

Contribution to the Third Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations Human Rights Council 40th Session on Venezuela



Right to culture: institutional erosion, disinvestment and criminalization of scientific work in Venezuela

This report is a contribution to the 3rd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of Venezuela presented by the Human Rights Observatory of the Universidad de Los Andes (ODHULA); Human Rights Center of the Universidad Central de Venezuela (CDHUCV); Human Rights Commission of the Faculty of Juridical and Political Sciences of the Universidad del Zulia, Human Rights Center of the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (CDHUCAB); Human Rights Center of the Universidad Metropolitana (CDH-UNIMET); Academics Against Poverty (ASAP) Venezuela Chapter; Aula Abierta; and EPIKEIA Human Rights¹. It is aimed at providing information on violations of the right to science, in accordance with the obligations of the Venezuelan State in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The report was elaborated based on the review and monitoring of legislation and policies implemented by the State in the areas of science and technology in Venezuelan public universities, as well as on the review of documents and interviews with researchers from institutes and universities.

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Legislative reforms for the progressive politicization of scientific work.

1. Although the National Constitution establishes in Article 110 that the State shall recognize the public interest of science as an essential instrument for the development of the country², the State has implemented legislative reforms since 2010 with the purpose of subordinating scientific work to the construction of the "Bolivarian socialism of the XXI Century" and centralizing the management of science and technology resources in the National Executive.
2. The Organic Law of Science, Technology and Innovation (LOCTI)³ was amended in 2010 and 2014 with the purpose of attributing exclusively to the National Executive the policies and resources directed to the areas of development in science and technology, excluding from these areas the actors of the private sector and politicizing the scientific work, subjecting it to the objectives of the "Plan of the Homeland for the construction of Bolivarian socialism"⁴. The new draft reform of the LOCTI approved in first discussion in the National Assembly on May 5, 2021, perseveres in the politicization of science when it states in Article 1 that knowledge management must be chained to the revolutionary vision⁵.
3. The process of politicization of science developed by the LOCTI meant incorporating and assigning resources to political actors such as the "Socialist Communes"⁶ and requiring scientists to be involved in activities aimed at consolidating the "Bolivarian Revolution", through their participation in organizations of "Popular Power" under the political control of the government⁷. Due to its ideological bias, Venezuelan academics requested the Supreme Court of Justice to nullify the LOCTI on the grounds that it restricted the freedom of scientific research⁸.

New institutional framework for science and technology subordinated to the National Executive

4. In 2001, the National Council for Scientific and Technological Research (CONICIT), the entity in charge of science and technology management since 1967, was eliminated. With the elimination of CONICIT, the management of science became controlled by the National Executive through the Ministry of Popular Power for Science, Technology and Innovation⁹ and the National Fund for Science, Technology and Innovation (FONACIT), which assumed the functions of collection, administration and control of the resources destined to science and technology¹⁰. Decision-making and management of science passed into the hands of political actors¹¹.
5. In 2006, the subjugation of science to politics deepened with the government program "Mission Science", which established a new model of knowledge production to build the socialism of the 21st century¹², without consulting the national universities, nor the associations of researchers and university professors¹³. The ideologization of scientific work was accentuated in 2011 with the creation of the "Bolivarian Front of Innovators, Researchers and Science Workers (FEBRIN)" which acts as a partisan organization. The then Minister of People's Power for

Science, Technology and Intermediate Industries (MCTI), Ricardo Menéndez pointed out that it was "a patriotic front for the construction of a new science"¹⁴.

6. The politicization of science has had a negative impact on scientific productivity and migration of researchers. According to official figures the number of researchers has decreased 89.7% between 2016 and 2019¹⁵ and the number of published articles would have decreased 55% between 2011 and 2019¹⁶.
7. It has also negatively impacted the operation of important laboratories that provided services for the health care of the entire population. The Quimbiotec laboratory provided blood products to the entire national public health network but in 2015 it was politically intervened and its researchers were persecuted¹⁷. As a result the laboratory was paralyzed and today the country's hospitals lack blood products¹⁸.

