

**THE CHÁVEZ  
REGIME:  
FOSTERING  
ANTI-SEMITISM AND SUPPORTING  
RADICAL ISLAM**



**A SPECIAL REPORT BY THE  
ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE**

**THE CHÁVEZ REGIME:  
FOSTERING ANTI-SEMITISM AND  
SUPPORTING RADICAL ISLAM**

**PART ONE: ANALYSIS**

*Introduction* **1**

*Hugo Chávez and Venezuela Today* **2**

*Summary* **4**

**PART TWO: DOCUMENTATION**

*The Chávez Government's Anti-Imperialist,  
Anti-Zionist and Anti-Semitic Rhetoric* **5**

*Anti-Semitism in Government-Sponsored Media* **10**

*Anti-Semitic Demonstrations and Vandalism* **16**

*Chávez's Allies* **18**

*Hezbollah Latin America* **21**

*Responses of the Venezuelan Jewish Community* **22**

*Anti-Defamation League Response* **25**

**APPENDIX**

*Background: The Rise of Hugo Chávez* **27**

*Images courtesy of  
The Confederation of Israelite Associations of Venezuela (CAIV)*

## **PART ONE: ANALYSIS**

### **Introduction**

With his September appearance in New York in front of the United Nations General Assembly as only the latest episode in his ideological march, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has situated himself in direct opposition to the United States and much of the West, billing himself as the successor to Fidel Castro — the next anti-imperialist leader of Latin America. Spurred on by both Venezuela's OPEC relationships and his hatred of Western capitalism, Chávez has fallen into political step with some of the most dangerous players in the Middle East and in doing so has become an increasingly outspoken detractor of the State of Israel.

Hugo Chávez rose to power through Venezuela's military with a vision of anti-capitalist "Bolivarian" reforms. Riding a tide of anger after the 1989 El Caracazo riots, during which Venezuelan government security forces killed hundreds of citizens in Caracas protesting the country's dire economic situation, Chávez staged a coup attempt in 1992. While unsuccessful, the effort and Chávez's subsequent national exposure set the stage for his successful presidential run in 1998. Once in power, Chávez pursued an aggressive socialist agenda during which he transformed the country's legislature and removed the power of political opponents. Chávez faced a coup attempt of his own in 2002 and blamed the unsuccessful episode on the United States, further cementing his hatred of America and his growing alliances with the West's enemies in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Hugo Chávez's anti-Zionism hit a peak during the July-August 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war when he vehemently condemned Israel's military operations in Lebanon and voiced solidarity with Hezbollah and its backers in Damascus and Tehran. Venezuela under Chávez has become an increasingly uncomfortable place to live for the country's significant Jewish population. The government's anti-Zionism has developed a distinctly anti-Semitic flavor and is spilling over into presidential rhetoric, government-sponsored media, and local government. When the highest levels of government are complicit in such intolerance, it is no surprise that instances of vandalism and intimidation of Jewish institutions and neighborhoods have been distinctly on the rise.

The Chávez regime has now aligned itself with countries and movements that are a verifiable threat to Israel and Jewry worldwide. This report details Hugo Chávez's rise to power, his government's increasing anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, and a catalogue of the ideology's present-day manifestations.

## Hugo Chávez and Venezuela Today

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez is capturing world headlines promoting his anti-imperialist agenda. Much has also been reported on his disapproval of the Bush administration's foreign policy. A close ally of the United States, Israel has become a target of verbal assaults by Chávez, as well as by other Venezuelan government officials and government sponsored media who have received an implicit green light from Chávez to promote outspoken anti-Zionism that has taken an increasingly anti-Semitic tone.

During the summer 2006 conflict in Lebanon, the Venezuelan National Assembly and various Venezuelan states issued a number of one-sided declarations critical of Israel. Chávez himself was very aggressive in condemning Israel's actions against Hezbollah to the point of recalling his chargé d'affaires from Israel — the highest-ranking Venezuelan diplomat in Israel — and threatening to sever diplomatic relations with Israel altogether.

Chávez and his government view Israel as a proxy of the United States in the Middle East; they claim Israel exploits the Palestinian and Lebanese people at the expense of world peace and has an objective of controlling oil resources in the region. Chávez and his allies have begun implicitly and explicitly equating Zionist Jews and Israel with the actions of the Nazis during World War II. These views are being expressed frequently in various Venezuelan government-sponsored media outlets in radio and TV broadcasts, newspaper articles, and political cartoons. Anti-Semitic graffiti and leaflets have appeared near synagogues and densely populated Jewish neighborhoods with statements including "Jews Assassins," "Jews Dogs," "Go Away Zionists," "Jewish Zionist Assassins Leave," and Stars of David equated with swastikas.

Venezuela has had a longstanding relationship with many Arab and Muslim states due to its oil resources and its membership in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), yet in the pre-Chávez era such relationships did not influence the country's political views on Israel. This is obviously not the case today; Chávez has extended his economic ties with many Middle Eastern countries into full-blown political alliances. In recent years, Chávez has specifically strengthened and initiated ties with many hostile political players including Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, convicted guerrilla terrorist Illich Ramírez Sánchez (aka The Jackal), and Argentine Holocaust denier Norberto Ceresole.

Reciprocally, terrorist sympathizers have found Venezuela and other South American states a fertile breeding ground for satellite chapters. Recent reports on the presence of the emerging group "Hezbollah Latin America" have been a source of concern for Latin American Jewry who have witnessed firsthand the impact of extremism, including the terrorist attacks on the Israeli Embassy and the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) building in Argentina, which

has now been tied directly to Iran and Hezbollah. Hezbollah Latin America has called explicitly for a jihad in the region during the coming year. Such calls should be taken seriously.

While Venezuelan Jews have not yet been direct targets of terrorism, government-sponsored anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism may be impacting the well being of the Jewish community there as never before. Instances of vandalism and intimidation are certainly on the rise. For years, Venezuelan Jews lived peacefully with their non-Jewish neighbors; anti-Semitism was in fact negligible before Chávez rose to power. Jewish communal activities started in the 1920s and 1930s when immigration from Northern Africa and Europe began. In the 1940s, Holocaust survivors were warmly welcomed in Venezuela, as were Sephardic Jews emigrating from Arab countries in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Jewish community, as represented by its umbrella organization the Confederación de Asociaciones Israelitas de Venezuela (CAIV), has actively denounced recent anti-Semitism and issued statements articulating their Zionism and declaring their concern regarding the one-sided government stance against Israel. The CAIV recently held a seminar for journalists to inform and educate reporters on the Middle East conflict. Unfortunately much of those efforts seem to have been ignored by the government.

The Anti-Defamation League has written to President Chávez expressing our concern over the current trends and advocating for the well-being of the Jewish community in Venezuela. To date, ADL has yet to receive a response from Chávez or his government.

## Summary

This report details the Anti-Defamation League's concern regarding a number of troubling trends observable in the government of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and government-sponsored media outlets.

- Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, his government, and government-affiliated institutions have elevated their anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic rhetoric — under the guise of anti-imperialism and anti-Americanism — to a dangerous level.
- Chávez has strengthened and formed new alliances with dangerous figures in the Middle East including Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, and Syrian President Bashar Assad. The government has expressed its explicit support for the terrorist organization Hezbollah, which attacked Israel and provoked the recent war in Lebanon, and its solidarity with Iran which seeks nuclear capabilities in the face of the international community.
- The Chávez government's rhetoric has become increasingly anti-Zionist, condemning Israel's actions during the war in Lebanon and comparing Israel and Zionism to the Nazi regime during World War II. Israel was attacked by Hezbollah and exercised its right of self defense. Israel is also a democracy and in no way represents the inhumanity of Nazi Germany; such an insinuation does great harm to the memory of the six million Jews who were systematically executed during the 20th Century.
- Chávez and his government have also resorted to implicit and explicit anti-Semitic displays including rehashing the ancient canard of Jewish conspiracies, blaming Israel and the Jews for the world's problems, and adopting anti-Semitic stereotypes about Jewish financial influence.
- Such rhetoric is dangerous because it incites hatred and intolerance and calls for Jews to be singled out and targeted. Indeed, the frequency of intimidation, vandalism, and physical attacks against Jewish institutions in Venezuela is distinctly on the rise.
- The Anti-Defamation League, and the Confederation of Israelite Associations of Venezuela (CAIV) with which we have expressed our solidarity, have expressed these concerns to President Chávez and his government but the message has not yet been satisfactorily received.

## **PART TWO: DOCUMENTATION**

### **The Chávez Government's Anti-Imperialist, Anti-Zionist and Anti-Semitic Rhetoric**

#### **Statements of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez**

##### **Address to the United Nations General Assembly (September 20, 2006):**

“...The devil is right at home. The devil, the devil himself, is right in the house. And the devil came here yesterday. Yesterday the devil came here. Right here. [*crosses himself*]. And it smells of sulfur still today.

“Yesterday, ladies and gentlemen, from this platform, the president of the United States, the gentleman to whom I refer as the devil, came here, talking as if he owned the world. Truly, as the owner of the world.

“I think we could call a psychiatrist to analyze yesterday's statement made by the president of the United States. As the spokesman of imperialism, he came to try to preserve the current pattern of domination, exploitation and pillage of the peoples of the world...

“The president of the United States, yesterday, said to us, right here, in this room, and I'm quoting, ‘Anywhere you look, you hear extremists telling you that you can escape from poverty and recover your dignity through violence, terror and martyrdom.’

“Wherever he looks, he sees extremists. And you, my brother — he looks at your color, and he says, oh, there's an extremist...The imperialists see extremists everywhere. It's not that we are extremists. It's that the world is waking up. It's waking up all over. And people are standing up...

“But the government doesn't want peace. The government of the United States doesn't want peace. It wants to exploit its system of exploitation, of pillage, of hegemony through war.

“It wants peace. But what's happening in Iraq? What happened in Lebanon? In Palestine? What's happening? What's happened over the last 100 years in Latin America and in the world? And now threatening Venezuela — new threats against Venezuela, against Iran?

“He spoke to the people of Lebanon. Many of you, he said, have seen how your homes and communities were caught in the crossfire. How cynical can you get? What a capacity to lie shamefacedly. The bombs in Beirut with millimetric precision?

“This is crossfire? He’s thinking of a western, when people would shoot from the hip and somebody would be caught in the crossfire.

“This is imperialist, fascist, assassin, genocidal, the empire and Israel firing on the people of Palestine and Lebanon. That is what happened...”

**Visit to China (August 25, 2006):** “Israel was committing a genocide in Lebanon and its leaders should be held responsible and should be judged by an international tribunal... The Israelis criticize Hitler but have done something worse.”

**Speech (August 8, 2006):** “Probably we will sever diplomatic relations [with Israel] I have no interest in maintaining diplomatic relations, nor offices nor commerce, nor anything with a State such as Israel, that commits such madness against Palestinians and Lebanese... We feel indignation to see how the State of Israel continues crushing, bombarding, assassinating, dismembering so many innocent people using ‘gringo’ aircraft and using its high military power with the support of the U.S.”

**Visit to university in Tehran, Iran (July 30, 2006):** “What Israel does today against Palestinians and Lebanese is terrorism and fascism.”

**Press conference with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during visit to Iran (July 30, 2006):** “[The Israeli aggression] is offensive and cowardly. Why don’t they fight against a real army? ... They want war because they have the ‘demon’ inside of them, why don’t they behave like soldiers? I am a soldier, confront us soldiers; because cowards bombard children and women’s dwellings

---

*“The Israelis criticize Hitler but have done something worse.” — President Hugo Chávez*

who do not have even a stone to defend themselves. How brave should the Israeli soldiers feel that way? I tell you from here, from Tehran, one and a thousand times, assassins, cowards. But simply you are condemned to your

own end, from the bottom of the soul of the populace will surge the force that will end the empire and its cronies...”

**Interview with Al Jazeera (July 28, 2006):** “The aggression against Palestine and Lebanon is an aggression against us as well. It is an unjustified aggression. It is a fascist aggression, much like Hitler... Israel is right in criticizing Hitler and the hostility against Jews, we do too, but they are doing the same thing that Hitler did to the Jews. They are killing innocent children, entire families, they destroyed the legitimate government of Palestine, they destroyed the multi-year effort of the road towards peace, looking for a Palestinian state, and now they are targeting Lebanon and have destroyed half of Lebanon... Behind the hostilities perpetrated by Israel is the hand of the U.S. The worst menace that has the future of humanity is the U.S. empire and one of its instruments of aggression is in the State of Israel. This plan was prepared in detail a long time ago and it was planned in the Pentagon, only that Israel is the executor.”

**Visit to Qatar (July 27, 2006):** “Who supported and armed Israel?... The mask is coming off the U.S. This fascism is something similar to what Hitler did: bombard cities, kill innocent children, women and men, and destroy the infrastructure of



people. They are demolishing Lebanon. How can you justify that due to the kidnapping of two soldiers, which I condemn, they attack a population, bombarding by using the great U.S. machinery... This was a planned action of war. Behind are the hawkish brains of the Pentagon. Unfortunately, the executor of this fascist aggression is the Israeli military. We urge, in the name of the Venezuelan people, to stop the aggression and for Israel to withdraw from the sovereign territory of Palestine. We ask G-d to end the violence.”

**Inauguration ceremony for Venezuelan Minister of Defense in Caracas**

**(July 16, 2006):** “There it is again, the flame of the Middle Eastern war and who is responsible? It isn’t the people of Palestine or Israel, it is the U.S. empire who pushes the Israeli elite to use their aggression against innocent people... They [Israel] do have nuclear arms, but nobody says anything because ‘the empire’ is behind threatening Syria and Iran. When will the madness go away? The desire of dominance of ‘the empire’ could lead the world towards a true Holocaust. G-d forbid.”

**Statement (June 9, 2006):** “The State of Israel needs to respect the people of Palestine who have been struggling to bring peace and independence for years... With all the military power and with the support of the U.S. empire, the State of Israel has acted against the mandates of the U.N. and against world peace and bombarded again and invaded Palestine territory.”

**Speech about wealth and poverty at Venezuelan rehabilitation center**

**(December 24, 2005):** “...The world is for all of us, then, but it so happens that a minority, the descendents of the same ones that crucified Christ, the descendents of the same ones that kicked Bolivar out of here and also crucified him in their own way over there in Santa Marta, in Colombia. A minority has taken possession all of the wealth of the world, a minority has taken ownership of all of the gold of the planet, of the silver, of the minerals, the waters, the good lands, oil, of the wealth then and have concentrated the wealth in a few hands: less than 10 percent of the population of the world owns more than half of the wealth of the world...”

**Declarations from government institutions**

**Press Release from the Venezuelan Government (July 15, 2006):**

*“Venezuela condemns the attacks of the State of Israel against the people of Palestine and Lebanon”*

“The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela rejects and condemns the disproportionate attacks of the State of Israel against the populations and infrastructure of Palestine and Lebanon. The indiscriminate employment of force has caused numerous deaths and injuries in the civil population, including innocent women and children.

“No pretext can justify such aggressions. The fact that Palestinians have decided to vote for one of the options that they chose during the recent elections, which has irritated Israel, is not a reason for the harassment that has developed and worsened in the current conflict.

“Even less explicable is the destruction of important Lebanese infrastructure systems...creating a very dangerous precedent to international relations. Similarly the aerial harassment towards Syria, puts in danger the stability of the entire region, with the peril of more bloodshed and worse penalties for the population that inhabits the region.

“The U.S. government veto to avoid the consideration of this crisis in the U.N. Security Council is unacceptable. The hegemony that is executed in this organ, is the negation of that organization as a forum to the reasonable resolution of conflicts. For this reason our government continues to be firm in the need to democratize such institution and we are working to occupy a position in its Security Council.

“Finally, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela expresses solidarity with the attacked countries and the innocent victims, calling to the governments of the world to stop the aggression and work through negotiation to establish a Palestinian State for those people who for centuries have occupied peacefully and have the undeniable right to these lands.”

#### **National Assembly declarations:**

*August 3, 2006:* “Urging the Venezuelan government to contribute funds to the humanitarian relief of Lebanon for the ruins left behind by the fascist attacks of Israeli army.”

*July 28, 2006:* “Condemning emphatically the savage and terrorist aggression of the State of Israel against Lebanon and expressing their solidarity with the Lebanese people.”

*June 29, 2006:* “Rejecting and condemning the aggressions of the Zionist State of Israel against the Palestinians, against its democratic institutions and the Arab countries in the region.”

---

“[We condemn] emphatically the savage and terrorist oppression of the State of Israel against Lebanon and [express our] solidarity with the Lebanese people.”  
— Venezuelan National Assembly

*July 18, 2006:* The “Israeli offensive” (referring to the war in Lebanon) was discussed in the National Assembly plenary and support for Lebanon was unanimously approved citing the indiscriminate attacks by the State of Israel who was using “chemical weapons,” causing a genocide, and leaving a large number of victims who were only looking to escape from the war.

The debate was initiated by a representative of the government’s party who said, “If you do not understand the philosophy of international Zionism you can never understand what happens in the Middle East. The ambitions that were developed in Israel are to take control of all the territories in the region. Israel is a country with more than 60 nuclear warheads capable of destroying half of Europe and parts of Africa... Since 1947 when Israel took control of the majority of the Palestinian territory leaving them only 20 percent of its original land, the Jewish community seeks to intensify its expansion.”

### **Other government action and statements:**

*August 10, 2006:* The Ministry of Science and Technology hosted a free movie-forum titled “Imperialism and Jewish Zionism. Assassins of children. Enemies of the World.”

*August 8, 2006:* During a discussion on the Middle East conflict in the Legislative Chamber of the State of Miranda, a Jewish legislator from the opposition was verbally attacked with anti-Semitic remarks by the President of the Chamber, a member of Chávez’s party. The proposed declaration was biased against Israel and the United States. The Jewish legislator stood up to offer his viewpoint on the conflict, advocating for Israel and proposing a declaration in favor of peace for all parties and sympathy with all civilian casualties in the conflict including Palestinian, Lebanese, and Israeli. The President of the Chamber verbally attacked the Jewish legislator justifying Hitler’s killing of Jews as a retaliation for Jews’ responsibility in killing Jesus Christ. When the legislator stated his pride for being Jewish and clarified the modern Church teachings that Jews today are not responsible for the killing of Jesus, the President of the chamber continued to attack him by using pejoratively and repeatedly the word “Jew.” The session ended immediately to prevent a physical altercation. Some Chávez supporters distanced themselves in private from the anti-Semitic views of the President of the Chamber, but nevertheless the anti-Israel declaration was passed as a public motion.

*July 27, 2006:* The State of Anzoategui hosted a march protesting Israel’s actions during the war in Lebanon. The march’s advertisement states, “Considering that the U.S. leadership has financed economically, militarily and morally the policies of extermination [of Israel] with the objective of gaining the support of the Jewish minorities in the U.S., and as sure as we are to avoid a new Auschwitz in southern Lebanon, where more than a 1.2 million people are prisoners of international Zionism, we urge [various organizations] to reject the genocidal policy practiced by Israel and its partner the U.S. empire against the Arab population.”

