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Carnet de la Patria

and Other Means of Social Exclusion
for Political Reasons

***Carnet de la Patria* and Other Means of Social Exclusion for Political Reasons**

Social discrimination for political reasons has been a constant practice over the last two decades in Venezuela, limiting the access to jobs, housing, food, health, among others. The Observatory of Human Rights of the University of Los Andes (ODH–ULA) investigated this discriminatory practice and found that the *carnet de la patria*¹, created by the government of Nicolás Maduro, has come to consolidate officially the segregation initiated by ex-President Chávez through so called *Lista de Tascón* (Tascón List).

The preparation of this list was announced by Chávez himself during a public speech on December 17, 2003, on the occasion of the presidential recall referendum, when he publicly threatened the Venezuelan people with the following statement:

“Those who sign against Chávez, their names will be in there recorded for history, for they will have to put their names, their surnames, and their signatures, and their identity card numbers, and their fingerprints.”

Then, in a memo addressed to Francisco Carrasquero, president of the National Electoral Council (CNE), dated January 30, 2004, without any legal basis nor respect for the separation of powers, Chávez stated that:

“I fully authorize Mr. Luis Tascón Gutiérrez, holder of identification card No. 9,239,964, to collect the certified copies of the forms used during the 2–A event that took place between 28/11/2003 and 01/12/2003, whereby a group of citizens requested to activate a recall referendum on my term of office, as established by Article 72 of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. I ask that my request be given full legal consideration.”

In the *Aló, presidente* No. 180 dated February 2, 2004, Chávez admitted to have requested the CNE for “the certified copies of the forms with the signatures” and to have ordered Mr. Tascón to compile a database with them. He also said that:

“I signed a few days ago, a memo addressed to the CNE asking for the certified copies of the forms that the opposition delivered.”

Other government officials also referred to the Tascón List. Roger Capella, minister for health and social development said on March 20, 2004, for instance, that “there is not place (in government) for traitors [...] those who have signed are fired.”

¹ Literally “homeland card”. It is a sort of national identification card required by the government to get access to services such as subsidy food as explained later.

In the *Aló Presidente* No. 214 dated February 27, 2005, in response to public complaints and protests against the discriminatory list, Chávez declared while laughing and mocking:

“We have to archive it, it’s over now. We have to bury the Tascón List. Let’s bury the Tascón List, we do not need it anymore.”

Nonetheless, in the practice, the List continued to be applied. It was even later revamped, enlarged, and renamed as *Lista Maisanta* (Maisanta List). This new list has been profusely used by different ministries and other government offices to exclude those who appear on the list from scholarships, housing, jobs and employment contracts. Even private sector organizations contracted by the government have not been allowed to hire workers who appeared in the list. In 2008, a young PDVSA official admitted privately that her job consisted exclusively on searching in the “Maisanta list” the names of the State-owned oil company employees, as well as people and workers from other companies that applied for contracts and jobs within government. On July 29, 2010, an IT worker from the *Unidad de Control de Gestión* (Management Control Unit) of the Government of the State of Mérida, was forced to resign due to internal pressures after he refused to obey orders. In his resignation letter, he alleged several illegalities such as:

“José Gregorio Vielma, representative of PDVSA, orally requested me to install and run the well-known software “Maisanta”.

This letter of resignation—and of complaint—was made public on social media and run in a national newspaper, which had adverse consequences for this person. He was compelled to request political asylum in another country and he now lives in exile.

Out of the investigation carried out by this Observatory, through interviews with people from different sectors of society throughout the country, in urban and rural areas, including government officials, it has been determined that being a holder of the *carnet de la patria* is not guarantee to obtain its benefits. In order to do so, the holder of such card must join the government United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), and they must not be included in the “Tascón–Maisanta List”, since people who have the *carnet* but appear in the list have argued they have not received any benefit from it. Besides of jobs, pensions, housing, food, medicines, and scholarships, the government endows money through the *carnet de la patria* by introducing the concept of *bonos*, a form of cash prizes, which are twofold: (1) Eventual, as it is the case of *aguinaldos* (Christmas bonus), *día de Reyes* (Three Kings Day bonus), and similar; (2) By personal condition, such as *bonus de la juventud* or youth bonus, pregnancy bonus, etcetera. To get these bonuses, the beneficiary needs to have a bank account in a State bank. 2017 Christmas bonus was of 500.000 bolivars². One of the interviewees said he bought with his money a heavy hen for the December *hallacas*, since he was unable to buy some

² About USD 21 at official exchange rate, but about USD 5 to black market exchange.

other product due to hyperinflation. The 2018 carnival bonus was of 700.000³ bolivars, although several people alleged they only received 500.000 bolivars.

The pregnancy bonus is of 700.000 bolivars over the nine months of gestation, plus one million bolivars at the time of delivery. About these bonuses, it must be pointed out that:

1. It is only given to pregnant women who applied for the *carnet de la patria*, joined the PSUV, and have not signed the “list”. Other people either receive incomplete bonuses on an irregular basis or they do not receive them at all.
2. This kind of government help encourages teenage pregnancy, particularly on the most vulnerable sector of population in terms of economy and education. There are cases of teenagers who have three children before the age of 18, with an age difference of ten months among the children.
3. They are an insignificant “help” against hyperinflation and the general crisis the country is facing.
4. Although the Venezuela’s National Institute of Statistics (INE) does not produce the corresponding figures, there is well-documented information about an alarming increasing rate of malnutrition and maternal and infant mortality.

In regard to eventual bonuses, they are only given to those who are faithful supporters of *chavismo*. In this case, the bonuses apply to both low-income people and people with sufficient financial resources, such as government officials or owners of businesses, hotels, and estates. Several officials who were interviewed consistently reported that senior officials with “trusted” positions—namely public notaries, registrars, and judges—receive larger amounts of money with bonuses. They came to this conclusion after considering that the highest offices in the country, including the president, ministers, parliament members, magistrates, cannot earn more than twelve minimum wages, in accordance with Article 8 of the Law of Emoluments; hence, the purchasing power of these officials is widely superior than what they can afford with their salaries, yet they own vehicles, estates and have their kids studying abroad. In addition, the delivery of a food box through the *Comités Locales de Abastacimiento y Producción*⁴ (CLAP) privileges sectors that have, in past elections, favored the PSUV.

In the ex officio hearing about the right to food and health in Venezuela convened by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, civil society representatives argued that the CLAP—as social program—performs poorly, on an irregular basis, whose contents do not supply the human nutrient requirements. Only 23 percent of families have bought a food box in a month. The CLAP fails to meet the formal structural of a feeding program and they are managed by non-state actors, which operate with total lack of transparency.

³ About USD 30 at official exchange rate, but about USD 3 to black market exchange.

⁴ Local Supply and Production Committees

Similarly, the government has unlawfully provided social security pensions to PSUV supporters and militants who never paid their own contribution to the Venezuelan Social Security Institute (IVSS), since they never worked for the public administration nor the private sector. The person in charge of approving these pensions was an official of the *Fundación Pueblo Soberano* (Sovereign People Foundation), who was a close friend of the ex-President Chávez. Given the serious situation caused by a government, whose main characteristics are to remain unwilling to listen to its citizens and to act outside of the National Constitution and properly enacted laws, the Observatory of Human Rights of the University of Los Andes offers the following recommendations:

- a. Call on the different State institutions to comply with the National Constitution and International Human Rights Treaties and to abstain from these discriminatory practices.
- b. Given the general lack of confidence in public institutions, urge the people who suffer from social exclusion to file complaints to this Observatory, or any other human rights organization, in order to put on record the violations of human rights.
- c. Call on the people to exercise their legitimate right to peaceful protest, as acknowledge by the National Constitution.



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