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Police and Military Repression

In a non-democratic context and facing an humanitarian crisis, university professors and students in Venezuela have involved themselves in social protests, and as a consequence they have been murdered, illegally detained and/or subjected to military justice. Meanwhile governmental or paramilitary repressive forces have illegally burst into university campuses.

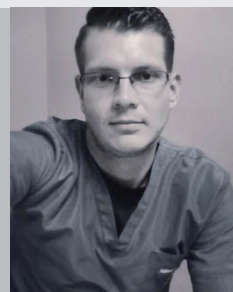
In 2017, 23 university students died in off-campus protests, shot by governmental repressive forces and/or the paramilitary forces called 'colectivos'.

336 students were wrongfully arrested or detained. At least 39 students and professors were detained in 2017 and subjected to military justice.



Protest statistics* in 2017

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University students died in off-campus protests	23
Students wrongfully arrested or detained	336
Professors and students detained and brought to military justice	39



Rafael Avendaño was a Bolivarian University Student who was expelled on October 2016 when he changed a TV channel in the medical office where he was receiving his practical classes. The Human Rights Observatory of Los Andes University representing Rafael Avendaño appealed the decision and went to court with no results yet.



On February 2017, Santiago Guevara, a professor from the Carabobo University, was detained under the charge of treason. He was brought to military justice and jailed 10 months. He lost almost 30 kilos and his health suffered damaged.

Financial Restrictions and Loss of Administrative Autonomy

In a hyper inflationary economy, university budget has been kept even during the last 10 years, which together with the existence of an economic exchange control has affected main universities, in such issues as:

- Equipment and technological services acquisition.
- Mobility of professors, researchers and students in the international academic context, thus affecting the internationalization strategies of universities.
- Continuity of international alliances and adherence to research and academic exchange webs.
- Barriers to book acquisition and subscriptions to international scientific journals.
- Difficulties for maintaining and repairing university infrastructures.
- University salaries are so low that a teacher and professor earns between 2 to 5 dollars per month.

University diaspora and brain drain

In 2018 universities are facing between 50% and 80% of student desertion

Around 60% of university teachers and professors have renounced thus affecting academic programs.

In its 2018 country report the Interamerican Human Rights Commission has expressed its concerns at the allegations of interference in university autonomy, emphasizing that university autonomy is an essential prerequisite for academic freedom, which, in turn, is necessary for full enjoyment of the right to education.

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**THREATS TO ACADEMIC
FREEDOM IN VENEZUELA**

Overview of the particular pressures on higher education in Venezuela



UNIVERSIDAD
DE LOS ANDES
VENEZUELA



THREATS TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN VENEZUELA

The Bolivarian regime in Venezuela has been in power for 20 years, the last 5 under Maduro's presidency. During this period, threats to higher education institutions have increasingly proliferated, affecting not only university professors, students or infrastructures, but also the innermost essence and values of university, and thus affecting its nature and future continuity. In fact, Venezuelan universities are currently facing severe and manifold risks that can be summarized as follows:

I. Imposition of non-autonomous legislation and policies:

1. 2003 Creation of the governmental program 'Sucre Mission', and of Bolivarian Universities as means of political indoctrination
2. 2008 National University Training Programs are created in compliance with the Plan de la patria (2007-2013), a sectarian Bolivarian governmental project.
3. 2009 a new Law of Education is passed, incorporating the concept of 'Educational State' in violation of academic freedom.
4. 2009 Creation of governmental program 'Alma Mater Mission' to promote university radical transformation according to the Bolivarian dogma.
5. 2010 Law of Science, Technology and Innovation is reformed and public and private resources are such centralized by the government.
6. 2013 A Collective Convention is imposed to rule public autonomous universities without participation of their legitimate representatives.
7. 2014 The Admission system for new students is illegally controlled by the government, which began applying non-academic criteria.
8. In 2015 the Creation of the Permanent Training System for university teachers requested that university research should be controlled by Ministry of Higher Education.
9. 2015 The National Council for Universities intends to replace university autonomous authorities without the participation of the university community.
10. By 2017, 41 Universities in Venezuela are non autonomous and subjected to the Ministry of Education, even though university autonomy is protected by Constitution.
11. Since 2011 until today the Supreme Court prohibited universities to elect their authorities, while judges obedient to the executive power are used for criminalizing university rectors and to impose university authorities. Such is the case of Simon Bolivar University, where a military man was appointed last year as academic vice chancellor.
12. An openly pro government judge in Merida appointed in 2017 a postgraduate program director at the Law Faculty, violating the internal rules of the university. She also interfered in the admission of new university teachers by prohibiting the selection process involving competitive examinations in the Law Faculty of Los Andes University.

