

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 11, 2009

Secretary Janet Napolitano
Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

We would like to bring to your attention a matter regarding the evaluation of asylum cases for Venezuelan nationals. We respectfully request that the asylum claims of Venezuelan nationals be evaluated in a fair and impartial way, as well as with the recognition of the circumstances and events currently unfolding in Venezuela.

As you may be aware, there is an alarming increase in the number of Venezuelans who are fleeing their homeland due to the ever increasing authoritarian character of the Chavez regime. Over the past decade, Hugo Chavez has and continues to implement policies that directly undermine the rule of law and freedom within Venezuela.

The South Florida community that we represent has become a home for many Venezuelan nationals who desire nothing more than to live in freedom. As we talk to these individuals, we see the fear and frustration they live with on a daily basis. A fear and frustration based on the fact that they were forced to leave their beloved homeland, while many of their friends, family and fellow countrymen remain under the repressive grip of Hugo Chavez.

According to information our offices have received, a high percentage of asylum requests made by Venezuelan nationals have been denied, however. We find this troubling since the evidence is mounting that Venezuela's government is increasing its persecution of those who disagree with its undemocratic actions.

We believe that the United States has a moral responsibility to stand with those Venezuelans who are seeking a better life for themselves and their children - a life that is free of repression, intimidation and coercion. A fair evaluation of their asylum requests is the least we can do to ensure that our great nation remains a steadfast ally of those who seek freedom and justice.

Once again, we would like to request that asylum requests from Venezuelans nationals be evaluated fairly and with the recognition of what is currently occurring within Venezuela. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



Lincoln Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress