

Veneconomy

Will we see him at The Hague?

This Monday, November 21, Diego Arria filed an accusation against Hugo Chávez for crimes against humanity before the International Criminal Court based in The Hague. This has extremely important implications for a number of reasons:

- 1) The International Criminal Court (ICC), made up of representatives from the 91 states party to the Rome Statute, among them Venezuela, is the “first permanent international judicial organism charged with pursuing and condemning the most serious crimes committed by individuals under International Law.”
- 2) The criminal charge (or *notitia criminis*) filed by Arria against Hugo Chávez as an individual before the ICC is supported by allegations by a group of Venezuelan lawyers advised by European experts specializing in cases of crimes against humanity.
- 3) The brief containing the charge, consisting of more than 2,500 pages, is supported not only by the testimonies of more than 500 victims, but also by recordings of public statements made by Hugo Chávez as well as reports by Venezuelan and international agencies that corroborate the systematic persecution of the civil population by the President as a matter of government policy and conspiracy to commit crimes with narco-terrorist groups such as ETA, the FARC, and the ELN.
- 4) The first-rate credentials of the person filing the charges, Diego Arria, who was a prosecution witness at the trial of Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia, sentenced for his crimes against the population, and is currently being called on to testify at the trial of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic on charges of genocide.

It is now up to Luis Moreno Ocampo, the CCI’s chief prosecutor, to say whether Chávez will go to The Hague or not, as he is the person who will have to validate the evidence and allow the accusation or not, and then the Court itself will have to decide whether or not to go ahead and hear the case against Hugo Chávez.

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