II. The Creation of a Parallel System of Non-autonomous Universities

Since 2003 a number of 41 universities have been placed under the control of Sucre and Alma Mater Missions, created for indoctrination into the Bolivarian socialist credo. Many of them do not meet the minimal quality standards. Even though 86% of universities are non-autonomous, 80% of the research that is produce comes from autonomous universities. Since these universities are subjected to a political governmental program, in them students and professors are expelled either for having an opinion critical of the Government or belonging to opposition groups. That is the case of Rafael Avendaño expelled from the Bolivarian university in Merida, on October 2016, simply for watching a television station that was not the State-owned channel, a case that was presented in 2017 before the Inter American Human Rights Commission.

III. Police and Military Repression

In a non-democratic context and facing a humanitarian crisis, university professors and students in Venezuela have involved themselves in social protests, and as a consequence they have been murdered, illegally detained and/or subjected to military justice, all while governmental or paramilitary repressive forces have illegally burst into university campuses.

In 2017, 23 university students died in off-campus protests, shot by governmental repressive forces and/or the paramilitary forces called 'colectivos' 336 students were wrongfully arrested or detained. At least 39 students and professors were detained in 2017 and subjected to military justice.

A year ago, in April 26th 2017, Juan Pernalet, a Metropolitan University Student, was killed during a social protest in Caracas when a National Bolivarian Guard shot tear gas bomb to his torso.
On February 2017, Santiago Guevara, a professor from the Carabobo University, was detained under the charge of treason and subjected to military justice.

Recently In March 5th 2018 this year Johann Adolfo Lobo Goyo and Michael Labrador, students of Los Andes University, were detained just after having been interviewed in a local television program. They were charged with offenses pertaining to the Hatred Law, a law passed on November 2017, by the illegal Constituent Assembly with the purpose of criminalizing free speech and political dissidence.

Repressive actions have also directed towards university media. In May 2016 the University of Los Andes educational TV was closed after the Bolivarian governor Alexis Ramírez declared publicly that the university TV was distorting reality and threatening peace.

IV. Violence in Universities

Violence in Universities has increased. There are high levels of insecurity in Universities and teachers and students are being robbed while teaching or attending classes. Activities and classes taking place after 5 pm had to be suspended for security reasons in many universities.

In the last 3 years a new type of violence has arisen. The natural properties of Universities (those used for research purposes) are been invaded. Lisandro Alvarado University in Lara state lost an important property in the hands of so-called "colectivos" or "Bolivarian" communes. Government has been supporting this actions and robberies. As a consequence many lines of research in progress had had to be cancelled— including lines of research based on international alliances.

On April 13th this year 2018, a natural property of the University of Los Andes destined to university research and activities, have been violently taken by "Bolivarian" groups. Even though the University has undertaken legal actions, the Bolivarian National Guard has said they can't prevent the attack unless they receive an order from above (that is, from the executive power). After being already in the property for 27 days , the Bolivarian violent groups cutted trees, killed the animals and keep destroying this important university area that should be protected, also, for its ecological value.

University authorities have also been under pressure. This year 2018 the Rector of the University of Los Andes, Professor Mario Bonucci, has been called before court two times and the judge admitted a demand against him aiming to depose him. The demand also requested that Universities were to be subjected to the Constituent Assembly, in flagrant violation of autonomic principle consecrated in the Constitution.

V. Financial restrictions

In a hyperinflationary economy, university budget has been kept even during the last 10 years, which together with the existence of an economic exchange control has affected main universities, in such issues as:

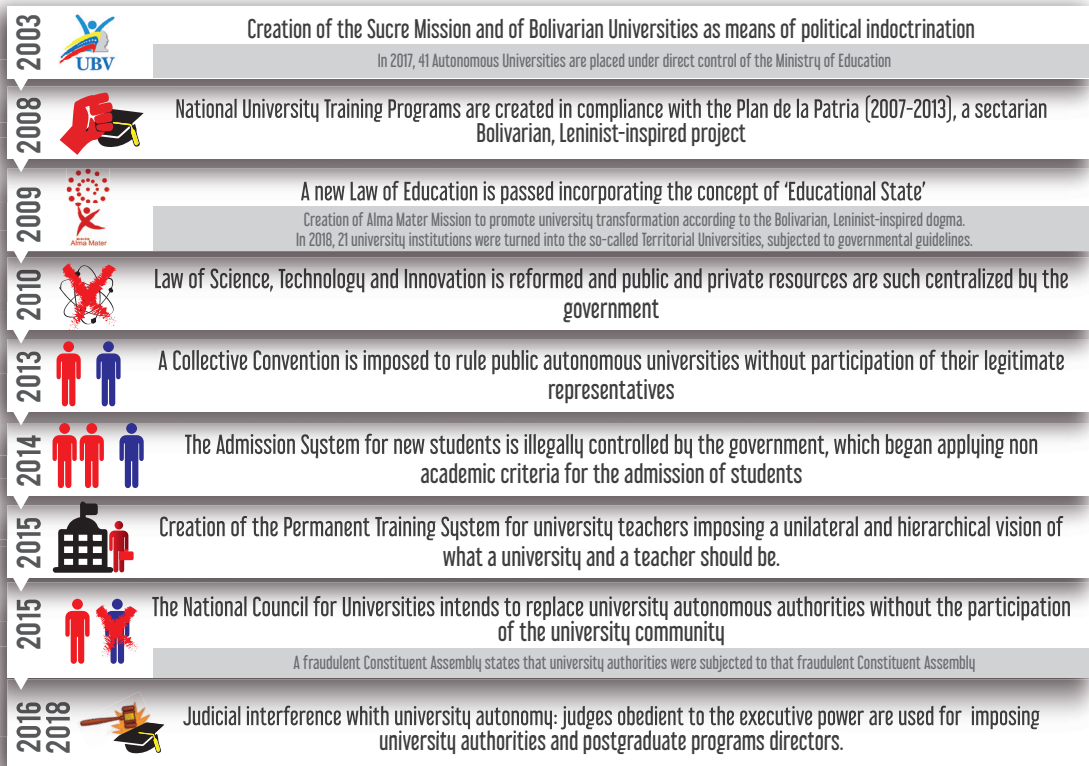
- a. Equipment and technological services acquisition including internet access and supplies necessary for laboratory researches.
- b. Mobility of professors, researchers and students in the international academic context, thus affecting the internationalization strategies of universities.
- c. Continuity of international alliances and adherence to research and academic exchange webs.
- d. Barriers to book acquisition and subscription to international scientific journals.
- e. Difficulties for maintaining and repairing university infrastructures.
- f. University salaries are so low that a teacher and professor earns between 2 and 5 dollars per month.

As a consequence universities are facing a severe diaspora and brain drain. In 2018, Universities suffered between 50% and 80% of student desertion. According to a recent information 25 thousand students have abandoned Los Andes University.

In the other hand, University research has suffered a 40% 40% decrease, between 2008 and 2014, according to a 2015 Unesco Report. This number might have increased by now.

Legislation in Violation of University Autonomy and Academic Freedom

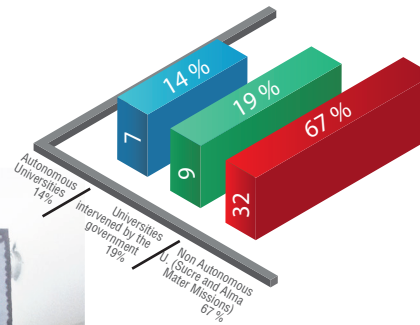
During the past 18 years, under the Bolivarian regimes of Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro, Venezuelan autonomous universities have suffered manifold attacks, the patterns of which can be summarized as follow:



New Non-Autonomous Institutionalility in Higher Education Policies

Since 2003 a number of 32 non-autonomous universities have been placed under the control of Sucre and Alma Mater Missions, created for indoctrination into the Bolivarian socialist credo. Many of them do not even have an adequate infrastructure, laboratories or libraries.

Autonomous Universities	7	14,58%
Non-Autonomous U. (Alma Mater and Sucre Missions)	32	66,67%
Universities intervened by the government	9	18,75%
Total	48	100,00%



Exhibition at the University of Security UNES that is part of the Alma Mater Mission. Students are obliged to paint and sculpt Hugo Chávez images for exhibiting them in University main hall.

Since these universities were subjected to a political governmental program, in them students and professors are expelled if they criticize governmental policies or even if they express themselves freely.