#### *Other one-sided government declarations against Israel:*

- Mayor of Caracas, President of the Venezuelan Association of Mayors (July 17)
- Venezuelan Parliamentary Group (July 18)
- Municipality of Vargas (July 20)
- State of Nueva Esparta (August 1)
- State of Miranda (August 8)

*Docencia Participativa (Participatory Faculty):* The government-affiliated educational institute issues a monthly newsletter.



July 2006 newsletter:

- Front cover text: “Stop the Massacre. For the love of G-d. For the Love of Allah. Assassin Jews! Apocalyptic Beasts.”
- Graphic: An American flag with a pattern including Stars of David and dollar signs.
- Graphic: A skeleton with a Star of David stamped on the forehead and in the background, an Israeli flag with a swastika adjacent to the Star of David.
- Article text: Advocates the withdrawal of the Venezuelan Ambassador in Israel.

August 2006 newsletter:



- Front cover image and text: A giant Star of David with a swastika in the middle and the headline “XXI Century Jews. Nuremberg.”
- Cover story text: “The massacre in the Middle East — children, elderly, women and people destroyed by the bloody Jewish Massacre. Trial to the Criminals of Humanity. Nuremberg.”
- Graphic for article entitled, “A Despicable War”: Illustration of a man wearing a kippah crushing with his hands a bleeding globe and a Star of David lingering above him.

## Anti-Semitism in Government-Sponsored Media

### Cianuro en Gotas (Cyanide in Drops)

*Los Papeles de Mandinga (weekly)*, September 19-25, 2006

“Those who are upset with Ahmadinejad’s visit to Venezuela are the gangsters of the local Jewish mafia, the terrorists who control the Confederations of Israelite Associations (CAIV) and other criminal organizations of similar reputation. They are saying stupid things about anti-Semitism. Those terrorists, those people who applaud each time that the terrorist State of Israel mutilates, assassinates an Arab child; nobody has ever heard these criminals of the Confederation say even one word of condolence for the Arab victims of the Israeli aggression. It seems that the [Venezuelan] government is anti-Semitic.”

### **Zionist Menace in Venezuela by Basem Tajeldine**

*Diario VEA (newspaper)*, September 14, 2006

“It was to be expected. The profound humanistic conviction and moral solidity of commander Chávez for denouncing the atrocities that are systematically committed by the State of Israel against Arab people, have bothered the cancers of the inferno — international imperialism and Zionism.

“It is very well known in the world the terrorist acts perpetrated by the Israeli Mossad against its own Jewish community to justify its criminal cause. History reminds us the historic alliance of the German Zionism with Nazi Germany.”

“World Zionists have reacted to the impressive international political figure of President Chávez, accusing him of ‘demonizing the State of Israel... and masking its anti-Semitism in terms of anti-Zionism’ (declarations by the international Zionist agency based in New York, ADL). The Confederation of Israelite Associations of Venezuela (CAIV), the Zionist enclave

in the country, reacted similarly much earlier. They both announced the possibility that such positions could be importing the [Middle East] conflict to the country. Actually ADL went beyond, ‘such positions could be used by others to justify violence against Jews in Venezuela.’

“On December 2, 2004, this same organization [the Simon Wiesenthal Center (instrument of international Zionism also based in New York)] issued a press release which condemned the raid conducted by Venezuelan intelligence against Hebraica, for proving the involvement of certain Zionist members with the assassination of Danilo Anderson. In that communication the Bolivarian government was accused of persecuting Jews in Venezuela. But they remained quiet when it was demonstrated that for the killing of Danilo Anderson methods were applied similar to those applied by Mossad against the Palestinian resistance...

“It is very well known in the world the terrorist acts perpetrated by the Israeli Mossad against its own Jewish community to justify its criminal cause. History reminds us the historic alliance of the German Zionism with Nazi Germany.”

### **Zionist Jews by Tarek Muci Nasir**

*El Diario Caracas (newspaper)*, September 2, 2006

“Zionists, the destructive sect of radical Jews, are again impregnating the Jewish community with its animosity towards humanity. The genocide they executed in Palestine and Lebanon is similar to the Holocaust which the Nazis executed

“The United States is trapped by Zionists who control their economy and many critical positions in their government”

against them, and they will undergo another Holocaust because of the global hatred they are accumulating. If the Jews have charged the Nazis for their victims, they will have to pay Lebanon for their killings. The Jewish race is

condemned to disappear, because if they continue marrying among themselves they will continue to degenerate; if they open their marriages they will racially dilute themselves, so their only recourse is to stay united, to provoke wars, and auto-genocides.

“Israelis are lying when they say they are the favored people of G-d; on the contrary, because they are always at war and without their own land, it seems that they are marked for having destroyed Jesus Christ. We should reform the Bible which falsely refers to them as the chosen race by G-d, and we will act to stop them from manipulating the Jewish community. The United States is trapped by Zionists who control their economy and many critical positions in their government; and we must avoid that this critical situation takes place in Venezuela before they also ruin us, because they can possess any nationality, but first they act as Jews in whatever land they plant themselves. Israel couldn't resist that despite possessing Jerusalem as the capital of the Christian world, Lebanon continued to have more international tourism, and now, due to international repulsion, Israel will have even less [tourism].

“Let's pay attention to the Israeli-Zionist associations, unions and federations which are conspiring in Venezuela to take over our finances, our industries, commerce, construction; which are infiltrating government positions and politics. Possibly, we'll have to expel them from the country, as other nations have done, which is the reason that Jews remain in a continuous state of stateless exodus, and it is why in 1948 they invaded Palestine, guided by Albion. Will global justice allow the United States, England, and Israel to destroy the Middle East to take over its oil? Only the union of its people will save them...”

#### **Nazi Zionist Fury by Luis Cadenas**

*Diario Vea (newspaper)*, July 4, 2006

“Undoubtedly the political, economic and military Israeli elites inherited the fascist weight of Hitler's Nazi Germany. In the 21st Century the actions of the government of Israel increase its terrorist character against the Palestinian nation and other countries with the support of the terrorist government of George W. Bush. Bush, similar to Hitler wants to dominate the world, destroying human life, with its economic and military power, wanting to take possession of the riches of third world countries...

“The people of Israel should remember when Hitler... assassinated millions of people for being Jewish... But if these actions are to be condemned, the actions of the Israeli government supported by its father Bush are as condemnable as those of Hitler... The Israeli people should not allow its leadership to repeat the genocide of which it was a victim... The Jewish people should call to stop the killings that the Zionists and the U.S. empire want to impose in the name of liberty and democracy... Out of Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, fascists, Zionists, Neo-Nazi, Neoliberals of Bush and the Zionist government of Israel.”

#### **De Primera Mano (First Hand) by Vladimir Acosta**

*Radio Nacional de Venezuela*, October 9, 2006

“...The government of Israel through its Mossad related companies is working with U.S. companies to build the barrier between Mexico and the U.S.... A few days ago Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the Israeli extreme right wing party Likud, declared in a meeting with other U.S. businessmen and politicians that the Mexicans were to the U.S. what the Palestinians were for Israel. In fact Israel has been involved

for 70 years in Latin America in all types of dirty business, arm sales to Central American countries, training of guerrillas, torture in the Southern Cone and spying through the Mossad...It is important that Venezuela continue to revise their relationship with Israel maintaining a distance from that genocidal government ...”

**Los Papeles de Mandinga, (The Papers of Mandinga—“the Devil”)**

**by Alberto Nolia**

*YVKE Mundial (Radio)*, July 19, 2006

“Terrorists and assassins, criminals of the fierce dictatorship of the State of Israel. They are destroying Lebanon, a country that can’t defend itself from the Israeli aggressions. Israel has thermonuclear arms and they have willingness to use them, they are assassins. For these criminals who govern the State of Israel only Jews are human beings, and not all Jews only Jews who live in the State of Israel, because the ones who live in other parts of the world are seen as garbage; the only thing they are good for is to ask them for money...

“Those assassin Zionist dogs, who can’t be called anything else, killers, criminals, are Nazis who are destroying a defenseless country with great indifference of the great powers of the world. This is happening in front of the government of the White House drug addict, the garbage called George Bush and the dogs that are by his side...

“I ask myself and I ask that rat that Israel has as an Ambassador here and the garbage that controls the Confederation of Israelite Associations in Venezuela (CAIV), a group of Nazis who do not represent the Jews in Venezuela, the majority who are decent people, who are not to blame for the genocidal plans of the government of Israel. Well, they should respond, how many children have the SS Jews [killed], because they are from the SS with Israeli uniforms, but the SS were more ethical. They were more decent than the assassin soldiers of Israel. I ask them how many children have they killed as a result of the kidnapping of 2 Jewish soldiers in what is a typical act of war to keep soldiers as prisoners...

“In that Zionist, criminal and terrorist state, the Arabs who are supposed to be citizens ... are not allowed in Universities... in that Zionist and terrorist state where a large percentage are Arabs there is not a single Arab in Parliament... and they call this democracy. By the way, Israel is the only country in the World where torture is legal, not even in Nazi Germany was torture legal; of course the German Nazis practiced torture just like the Nazi State of Israel, but at least in Germany it was theoretically illegal.

“They say [Israel] is a democracy. It is a fundamentalist theocracy where a religious sect of conservative [right wing] Jews monopolizes all businesses in Israel. The Israeli army only serves kosher food, blessed by the rabbis of the conservative [right wing] sect and of course they charge fortunes to certify the Kosher status of that food; is that a democracy? It is very amusing to me the democracy of Ariel Sharon or that of Adolf Olmert or Ehud Hitler.”

**La Hojilla (The Blade) by Mario Silva**  
*Venezolana de Televisión (TV), September 22, 2006*

Mario Silva, the program host, referenced an article by Heinz Dietrich, a left-wing political scientist living in Mexico, in which he states that the Bush administration wants to assassinate President Chávez and would use Mossad-type methods. Silva says, “[The Bush administration] would presumably use methods such as the Israeli secret service death squads, who routinely kill enemies in other countries... The model to follow, according to Dietrich is the successful poisoning used to kill Yasir Arafat. There was a public debate back then in Israel and Ehud Olmert declared that the assassination of President Arafat was legitimate, but questioned whether it was practical to eliminate Arafat. After that successful operation do you think the fascist presidents Ehud Olmert and George Bush would doubt of the practicality and legitimacy of removing the obstacles of peace? In other words the oil peace represented by Chávez?”

**Political Cartoons**

①



②



③



- ① Where is our soldier? Confess! (Israeli tank with a Star of David and swastikas targeting a woman dressed in Muslim garb). *Temas Venezuela, June 30, 2006.*
- ② You have to recognize that the majority of the Jews disseminated around the world are not to blame for the massacre that is occurring in Lebanon and Palestine. The blame is on the part of the Israeli government that follow orders from the genocidal White House. They [Israel] suck up [to the U.S.] so much, that they trade the shekel for the dollar, Hebrew for English, Judaism for Christianity, and G-d for Bush. *Diario Vea, July 30, 2006.*
- ③ While I destroy Iraq and Afghanistan (skeleton wearing helmet with U.S. flag), I will take care of Palestine and Lebanon (skeleton wearing helmet with Israeli flag). *Diario Vea, July 29, 2006.*



4



5



6



- 4 Grandpa, so the real terrorists are the Zionists? (Grandfather reading a newspaper with the title "Israel Massacres the People of Gaza"). *Diario Vea*, May 7, 2006.
- 5 Enough! (Star of David pinning down a bloody man, woman, and child). *Diario Vea*, August 7, 2006.
- 6 You can imagine who taught me to kill (Israeli skeleton with a bloody axe in front of a picture of Uncle Sam). *Diario Vea*, July 15, 2006.

7



- 7 When someone gets close to the Wailing Wall, they will hear the cries of innocent Palestinian and Lebanese boys and girls that were massacred by the Israeli footmen of the White House (Picture of the Western Wall in the background). *Diario Vea*, July 25, 2006.

## Anti-Semitic Demonstrations and Vandalism

### Demonstrations



*Caracas, July 31, 2006:* A march took place to protest Israel's actions in Lebanon and in the Palestinian territories, and the demonstration ended in front of the Sephardic synagogue. Marchers held posters that read, "No to Zionism and Imperialism" with a picture of Hitler in the background and signs depicting a Star of David equated with a swastika. Graffiti was painted on the exterior walls adjacent to the Synagogue stating "Zionist Jews Assassins," "Zionism = Terrorism," "Trial for Israel."



*Caracas, July 20, 2006:* A march took place ending at the Israeli embassy in Caracas. The objective was to protest Israel's military actions in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. The organizer of the event, Hindú Anderi, coordinator of the government-affiliated Popular Participation Forum, was quoted saying, "this act will let us unify forces and continue with a global campaign against the intrusion of U.S. imperialism and the Israeli government in our Arab countries." Young people of Arab and Lebanese descent were waving Hezbollah flags and posters of the group's leader Hassan Nasrallah while they sang in Arabic in favor of the "resistance" in southern Lebanon. Some of the posters said "Unannounced Holocaust," "Auschwitz in Palestine," and "Israel equals Terrorism."