Intimidation and persecution of scientists and academics

8. Scientists and academics have been victims of disqualification and intimidation by high government officials who violate the freedom indispensable for scientific research. Since 2009, then President Hugo Chávez, in a nationally televised address, stated that "researchers should stop working on obscure projects and go to the neighborhoods to do something useful"¹⁹. The State imposes obstacles to academic and research freedom when, through the Socialist Plan for the economic and social development of the Nation (Plan de la Patria 2019-2025), it establishes as policy for research, the conformation of "a socialist productive model, the strengthening of socialist ethics and the construction of socialism"²⁰.
9. Professors Liliana Kurz and Jeff Wilkesman²¹, from the University of Carabobo, had to emigrate in 2017 due to the impossibility to continue developing their research in the areas of biotechnology and molecular biology, as a result of political intervention and restrictions in the allocation of resources for research²².
10. In 2019, the organization Médicosn Unidos de Venezuela denounced the detention of 11 doctors in several states of the country and acts of threat, persecution and intimidation against at least 45 medical professionals, for reporting on the crisis in the health system²³. In March 2020, Dr. Freddy Pachano, director of the School of Medicine of the University of Zulia, had to flee the country to avoid arrest, because Omar Prieto, governor of Zulia state, asked the security agencies to investigate the academic because he had expressed his concern about the lack of biosecurity equipment to deal with the covid-19 pandemic in that state, which later became the epicenter of the pandemic²⁴.
11. In May 2020, researchers from the Academy of Physical, Mathematical and Natural Sciences of Venezuela were threatened and accused of "generating terror in the people" by Diosdado Cabello, then president of the illegal National Constituent Assembly²⁵, after publishing on May 8, 2020, a technical report warning about the possibility of increased cases of covid-19 and recommending the increased application of PCR-RT tests for better management of the pandemic²⁶.
12. The persecution of scientists for political reasons has also affected research in the areas of oil and energy. From being a pioneer in oil research, Venezuela has fallen

to the point where it does not even produce gasoline to supply the domestic market. In 2003, half of the researchers of the Venezuelan Petroleum Technological Institute (INTEVEP), considered one of the most important oil research centers in the world, were dismissed for having participated in a strike against the government of Hugo Chávez²⁷.

Elimination and politicization of research grants.

13. In 2010, the Research Promotion Program (PPI), a national grant program that had been in operation since 1990, was eliminated and replaced, without consulting the scientific community, by the Program to Stimulate Innovation and Research (PEII), which incorporates non-scientific criteria and actors. With the elimination of the PPI, 336 researchers from the Universidad Central de Venezuela, 220 researchers from the Universidad del Zulia and 140 researchers from the Universidad de Los Andes were removed²⁸.
14. The new PEII program modified the evaluation scales and the evaluation commissions were made up of people who were clearly pro-government²⁹. Grant amounts were reduced to US \$5 per quarter by 2016 and payments were made with delays of up to 1 year³⁰. In 2016, date of the last call, the National Observatory of Science Technology and Innovation (ONCTI) announced the absence of payment due to lack of resources³¹. Six years after that call, no others have been made and the program disappeared without explanation.
15. By 2016 FONACIT stopped funding 80.4% of the research projects it funded in 2001 and its contribution to public universities for research funding dropped 91.8% between 2004 and 2016³².
16. On the other hand, researchers' salaries are less than US \$7 per month and although as of 2019 the government applies a bonus policy that ranges between US \$50 and \$200 per month, these bonuses are delivered through the patria system³³, as a "doctrinaire and nationalist incentive"³⁴, bonuses that do not cover basic needs since in 2019 90% of the personnel of the Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Research (IVIC) denounced lacking sufficient income to live with dignity³⁵.
17. These regressive policies have produced a dramatic decline in scientific productivity. In 2001 Venezuela ranked fifth in scientific productivity in Latin America. By 2020 it will be in tenth place. They have also affected areas necessary for the country's development such as agricultural sciences. In 2012, accredited researchers in the PEII in agricultural sciences, represented 23%, reducing to 11% in 2015³⁶.

Budgetary constraints for the development and dissemination of science

18. The autonomous public universities, which historically have generated 80% of research in Venezuela, have been subjected to a progressive budget reduction that has severely limited their research activities.

19. The budget that was allocated to public universities in 2020, does not reach 10% of what is required for academic and scientific activities³⁷ and, by order of the Ministry of University Education, does not include resources for maintenance or construction of infrastructure³⁸.
20. Between 2004 and 2017 the State decreased the allocation for the acquisition of books and teaching and research materials by 99.9%³⁹.
21. The president of the Academy of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, pointed out in 2017 that IVIC researchers, one of the most important scientific institutes in the country, could not buy reagents for their laboratories due to the derisory amount allocated to projects and the existing bureaucratic obstacles⁴⁰. IVIC has not received a budget since 2015 and its scientific production capacity was reduced by 70%⁴¹. By 2018, 75% of IVIC laboratories were paralyzed⁴².
22. As a result, drug resistance testing for HIV and hepatitis have been paralyzed at IVIC since 2015. The Department of Microbiology and Cell Biology, which does research on malaria, tuberculosis, AIDS, diarrhea-causing viruses and pathogenic fungi, faces the decline of its research due to the migration of 50% of its researchers⁴³.
23. The government has centralized the purchase of reagents, and only allocates between 5% and 10% of the reagents requested for a whole year⁴⁴. The Dean of the Faculty of Sciences of the Universidad de Los Andes (ULA) has pointed out that the scientific production of this Faculty has decreased by 95% due to lack of budget⁴⁵.
24. In spite of the current crisis of the health system and the precarious situation of medical research, the government has not called for an emergency plan that would allow Centers and Institutes to have access to the necessary supplies and materials for their research.
25. The Councils for Scientific, Humanistic and Technological Development of Public Universities (CDCHT) stopped receiving financial resources since 2009⁴⁶. The director of the CDCHTA of the ULA, pointed out in 2020 that the institution lacked resources to finance projects⁴⁷. At ULA, the number of funded research projects dropped from 248 to 16, between 2016 and 2019⁴⁸. The lack of budgetary resources has resulted in the inability to open calls for new research projects⁴⁹.
26. University professors and researchers do not have grants to carry out scientific exchange activities, due to the serious budgetary situation. Nor can they cover it with their salaries, which range between US \$5 and \$15 per month. This situation began in 2009, with a presidential decree on sumptuary expenses in the public administration⁵⁰ that forced researchers to be authorized directly by the Vice-Presidency of the Republic to attend academic activities abroad.
27. The acquisition of books and subscriptions to international scientific journals has also been affected by the lack of budget⁵¹. The Integrated Library of Architecture, Science and Engineering of the ULA, the second most important in the country in its area, has not been able to acquire periodicals since 2010, nor specialized databases since 2012, nor books since 2017⁵².

28. The Immunohistochemistry Service of the Anatomopathological Institute of the Central University of Venezuela (UCV), the main reference for the classification of neoplasms in the country, lost its capacity to determine tumor markers, affecting the care of oncology patients, due to the lack of supplies⁵³.
- 29.

Deterioration of the research and science dissemination infrastructure.

30. The lack of budget has prevented the repair and maintenance of research infrastructure, a situation that has been aggravated by the covid-19 quarantine. At ULA, 80% of its infrastructure is deteriorated. This situation is similar in all universities and research centers in the country⁵⁴. At the Universidad de Oriente (UDO), 80% of the electrical wiring is damaged and cannot be repaired due to budgetary restrictions⁵⁵.
31. In 2019 IVIC researchers denounced lack of maintenance of their buildings and the paralyzation of half of their transportation units due to lack of spare parts⁵⁶.
32. The roof of the Integrated Library of Architecture, Sciences and Engineering (BIACI) of the ULA presents severe leaks that put at risk a collection of approximately 76,101 specialized titles and periodicals and 150,565 in the areas of Architecture, Sciences and Engineering⁵⁷, affecting more than 45,000 users⁵⁸.
33. The situation of deterioration and out datedness of public museums in the country is alarming. In February 2021, a publication of the newspaper El Nacional denounced that the Museum of Bellas Artes, the Museum of Sciences, the Galery of Nationals' Arts, the Museum of la Estampa and of design "Carlos Cruz-Diez" and the Museum Alejandro Otero were in a state of abandonment and deterioration of their infrastructure. The Museum of Bellas Artes, which is the oldest fine arts museum in the country, has walls and corridors stained by leaks, and the Science Museum is totally outdated⁵⁹.
34. The Armando Reveron Museum of Contemporary Art has been dismantled, its staff has been relocated to other museums and is closed due to leaks and fungal contamination, with the loss of important works of national and international artists⁶⁰.
35. In 2005, then President Hugo Chavez had decided to create the National Museums Foundation to group all the museums of the country. This decision meant the centralization of the acquisition of works and pieces, depriving the museums of autonomy and power to decide on the process of acquisition, increase and management of their collections⁶¹.

