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US SENATE TO ASK OAS TO TAKE A STANCE ON RCTV CASE

US Republican Senator Richard Lugar and Democrat Senator and pre-candidate Christopher Dodd prepared a draft resolution in favor of freedom of expression in Venezuela and private TV channel Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV), which faces closure next May 27

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The United States Senate on May 25 is likely to endorse a resolution showing concern about the Venezuelan Government decision not to renew a broadcast license for private television channel RCTV and urging the Organization of American States to take a stance on this issue. The next OAS assembly is scheduled for June.

The draft resolution submitted by Republican Senator Richard Lugar and Democrat Senator Christopher Dodd voices "profound concern about the transgression against freedom of thought and expression that is being attempted and committed in Venezuela by the refusal of the President of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, to renew the concession of the television station 'Radio Caracas Televisión' (RCTV) merely because of its adherence to an editorial and informational stance distinct from the thinking of the Government of Venezuela."

The document also "strongly encourages the Organization of American States to respond appropriately, with full consideration of the necessary institutional instruments, to such transgression."

The draft resolution reminds that "the refusal to renew the concession of any television or radio broadcasting station that complies with legal regulations in the matter of telecommunications constitutes a transgression against the freedom of thought and expression, which is prohibited by Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights, signed at San Jose, Costa Rica."

The motion also claims that "according to the principles of the American Convention on Human Rights and the Inter-American Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression, to both of which Venezuela is a party, the decision not to renew the concession of the television station RCTV is an assault against freedom of thought and expression and cannot be accepted by democratic countries, especially by those in North America who are signatories to the American Convention on Human Rights."

Venezuela replies

Meanwhile, Venezuelan Ambassador to the United States Bernardo Álvarez said he met a number of US Senators "to explain to them point by point the elements of the resolution."



Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Álvarez claims RCTV is waging a "campaign of misinformation" (Photo: Gil Montaña)

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Álvarez told US lawmakers that the Venezuelan government's refusal to renew RCTV broadcast license "was not based on the media's editorial stance," but it was an "independent decision" within the Government scope of fulfilling what is established in the Venezuelan Constitution, with a view to democratize the radio spectrum in the country.

Álvarez told official television channel VTV that the draft resolution submitted by Lugar and Dodd is part of "a campaign of misinformation RCTV has been deploying."

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