## Vandalism

Jewish buildings in Caracas, including those of the Israelite Association of Venezuela (AIV) and the Hebraica community center, were vandalized on at least four occasions:



September 9, 2006: "Zionists Assassins" and "Zionists Killers of Children," along with images of Stars of David equated with swastikas.



August 5, 2006, Hebraica: "Leave Zionists," "Jews Dogs," along with swastikas.



July 15, 2006, AIV: "Stop the Massacre in Palestine," "Israel Assassin of the Palestinian People, Palestine will succeed," "Israel Assassin, The Intifada will win."



June 29, 2006, AIV: "Jews Assassins," "Israel Assassin," "Bush = Israel, Assassins."

## Chávez's Allies

Over the years, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has befriended a number of questionable figures in South America and also in the Middle East where he has formed bonds through both OPEC and ideological channels. As Chávez's hatred of the United States and Israel has grown, he has become close allies with a number of the West's most dangerous adversaries. These relationships grew only stronger during the Israel-Hezbollah war, when Chávez was outspoken in his criticism of Israel and the United States and in his support for Hezbollah.

### Mahmoud Ahmadinejad – President of Iran

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad explicitly threatens to wipe Israel from the map, denies the Holocaust and defies the democratic world by supporting terrorism and extremism and pursuing nuclear weapons.

Chávez has visited Iran on several occasions, has hosted president Ahmadinejad in Venezuela, and has made extensive bilateral agreements with the current Iranian government. On July 30, 2006, while visiting Iran, Chávez and Ahmadinejad took part in a joint press conference at which Ahmadinejad stated, "Just like my dear brother Chávez expressed, [Israel's incursion] is a real shameful crime, and a handful of Zionists see an open path to crime... we believe the real criminals are those who have created this illegal regime. The true responsibility of these crimes lies in the U.S. and England who are supporting the illegal regime [of Israel]... We hope that G-d's hand will come out of the hands of the people which can take vengeance of the unjustified bloodshed..."

### **Bashar Assad – President of Syria**

On August 30, 2006 Chávez visited President Assad in Damascus. At their press conference Chávez said, “What is Israel? We all know how Israel was born. It is an annex of the North American empire in the Middle East. Israel is the cause of the conflict in the region. This [territory] 6 thousand years ago was of the Canaanites and the Philistines, these lands belong to the Palestinians.” Chávez also denounced the “Nazi Crimes” in Lebanon and demanded that Israel withdraw from the Golan Heights. He said, “It is a theft perpetrated against the entire world... Nothing equates to the Nazi crimes that Israel has committed against Lebanon and Palestine.”

*On August 5, 2006, representatives from the Venezuelan National Assembly visited Syria to present an accord of solidarity with Lebanon that included the following clauses:*

- Condemns energetically the savage and terrorist aggression of the State of Israel against Lebanon and expresses its solidarity for the people and the nation of Lebanon.
- Supports President Hugo Chávez in addressing Venezuelan foreign policy.
- Demands [Israel] to comply with United Nations resolutions to withdraw immediately from Lebanon and other Arab occupied territories.
- Request from the United Nations to accelerate the process of humanitarian aid to the victims of the conflict in Lebanon and Palestine.

### **Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah – Hezbollah Secretary General**

Chávez became an idol of Hezbollah supporters during the recent conflict because of his outspoken criticism of Israel and support for Hezbollah’s “resistance.” He appeared side-by-side with Nasrallah in posters that read, “Israel needs to be judged for its crimes” and “Thank you Chávez.” Nasrallah himself is quoted as saying, “Coalition from Gaza to Beirut, stopping by Damascus, Tehran, and for the brother Chávez.” Venezuelan newspapers reported that Chávez paid \$1 million to finance posters depicting himself alongside Nasrallah in a Hezbollah “victory” rally in Beirut.

### **Illich Ramirez Sanchez (a.k.a. Carlos The Jackal) – Convicted guerrilla terrorist**

President Chávez publicly declared his support for the Venezuelan-born Illich Ramirez Sanchez, known as “Carlos The Jackal,” who is currently serving a life sentence in France for a series of hijackings, kidnapping, and bombings in Europe. Ramirez, who acted on behalf of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, is said to have masterminded the assassinations of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Chávez attempted to extradite Sanchez to be prosecuted in Venezuela to no avail. On June 3, 2006, during an OPEC meeting Chávez referred to Sanchez as a “good friend.”

## **Norberto Ceresole – Deceased Argentine sociologist and political scientist**

Norberto Rafael Ceresole, who died in 2003, was an Argentine sociologist and political scientist, who identified with Peronism and left-wing militias. He was labeled throughout his life as neo-fascist and anti-Semitic because of his Holocaust denial and hatred of Zionism and Israel.

Ceresole was one of Chávez's mentors. He came to Venezuela in 1994 at the same time Chávez was being pardoned by President Caldera for his 1992 coup attempt. Ceresole was exiled from Venezuela in 1995 by Caldera for his alleged ties with Islamic terrorists, but he returned in 1998 after Chávez's victory and wrote a book entitled, *Caudillo, Ejército, Pueblo* (Leader, Army, People) about the Chávez revolution. The introductory chapter is titled "The Jewish Question and the State of Israel" and it blames Israel and the world Jewish community for his exile.

Ceresole claimed that Jews use the "myth" of the Holocaust to control the world, although he contended he wasn't an anti-Semite. He repeatedly stated that he has nothing against Jews, but that rather he was against the State of Israel for using the Holocaust for political gain.

*Excerpts from "Caudillo, Ejército, Pueblo" (Leader, Army, People)  
by Norberto Ceresole:*

"I am not anti-Semitic nor a neo-Nazi... I am a critic of the State of Israel and of the international Jewish organizations, to which I have devoted my last few books. I consider myself part of a new revisionism whose objective is to demonstrate:

1. That an important part of the canonical tale of deportation and death of the Jews under the Nazis has been arranged in the form of a myth.
2. That such a myth is utilized to preserve the existence of a colonial enterprise endowed by a religious ideology (monotheistic and mythic-messianic): the dis-ownership by Israel of the Arab Palestine.
3. That this myth is also utilized to financially blackmail the German state, other European states and Jewish communities in the U.S. and other countries.
4. That the existence of this political enterprise (Israel a power shaped under the monopoly of monotheism and implemented by an army, various police forces, jails, tortures and assassinations) looks to consolidate itself via a series of ideological manipulations in the bosom of the hegemonic power of the U.S., which procures by any means to be accepted about the owner of the world using generalized terror and also via dissuasive and persuasive practices."

