



Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the UK and Ireland

Fact Sheet:

THE TRUTH ABOUT 34 MEDIA STATIONS THAT STOPPED BROADCASTING VIA PUBLIC AIRWAVES

There has been much uproar in the international media in recent days as various radio stations in Venezuela stopped broadcasting via the public airwaves. As usual, much disinformation has guided this debate. This fact-sheet should clarify the issues and rectify the imbalanced reporting of the mainstream media.

CLOSURE OF 34 MEDIA STATIONS

The National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL) ascribed to the Ministry of Popular Power for Infrastructure and Housing (MOPVI) announced the closure of 34 Venezuelan media stations **as they operated illegally, without a proper broadcasting permit, as foreseen in the Telecommunications Law, ratified in the year 2000.**¹

The mainstream international media tries to portray the closure of these stations as if it were the result of a deliberate decision taken by President Chávez, when in fact it is the consequence of the rightful application of the law.

Here are the Facts:

1. The operators of the 34 media-stations, which went off the public airwaves on August 1, 2009, knew that they were broadcasting illegally since the year 2002, when CONATEL asked all media operators to present their licenses in order to adapt their situation to the requirements of the new telecommunications law.
2. The data-revision process back in 2002 brought to light that **the 34 media-stations in question were not complying with the law** because of various irregularities, among those are:
 - the passing-away of a concession holder and the continuous use of the license under the name of the passed-away person;
 - the expiration of the broadcast-concession and/or the lack of renewal of the concession within the time period determined by the law;
 - the renunciation of a concession and the continuing use of the airwaves without any permit;
 - tax evasion;
 - the lack of the lawful transfer to a new concession holder.
3. The Venezuelan Telecommunications Law foresees in Article 73 that broadcast-concessions can only be granted by the National Telecommunications Commission, CONATEL, and cannot be passed on automatically among family, friends or business partners.
4. Due to the irregularities mentioned the 34 stations were supposed to stop broadcasting in 2002, however, they continued using the airwaves without legal license until 2009.
5. On May 25, 2009 CONATEL asked again all radio-operators to present their licenses and to update their records. However, the 34 stations in question did not respond to



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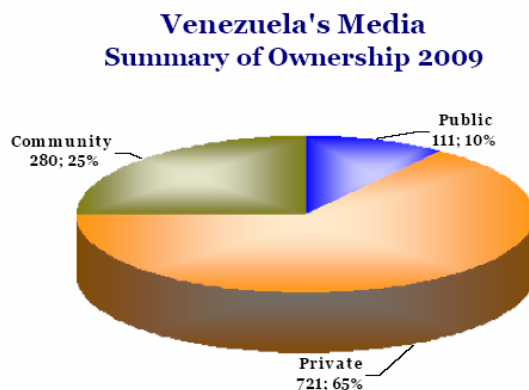
CONATEL's request. As it was known already that they were operating outside the margins of the law, they had to stop broadcasting immediately. Cabello stated in a recent press conference that authorities went to inform the 34 stations about the incompliance with the law, but they closed the doors in front of them. Cabello said "there is no way to close the doors to the truth".

- 6. In other cases, administrative processes were opened. Decisions are still pending on 206 more stations.
- 7. In that context Diosdado Cabello, Minister for Infrastructure and Housing, faced those opposing the measure and said "I challenge those who operate the Circuito Nacional Belfort to provide a document showing that CONATEL has authorized them to operate the 102.3 frequency. They are saying that the station is theirs and it's not true...They have started to say that we are revoking concessions and that is not true. **The state is simply recovering the concessions that were being used illegally ... It is an act of justice that has to do with giving power to people**".²
- 8. Nonetheless those affected by the measure can continue broadcasting their programs through the internet as the regulation only applies to the use of the state-owned airwaves.
- 9. Furthermore it is worth noting that despite these 34 stations being off the public airwaves and 206 being under revision, **there are another 872 TV and radio stations operating in Venezuela**. There

are currently 794 FM radio stations, 210 AM radio stations and 108 TV stations using the public airwaves in Venezuela. In total 65 % are commercial, 10 % are public, and 25% are community outlets. In fact, CONATEL has increased the use of the airwaves by private stations by **granting, for instance, 181 concessions to private FM radio stations owned by the private sector during the administration of President Hugo Chavez**.³

- 10. Another aspect that has not been mentioned in the international media is the fact that people in Venezuela have rallied in favor of the measure. On July 23, the National Association of Free and Alternative Community Media (AMCLA), rallied in Caracas and called for radio and television airwaves to be given to the people. On Sunday several hundred people convened in front of CONATEL in support of the government measure. In that context one person mentioned "I'm totally in agreement with the measure that minister Diosdado Cabello has taken of placing the airwaves in the hands of the Venezuelan people."⁴

London, August 25, 2009



¹ Telecommunication Law, June 2000. http://www.tsj.gov.ve/legislacion/LT_ley.htm
² <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/news/4683>
³ Fact-Sheet, Venezuelan Embassy Washington D.C. http://www.embavenez-us.org/factsheet/Recent-Media-Events_FS-US.pdf
⁴ <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/news/4683>