundred thousand bolivars (21.5 times the minimum wage). This makes it almost impossible for Venezuelan families to survive, neither the poor people existing in the past nor the new poor people of now.

The increase in child and maternal mortality associated to the serious lack of food and to poverty, as well as the noticeable lack of medicines and hospital services, which is close to 85%, the reappearance of diseases eradicated a long time ago such as diphtheria, or for an extended time under control such as malaria and tuberculosis, are part of a state of affairs that point to a pronounced social deterioration that cannot be sustained.

These problems are at the root of the popular protests which have been so forceful all over the nation since last April in exercising the constitutional right to peaceful manifestation or protest, expressed in article 68 of our Magna Carta.

The National Academies categorically reject the response by the national branch of executive power to said manifestations, expressed through threatening declarations and behaviors by government officials as well as the brutal and excessive repression by the National Bolivarian Guard, the National Bolivarian Police force and acts by irregular armed corps, all of which have left a tragic balance of over 80 deaths –especially of young persons and minors – and thousands of civilians who have been injured, arrested or detained. Of these latter, several hundreds have been submitted to military courts and have been convicted, openly contravening the Constitution and the international treaties Venezuela as a signatory is compelled to comply with, which prohibit the use of lethal weapons to control public protests as well as military jurisdictions in cases against

civilians. We likewise reject the illegal raids and the abuses and outrages committed by state security corps. These events, which seem to be oriented towards comprising a repressive State, that violates the constitution in force, have been firmly denounced by the Catholic Church and other national and international civil and religious entities.

Coupled to the social motivations that induced the initial protests in recent weeks are claims against the unconstitutional proposals by the national branch of the executive power that is forcing a constitutional change divorced from the nation's current problems by means of a spurious communal and sectorial-based national constituent assembly without conducting a priori consultation referendum. The National Academies protest this call not only because it violates the current constitutional norms in this subject matter but because it annuls the principle of universal, direct and secret vote in force in Venezuela since seven decades.

The statement by the president of the Republic on Tuesday June 27 announcing the use of bullets if the votes do not favor the official stance constitute an unacceptable threat to peaceful political cohabitation and a fundamental democratic principle which is alternation at the helm of the State, by virtue whereof, we repudiate and recall that the weapons of the Republic must be used to defend the homeland and not for a minority to try and impose its will over the others by means of violence.

We also repeal the decisions by the questionable judiciary power which, through multiple sentences, has reached the extreme of taking over attributions of the national assembly aiming to transfer constitutional competencies from other State powers to the national executive, which would concentrate these powers in one single person or body, as occurs in dictatorial regimes.

We endorse the declarations and actions of official agencies and public organizations such as the national assembly, the attorney general of the republic, political parties and organizations fighting for democracy, multiple civilian agencies and experts in constitutional law who, invoking articles 333 and 350 of the constitution in force, have categorically manifested their position against the rupture of the constitutional order perpetrated by the executive power, backed and with the collaboration of the judiciary power.

For all these reasons, during these complex times in the republic, the National Academies make a call to cease the repression and for the public powers to strictly adhere to the tenets in the constitution, legality and institutionalism. Only thus can citizen cohabitation become normal again; the abandoned goals of social and economic wellbeing be taken up once more as well as the peaceful construction of a more promising future for all, based on the universal principles of democracy and freedom and respect for human rights.

In Caracas, on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2017.

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