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VENEZUELA'S FORMER PRESIDENT, CARLOS ANDRÉS PÉREZ, ISSUES A CALL FOR VIOLENCE FROM MIAMI

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In recent months, Venezuela's powerful opposition has repeatedly suggested that violence is a viable solution to the country's political problems. *While the government of President Hugo Chávez has stated firmly that it will respect and adhere to the rule of law, the opposition has not followed suit.* In an interview from Miami, published on July 25, 2004 in the Venezuelan opposition newspaper El Nacional, former Venezuelan President again insisted that violence is the only option remaining for those Venezuelan's who oppose President Chávez.

"...[D]emonstrations don't topple governments... We can't abandon the streets. We must be in the streets, but not with dancing and idiocies like that... There will be violence...I am working to get Chávez out. Violence will permit his ouster. It is the only path we have... I am part of that battalion. As it sounds, it should be understood. I am part of this battalion....Chávez should die like a dog, that is what he deserves, begging the pardon of those noble animals..."¹

This is not the first time that the former President has called for violence to achieve a change in government in Venezuela, however.. On May 6, the former President, who currently lives in the U.S., told a Colombian radio journalist:

"We are inclined to remove him from power, but we are convinced that the way to do that is not through peaceful means, but by force . . . all peaceful means to remove Chávez have been exhausted." Pérez, who lives in exile in the United States, said that "there will be blood spilled."²

President Chávez reacted to the comments made by the former President by appealing to Venezuela's opposition to maintain the rule of law, eschew violence, and distance themselves from those opposition factions that advocate violence. **"We need an opposition that is loyal to the country, so we can work in the building of our nation in spite of our differences,"** said the President. **"I hope the more rational members [of the opposition] will not heed his call to violence."³**

¹ CAP rechaza el pasado y se considera el futuro: "El 15 de agosto no se resolverá nada" El Nacional, 25 de Julio de 2004
Ramon Hernandez

² "Carlos Andrés Pérez insta a sacara Chávez por la fuerza" Associated Press, 6 May 2004

³ <http://www.rnv.gov.ve/noticias/>