## Hezbollah Latin America

A group called Hezbollah Latin America, based in Venezuela, has set up a Web site to “educate” the Wayuu tribe of the Guajiros ethnic group that inhabits the eastern part of the country. The Web site is password protected and access is restricted. The group offers its full ideological support to Hezbollah in Lebanon although they claim not to be directly affiliated or financed by their Lebanese counterparts.

Excerpts of previous Web postings on the Hezbollah Latin America Web site:

“The demon of the North, Israel and its allies, all enemies of Islam and Allah, have ordered the extermination of Islam, of Muslims, of our sacred places and the disappearance of our faith. The fight of these descendents of Satan is against Allah. Latin American Muslims have to take arms to defend Islam and Muslims. The time of passiveness, indifference to the conflict with Islam has passed. Latin Muslims today assume a leading role in the Latin American Jihad against the West, enemy of Islam.

“Latin Muslims today are lining up in the battle next to our Arab brothers for the cause of Allah...The fate of our Muslim brothers who suffer the effects of the imperial and Zionist terrorism, can’t be a cause of indifference...we are prepared to go in the offensive if Israel and the U.S. do not stop the attacks in Lebanon. If the U.S. doesn’t stop its desire to invade Iran, our Islamic theocracy, we will attack you in Latin America and even inside the U.S. because we have the means to do it. Our offensive in America can consider the sabotage of supplying oil to the U.S. from Latin America. You are warned, we are not indifferent to the fate of our brothers.”

Following the Israel-Hezbollah war, the group called on supporters to put “low grade” explosives in Latin American institutions affiliated with the United States in response to Israel’s military actions in Lebanon. They also plan to distribute brochures with the Hezbollah Latin America logo to promote public opinion of Islamic resistance and revolution.

*October 23, 2006:* Two crude homemade explosive devices were found outside the U.S. Embassy in Caracas. A box containing one of the bombs was found with leaflets referencing Hezbollah. Police arrested a man carrying 100 black powder bases, pliers, adhesive tape, glue and electric leads; authorities believe the second explosive was to be taken to the Israeli Embassy in Los Ruices. The amateur nature of the explosives suggests it was not planned by Hezbollah in Lebanon, a sophisticated terrorist organization with a history of well-planned attacks. The attackers, clearly supporters of Hezbollah, could be members of Hezbollah Latin America with no logistical ties to the group in Lebanon.

## Responses of the Venezuelan Jewish Community

The Confederation of Israelite Associations of Venezuela (CAIV), the umbrella organization representing the Jewish community in Venezuela, has been active in documenting and denouncing the recent escalation of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic rhetoric from the Chávez government. The CAIV held solidarity rallies, issued statements rejecting the anti-Israel government declarations and stating their disapproval of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit to Venezuela. The group also offered a seminar for media professionals to educate them on the Middle East conflict.

*January 31, 2006:* After Chávez's controversial December 2005 speech, the CAIV arranged a meeting with the president in which they presented a dossier documenting anti-Semitic reports in the government media. The CAIV also requested that the president closely monitor the transmission of anti-Semitic remarks on state broadcast media.

*September 17, 2006:* The CAIV issued the following statement on the occasion of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit to Venezuela.

“With the occasion of the announced visit to our country of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Confederation of Israelite Associations of Venezuela (CAIV), in representation of the Venezuelan Jewish Community, manifests its uneasiness and indignation for the reiterated declarations of the Iranian leader in which he calls for the destruction of the State of Israel, calling to ‘wipe off the map’ a democratic state legally set up and recognized by world nations.

“Equally, he has sustained an unacceptable and absurd negation of the Holocaust pretending to trivialize the most perverse tragedy in human history.

“Such positions promote the repetition of inhuman and barbaric actions as was the tragic genocide perpetrated but the Nazi machinery during World War II.

“We make ours the words of protest and disagreement of Secretary General of the U.N., Kofi Annan, directed towards the Iranian President on his continuous and repeated remarks that the Holocaust is a myth; and his daring remarks demonizing Jews, vilifying Israel, the Western World and desecrating the sacred memory of six million victims of Nazi barbarism and the 50 million human beings that were wiped off the world.

“The CAIV reiterates its support and solidarity with causes of liberty, justice, human dignity and the right of auto determination of all people. We wish for peace and the resolution of all conflicts by peaceful means.”

*August 3, 2006:* The CAIV issued the following statement in support for the State of Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War.



“The Confederation of Israelite Associations of Venezuela (CAIV), as representative of the Venezuelan Jewish community, in view of the events that are presently occurring in the Middle East and faced with the anti-Semitic campaign that is developing in our country, manifests:

- Its deepest lament for the deaths of innocent civilians, men, women, and children in Israel, Lebanon, and Gaza.
- Its repudiation for the acts of aggression perpetrated by the terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah on Israeli territory that gave rise to this lamentable conflict.
- Its unrestricted support for the State and the Government of Israel, in the actions undertaken to defend its sovereignty and protect the lives of its citizens.
- Its repudiation of all intentions to try to transfer the conflict in the Middle East to Venezuela, where traditionally, all minorities that comprise Venezuelan society have lived together in harmony and respect.
- Its repudiation of all anti-Semitic manifestations — that are excused under the disguise of ‘anti-Zionist’ — by all official media outlets and government officials that incite hate or discrimination, weakening the principle of freedom of expression.
- Its rejection of the attempts to trivialize the Holocaust — the premeditated and systematic extermination of millions of humans solely because they were Jewish — during the Second World War, comparing it to the current acts of war.
- Its preoccupation and consternation in the face of public and arbitrary partiality of officials and representatives of the national, state, and municipal governments and the National Assembly, for one of the sides to the conflict.
- Its complete identification with Zionism, the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, which led to the re-founding of the State of Israel on its ancestral lands.
- Its rejection of all intentions to associate Zionism with fascism and Nazism.
- Its desire for the cessation of all causes that unleashed the violence in the Middle East and that all parties involved can reach an understanding that allows a sustainable peace between Israel and all its neighbors, including a Palestinian state.

“CAIV calls for peace and coexistence between all Venezuelans.”

*July 20, 2006:* The CAIV held a rally of solidarity with the State of Israel at Hebraica, the Jewish social center, to support Israel in its time of crisis. The CAIV articulated its Zionist values and criticized the incitement of hate and violence newly appearing in Venezuela.

