



Caracas, February 20, 2003

Honorable  
Dr. Condoleezza Rice  
**National Security Advisor**  
The White House  
Washington, DC

**Re: Venezuelan Stanford Alumni Association  
The Venezuelan Situation**

Honorable Dr. Rice:

We respectfully write to you on behalf of the more than 300 strong Venezuelan Stanford Alumni Association. We are proud to be part of the Stanford community and we feel privileged to see a distinguished member of the Stanford family in a leadership role as National Security Advisor.

We would like to take advantage of your important position to share our concerns about the rapidly deteriorating Venezuelan situation, hoping that your insights and your experience will lend support to our situation and accelerate the resolution of the existing crisis.

President Chavez' government has been incapable of starting to solve our country's key problems. If anything, it has only made things worse. Its use of confrontational language and questionable legality has encouraged a violent climate, making this country - right in the United States' backyard - a potential source of instability in the Latin American region. Will Mr. Chavez be like Mr. Castro, where the world failed to see and deal with a real danger in time?

We are convinced that this is a Venezuelan problem and that we must solve it ourselves, but we want to benefit from your experience and advice. We know that many other hot-spots in the world occupy your attention, but Venezuela also deserves immediate attention.

We would like to share our views with you and offer the resources of the Venezuelan Stanford community to help get Venezuela back on track towards the future of peace, democracy and prosperity we all desire for our country.

### **The Situation**

Venezuela is in the midst of a terrible crisis. Even though this crisis is mainly political one it entails huge economic and social costs. We are also seeing increasing violence that may lead to an extremely volatile situation.

President Chavez is unwilling to accept an early electoral process that will prove the erosion of his original popular support. The massive turnout of registered voters on February 2nd shows that the majority of the population opposes Chavez' regime. Opposition is peacefully demanding an accelerated electoral process to restore true democracy in Venezuela.

Venezuela is no longer exporting oil. The US has already felt the effects of this. A vast majority of oil workers still support the *National Work Stoppage*. More than 12,000 highly qualified professionals have been fired (out of 35,000) and are being replaced by military personnel, supporters of the regime and foreign mercenaries from countries like Libya, Cuba, India, and Pakistan. As a result, oil and gas shortages are commonplace.

Venezuela's economy is being systematically destroyed. Government policies have impoverished the population and are driving private industry out of business. Recent actions of questionable legality used against Coca Cola and Polar, followed by administrative measures against the four major private TV broadcasters, are clear indicators that the regime is moving away from a market-oriented economy toward a centrally controlled one.

Transnational companies in Venezuela are in serious danger. Foreign exchange controls have been put in place. These mechanisms will be used to bring private industry to its knees and invite further sources of corruption.

Venezuelan democracy is at stake. Laws set to be approved by the Chavez controlled National Assembly are aimed at also putting the Supreme Court, Electoral Council and private media under Mr. Chavez' control. This will slam the door shut on democratic dissent and liquidate any vestige of civil liberties.

### **The Complications**

The Chavez regime consistently lies. Mistrust and increased radicalization are delaying possible solutions to the crisis. The government and the opposition are moving toward a head-on collision. The escalating confrontation diverts energy and attention from the reconstruction of the country.

In addition, the war against terror and world events in Iraq and the Middle East, make it difficult for you to deal with the Venezuelan situation at an early stage.

### **Our fears**

Totalitarianism. Independent democratic institutions (Congress, Supreme Court, Attorney General, Comptroller, Ombudsman and Armed Forces) that should provide checks and balances to a strong Executive branch no longer exist. These institutions are subservient to Mr. Chavez' Cuban-style revolutionary plan. We fear that intimidation, violence, judicial terrorism, brute force and tyrannical power will soon be prevalent in our nation.

Terrorism. The regime has consistently shown close ties with terrorist organizations and governments. Internationally, we fear that Venezuela may become a safe haven for terrorists and a source of funds for organizations that threaten world peace. Internally, we fear that the involvement of the government in terrorist acts, and its supply of weapons, battle training, and police and judicial coverage to violent groups, will render those fighting for true democracy defenseless.

Our oil industry. PDVSA is rapidly losing its operational, technological and human resource strengths. We fear that it will become a key weapon in both the national and international political agendas of Mr. Chavez' regime instead of preserving its traditional role of maximizing profits as a means of improving the quality of life of our people.

Corruption. Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. We fear that the lack of independence and autonomy of the different government institutions (e.g. Legislative, Judicial, Military and Central Bank) and the proliferation of discretionary control and regulation will result in the destruction of what is left of our nation's moral fiber.

Time is of essence. We fear that the threat is imminent.

### **What we want**

We need to create alliances to produce democratic results, promote peace and eliminate violence in our country. We want this *now*; next month may be too late.

We need *your* help. We want your experience and resources to be put to work to keep this contest clean, balanced and fair.

We need the support of the United States. The United States has been the foremost defender of the democratic system in recent decades. We want Venezuela to continue to exist as a true democracy.

Venezuela must remain the peaceful nation it has always been. It must continue to be a vital member of the free-economy world. Venezuela should not be a problem for the world. We offer the resources of the Venezuelan Stanford community to this effect. We are available to meet with you at your convenience.

On behalf of the Venezuelan Stanford community, we wish you well in your efforts to promote peace, justice and security throughout the world.

Respectfully yours,

Odila Rubin de Ayala  
President

Nicolás Jove  
Vice-president

Andres Olavarria  
Treasurer

Jacobo Rubinstein  
Director

Arno Sinram  
Director

Aurelio Useche  
Director

Pedro F. Arroyo  
Director