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Last Updated: Friday, 25 May 2007, 09:20 GMT 10:20 UK

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Chavez rejects TV move criticism

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has dismissed outside criticism of his decision to take opposition TV channel RCTV off air as "laughable".

The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the European Parliament have both voiced concern that the move will undermine freedom of expression.

Mr Chavez rejects this and accuses the channel of plotting against him and backing a coup attempt in 2002.

RCTV is due to have its licence revoked at midnight on 27 May.

It is to be replaced by a state-sponsored station.

On Thursday, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington approved a motion expressing "profound concern" at the decision not to renew RCTV's licence.

It was "an assault against the freedom of thought and expression that could not be accepted by democratic countries," the motion said.

Also on Thursday, the European Parliament vote 43 to 22 to approve a resolution saying the move could set "an alarming precedent".

Mr Chavez said he could not care less about the Senate committee's motion made him laugh, while the European Parliament's move made him cry, "but for them".

The motion debated at the European Parliament's meeting in Strasbourg was voted on by 65 MEPs out of a body that has 784 members.

"This is a gigantic demonstration that the European political class thinks this is of no interest to them," he said.

Demonstrations



RCTV is Venezuela's oldest private broadcaster

VENEZUELA UNDER CHAVEZ

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The licence held by RCTV - Venezuela's oldest private broadcaster - is due to expire at midnight on Sunday and will not be renewed.

Its frequency is set to be taken over by a new government-funded channel called Televisora Venezolana Social (TVES), which officials insist will have diverse programming.

There have been demonstrations in Venezuela during the week both for and against the decision not to renew RCTV's licence.

President Chavez was re-elected by a landslide last year.

His welfare spending programme has won him massive support among the poor but his opponents accuse him of turning the country into an increasingly authoritarian socialist state, modelled on Fidel Castro's Cuba.

Are you in Venezuela? Do you think it is right that RCTV's licence is to be revoked? You can share your thoughts with the BBC using the form below:

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