Unsafe environments for science due to looting, robberies and invasions

36. One hundred security incidents recorded at the ULA Agricultural Research Institute in 2019 affected six laboratories and 50 years of research work⁶².
37. The Institute of Tropical Medicine of the UCV⁶³, one of the most important research centers, has been robbed 76 times between 2015 and 2020⁶⁴ affecting the care of

HIV⁶⁵ patients . To the high rate of insecurity is added the lack of supplies which prevents testing for cytomegalovirus, hepatitis and rubella, failing to attend 65% of patients in 2018⁶⁶.

38. The Oceanographic Institute of UDO⁶⁷ world reference in marine research is destroyed by looting and theft and 95% of its research activities have been paralyzed⁶⁸.
39. Since 2016 the Judibana Experimental Station of the ULA has been invaded, affecting bovine genetics and agroforestry research⁶⁹. Despite the existence of an eviction decision, it has not been complied with by the security forces⁷⁰. The Rector of ULA has requested the police authorities to intervene to protect the external areas of the university and coordinate actions for the eviction of the invaders, however, there has been no response to date^{71,72}.
40. In June 2020, the library of the Universidad de Oriente (UDO) Campus Sucre was burned down and more than 120,000 academic titles were lost. The damages caused by the fire amount to one million dollars. The firefighters of the UDO assured that the fire had been arson. There are no resources to recover the library⁷³.

Censorship and limitations on internet access for the development, access and dissemination of science.

41. The Venezuelan State has been systematically taking regressive measures that affect the development, access and dissemination of science. The result of these measures is evident in the severe limitations of access to internet, literature, data and scientific production works. Internet connectivity in Venezuela is among the slowest in the world⁷⁴. According to the study of Speedtest Global Index, a portal that measures Internet speed at an international level, Venezuela's connection is ranked 136th out of 137 countries⁷⁵.
42. According to the Observatory of Universities (OBU) in 2018, 20% of teachers in the state of Lara never had internet in their workplace, a figure that for 2019 increased by more than 230% and reached 67% of teachers. In 2018, 33% of students never had internet at their university and in 2019 this figure rose to 58%⁷⁶.
43. During the quarantine by covid-19, the "University at Home Plan" proposed by the government, could not be implemented due to electricity and internet failures⁷⁷. In September 2020, the Directorate of Data and Telecommunications of the ULA warned that the Universidad de Los Andes had been left without connectivity due to the damage caused to the network by the constant electrical failures⁷⁸. To the internet service interruptions has been added the censorship applied by the State to web platforms for the dissemination of information. A 2019 report by the organization IPYS Venezuela, revealed that more than 33% of internet content was censored⁷⁹.
44. In the last 6 years, universities have been at risk of losing access to institutional repositories that exist on the web to give visibility to research⁸⁰, for lack of payment to the Internet Address Registry for Latin America and the Caribbean^{81,82}. In 2020, the Association of Rectors of Venezuelan Universities (AVERU) warned about a

possible computer blackout, since the State made the payment after the due date⁸³. In 2020, a government order through the National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL) required universities to change their institutional domain, affecting the visibility and citation and reference system of scientific publications⁸⁴.

45. Between 2002 and 2021, the scientific production of Venezuelan universities decreased from 3.4% to 0.6%⁸⁵. According to ScimagoLab, between the five-year periods of 2013-2017 and 2014-2018, the production of Venezuelan higher education institutions fell by 7%, which is equivalent to a decrease of 600 publications in those periods⁸⁶. The position of Venezuelan universities in international rankings has also deteriorated considerably. In 2010, 8 of the country's universities were included among the top 100 in Latin America, while today only 4 occupy those places⁸⁷⁸⁸.

46.

Restriction of access to the benefits of scientific progress.

47. The State has promoted pseudoscience, creating false expectations and putting at risk the health of the most vulnerable sectors. In March 2020, the National Executive reported on national television⁸⁹ about a herbal preparation that could cure covid-19 disease⁹⁰. In January 2021, the government announced that Venezuelan scientists had developed the drug Carvativir or miracle drops as a cure for covid-19⁹¹. The Venezuelan National Academy of Medicine (ANM), warned about the lack of scientific verification of Carvativir, as well as any natural medicine for covid-19⁹².