The CAIV issued a statement deploring the June 29, 2006 biased declaration by the Venezuelan National Assembly. The statement clarified CAIV’s position in support of the Israeli government and the need for Israel to defend itself from continued aggression from Palestinian and Hezbollah terrorists. It also noted Syria’s rejection to recognize the State of Israel and its role in the aiding and harboring of terrorists. The statement rejected the validity of negative connotations associated with the word “Zionist.” The CAIV also lamented that the National Assembly adhered to one-sided stances on the conflict rather than looking to promoting peace between Israel and its neighbors.

## Anti-Defamation League Response

Concerned with the increasing levels of anti-Semitism in Venezuela, the Anti-Defamation League wrote the following letters to President Chávez and the Venezuelan Ambassador in Washington:

### August 7, 2006: Letter to Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez

Dear Mr. President:

We are dismayed by reports in legitimate international news outlets in which you are quoted as comparing Israel's recent military action to those of the Nazis under Hitler and referring to Israel's response to the violation of its sovereignty as "genocide." Such comparisons are profoundly hurtful to the Jewish people, who suffered unspeakable atrocities at the hands of the Nazis. No matter what one's views are regarding the conflict in the Middle East, rhetoric of this type has no place in civil discourse among nations.

We are deeply concerned that statements demonizing Israel and anti-Semitism cloaked in anti-Zionist terms may be used by others to justify violence against Jews wherever they live, including in your own country of Venezuela.

---

"Mr. President, we urge you to continue to ensure that safety and tranquility remain the norm for the Jewish community in Venezuela and for all Venezuelans."

For these reasons, ADL expresses solidarity with CAIV in their activities on behalf of the Venezuelan Jewish community and in their statement expressing clear support for the State and government of Israel, calling for the government of Venezuela to repudiate

all manifestations of anti-Semitism and rejecting the false association of Zionism with the inhumanity of the Nazis.

We also join with CAIV in their denunciation of the acts of terrorism perpetrated by Hezbollah and Hamas on Israeli soil and in their expression of sorrow over the loss of innocent civilian lives on both sides of the conflict.

Mr. President, we urge you to continue to ensure that safety and tranquility remain the norm for the Jewish community in Venezuela and for all Venezuelans.

Very truly yours,

Barbara B. Balsler  
National Chair

Abraham H. Foxman  
National Director

**January 12, 2006: Letter to Venezuelan Ambassador to the United States  
His Excellency Bernardo Alvarez Herrera**

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

We are writing regarding reports of President Chávez's speech last month in which he which uses several stereotypes that have been historically invoked against Jews.

We understand that the speech has been subject to misinterpretation by some and believe this highlights the importance of your government taking the opportunity now to publicly condemn anti-Semitism and to clarify these remarks.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

With every best wish.

Sincerely,

Abraham H. Foxman  
National Director

## APPENDIX

### Background: The Rise of Hugo Chávez

Chávez got his start in the military, enrolling at the Venezuelan Academy of Military Sciences at the age of 17. There he began to develop his leftist “Bolivarianism” philosophy, incorporating the ideas of Venezuelan liberator Simon Bolivar and various other pan-Americanists, socialists, and communists. Chávez’s military career lasted 17 years, during which he held a number of different posts and ranks and founded the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement-200 (MBR-200). While he was a young teacher at the Military Academy of Venezuela, his students were the first to witness his fiery rhetoric and revolutionary critique of Venezuelan society.

This fire was unleashed in the aftermath of the February 1989 El Caracazo riots during which Venezuelan government security forces killed hundreds of citizens in Caracas protesting the country’s dire economic situation. With the anger over El Caracazo still lingering three years later and the country suffering under an economic crisis, in 1992 Chávez led five army units under his command into the capital city with the aim of staging a coup and unseating President Carlos Andrés Pérez, who was widely blamed for Venezuela’s financial woes. Despite simultaneous sympathetic uprisings in other cities across the country, Chávez failed to capture Caracas, and before being sent to prison he appeared on national television to call for his sympathizers to quell their uprising. This national exposure and Chávez’s leftist economic ideology made him a hero among the country’s massive disgruntled poor and set the stage for his presidential run.

President Rafael Caldera released Chávez from prison two years later in 1994. Chávez immediately resurrected the MBR-200 as the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR) and ran for president in 1998, winning with 59 percent of the vote. He promptly introduced his social welfare and anti-poverty legislation and called a referendum election to create a national constitutional assembly and to choose its delegates. Members of the MVR, under the banner of the Polo Patriótico party, took 95 percent of the seats.

Chávez used this overwhelming victory to justify declaring judicial and legislative emergencies, allowing him to acquire the power to unilaterally remove judges and to appoint a seven-member legislative committee which assumed the role previously held by the entire National Assembly. A new constitution was written and Chávez’s opponents were left with little if any power. In the next elections in 2000, Chávez won an easy reelection and his allies took two-thirds of the National Assembly seats.

On April 11, 2002 in response to calls from Carlos Ortega Carvajal, leader of the Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (CTV), Venezuela's largest union, hundreds of thousands of workers staged a strike and marched on the headquarters of Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA), the state-owned oil company. The demonstrators clashed with pro-Chávez protestors outside of the presidential palace. Lucas Rincón Romero, the commander-in-chief of the Venezuelan Army, announced unexpectedly that Chávez had resigned from the presidency. Chávez was detained and the head of the Fedecámaras, the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Pedro Carmona, was installed as interim president. He quickly reversed all the major policies of Chávez's "Bolivarian Revolution." Chávez loyalists staged a counter-coup, releasing Chávez from custody and reinstalling him as president.

Chávez was incensed by the coup attempt and was convinced the United States military had been involved, and has since held a serious grudge against the United States government and President George W. Bush in particular.

Venezuela saw another round of strikes when Chávez sought in late 2002 to fully nationalize PDVSA. Chávez responded by purging the company's management ranks and firing 18,000 workers. In 2004, Chávez faced a recall referendum spurred on by a petition submitted by opposition leaders with 2.5 million signatures. Chávez defeated the recall vote and later passed legislation criminalizing libel against government officials. In 2004 and 2005, Chávez also advanced Venezuela's foreign policy, strengthening old relationships and initiating new ones with leaders in China, Cuba, and Iran.

In March of 2005, Chávez declared "dead" the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and vowed to replace the system with an anti-capitalist model to improve regional trade and economies. He reinforced this view at the 2005 U.N. World Summit, at which he delivered a speech that condemned privatization and the removal of trade barriers, and at the Fourth Summit of the Americas in Argentina.

In 2006, while seeking a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, Chávez delivered his now infamous speech to the General Assembly in which he called President Bush "the devil." Chávez came out vocally against Israel's actions in Lebanon in July and August and has since strengthened ties with Iran and Syria.