48. No effective vaccination plan for covid-19 has been provided and vaccination of the population is conditioned to registration in the Patria System⁹³. According to figures from the Pan American Health Organization, Venezuela had only vaccinated 4% of its population by June 23, 2021⁹⁴, occupying the last places in the region⁹⁵ and according to information from Transparencia Venezuela, it would take 1,219 weeks to vaccinate the entire population at the rate of May 2021⁹⁶.

49. The National Academy of Medicine expressed on June 21, 2021 its concern for the inoperability of the National Technical Vaccination Board in charge of establishing the National Vaccination Plan against covid-19⁹⁷.

50. The Microbiology Laboratory of the Universidad de Los Andes was not supplied with the supplies to perform PCR tests (for covid-19), despite the fact that on March 18, 2020, the Ministry of People's Power for Health had approved the certification of this Laboratory to perform the diagnostic tests, thus affecting a population of one million people.

Recommendations

51. To revoke norms that centralize in the National Executive the administration and control of resources destined to science and technology, and that subordinate scientific work to political doctrines and ideologies.

52. Allow the scientific community to participate in decision-making and policy management in science and technology, and immediately cease the disqualification and persecution of scientists who warn and report on the health crisis.
53. To recover the national research subsidy programs and eliminate any political or ideological bias for their admission and permanence, and cease any action and policy that affects the exercise of academic and research freedom.
54. Guarantee the necessary funding to recover the research infrastructure and take measures to protect the facilities of universities and research centers, ensuring a favorable environment for the conservation and development of science.
55. Guarantee the necessary funding to recover the infrastructure of museums and the protection of cultural and scientific heritage, guaranteeing the security of their spaces.
56. Not to censor or apply arbitrary restrictions that limit access to the Internet, scientific knowledge and its dissemination, and not to misinform or propagate hoaxes that erode understanding and respect for science.
57. Promote the international cooperation of researchers, guaranteeing an adequate budget for internationalization and academic exchange programs.
58. To guarantee access to the benefits of science to the entire population without restrictions.
59. Implement policies to guarantee that research centers and institutes have access to inputs and materials necessary for research.

Notes

¹**Human Rights Observatory of the Universidad de Los Andes (ODH-ULA)**. Created in March 2014 and dedicated to the promotion and defense of academic freedom, university autonomy and the right to science. It is an organization that contributes to the documentation, denunciation and dissemination of human rights violations. It is an organization that is focused on being a local, national and international reference that promotes the culture of human rights, with autonomy, plurality, independence and impartiality. Specifically, it carries out documentation, monitoring, follow-up, legal assistance and human rights education activities in the states of Mérida, Táchira and Trujillo. It conducts strategic litigation and has participated in public hearings before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. It contributed information on Academic Freedom and University Autonomy in the Second Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review on Venezuela in 2016. ODH-ULA is part of local and national human rights networks. Mail: odhula@gmail.com Website: www.uladdhh.org.ve; **Center for Peace and Human Rights of the Central University of Venezuela (CPDHUCV)**. Created in 1986, it is a university unit of the Central University of Venezuela on education, research and defense of human rights, culture of peace, democracy, academic freedom and promotion and defense of ESCR. It maintains alliances with university Human Rights Centers and civil society organizations working for human rights. It is part of the Foro por la Vida, the oldest group of human rights organizations in the country. Founder of the Human Rights Award in Venezuela together with the Canadian Embassy. He is part of the Specialized Academic Network of the IACHR and the International Network of SDG promoters. Website: <http://www.ucv.ve/navegacion-horizontal/areas/areas-generales/de-interes/centro-para-la-paz-y-derechos-humanos-ucv/quienes-somos.html> ; **Human Rights Commission of the Faculty of Legal and Political Sciences of the University of Zulia (Human Rights Commission of the FCJP- LUZ)**. Founded 2014. It functions as a unit for assistance to university students who are victims of human rights violations

and research in the thematic areas of International Law and Human Rights, aimed at the formulation and implementation of research projects and programs, outreach and community service, dissemination and dissemination of their results, and the organization of national and international academic events; **Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (CDH-UCAB)**. Founded on November 15, 1999. It is the first university human rights initiative in Venezuela. It develops its work in the traditional activities of the academy, such as training, research, extension and legal accompaniment of cases in the following areas: right to participation, freedom of expression, international protection systems, transitional justice, modern slavery and protection of refugees and migrants. Website <https://cdh.ucab.edu.ve/Correo> electronic: cddhh@ucab.edu.ve | cdhucab@gmail.com; **Aula Abierta (AA)**. Created in 2016. Non-governmental organization, founded in 2016, that works for the defense of university students in Latin America, through initiatives to promote and defend human rights in the university environment, especially academic freedom, the right to quality education and freedom of association and peaceful assembly. She has participated in several hearings before the IACHR. She was recommended by the CESCR to consultative status and is a member of the Specialized Academic Network for Technical Cooperation of the IACHR. Website: <http://aulaabiervenezuela.org/> <http://derechosuniversitarios.org/> / <https://libertadacademica.org/Correo> electronic: aulaabiervave@gmail.com; **Epikēia Human Rights (EPIKEIA)**. Created in May 2017. It is a non-governmental organization dedicated to the promotion and defense of access to justice, democratic institutionalism, academic freedom, university autonomy and the right to science. Its mission focuses on promoting citizenship, democratic values and human rights in non-democratic contexts. Epikēia Human Rights promotes in a didactic way the culture of human rights with plurality, independence and impartiality with a view to the enjoyment of all rights for all people. It carries out research, documentation, monitoring and systematization of human rights violations. It provides legal assistance to victims of human rights violations at the national and international level through litigation strategies before protection bodies. Epikēia Human Rights is part of local and national human rights networks. Email: epikeiaddhh@gmail.com Website: <http://epikeiaddhh.org/>; **Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Metropolitana (CDH-UNIMET)** Founded in 2007. Dedicated to documenting, denouncing and disseminating serious human rights violations linked to arbitrary detentions or extrajudicial executions in the context of peaceful protests, violations of university autonomy, academic freedom and the Venezuelan migration crisis, especially in relation to human trafficking. Provides legal assistance to students arbitrarily detained in the context of peaceful demonstrations and advises other victims of serious human rights violations. Prepares reports and academic articles related to International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, International Criminal Law and Transitional Justice. E-mail: cdh@unimet.edu.ve ; Contact website: <https://www.unimet.edu.ve/centros-y-observatorios/cdh-unimet/> ; **Academics Stand Against Poverty. Chapter Venezuela (Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP), Chapter Venezuela)**. Created in 2020. ASAP is an international academic network born to confront the norms and practices that perpetuate poverty in the world since 2010 at the global level. Email: venezuela.asap@gmail.com Website: <https://academicoscontrapobrezavenezuela.wordpress.com/>

²National Constitution. Article 110. "The State shall recognize the public interest of science, technology, knowledge, innovation and its applications and the necessary information services as fundamental instruments for the economic, social and political development of the country, as well as for national security and sovereignty".

³Official Gazette of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela No. 37.291 dated September 26, 2001. Organic Law of Science, Technology and Innovation. Available at: <https://wipolex.wipo.int/es/text/235660>

⁴Observatorio de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad de Los Andes (ODH-ULA) (2021). Plan de la Patria 2019-2025: Consolidation of the parallel university system in Venezuela (2021). Available at: <https://www.uladdhh.org.ve/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Plan-patria-2019-2025-sistema-universidades-paralelas-venezuela-Def.pdf>

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⁶Organic Law of Science, Technology and Innovation (LOCTI) Article 3: "The communes that carry out science, technology and innovation activities and their applications are subject to this law". Article 7

paragraph 1 of the Organic Law of Communes states that their purpose is to 'develop and consolidate the communal state as an expression of the Popular Power and support for the construction of the socialist society'. Available at:

http://www4.cne.gob.ve/onpc/web/documentos/Leyes/Ley_Organica_de_las_Comunas.pdf

⁷Organic Law of the People's Power Article 7 numeral 1: 'The purpose of the people's power is to promote the strengthening of the organization of the people in order to consolidate the revolutionary protagonic democracy and to build the bases of the socialist society (...)'. Available at:

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²⁰Observatorio de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad de Los Andes/ ODH-ULA (2021). Plan for the Homeland 2019-2025. Consolidation of the Parallel University System in Venezuela. In: <https://www.uladdhh.org.ve/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Plan-patria-2019-2025-sistema-universidades-paralelas-venezuela-Def.pdf>

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