

The Executive Committee of LASA values the opinions of its membership and appreciates the revision of the proposed resolution recently submitted by the Venezuela Section. The EC shares the concern of the Venezuela Section at the current situation in Venezuela. The EC is keenly aware that the situation in Venezuela is serious and is deteriorating rapidly.

After intensive deliberation, by majority vote, the Executive Committee of LASA voted against approval of the resolution presented by the Venezuela Section as currently written. This letter outlines the process by which the EC came to this decision as well as the primary reasons expressed by the EC members for this decision.

All EC members reviewed the revised proposed resolution and an intensive exchange of ideas followed. All members of the EC rejected the call for a joint LASA-EC delegation, as explained in point 3, below. The EC thus resolved to vote to either (1) approve the revised resolution as is minus point three of the “resolved” section; or (2) to reject the resolution altogether. As already noted, the majority of EC members voted against approval of the resolution. The primary concerns raised include:

1. Regarding the second point of the resolution, several EC members raised the concern that it does not adequately historicize the current crisis and focuses solely on government actions. Several suggested that, given the extreme polarization in Venezuela, it appears too partisan and one-sided, and suggested a more nuanced and historicized statement of the problem is necessary.

In the Lima meeting, the EC had suggested the following alternative phrasing, which was not included in the revised version of the resolution: “Whereas we recognize that different political forces have contributed to undermining the Venezuela democracy, we are concerned about the recent events and government decisions that undermine democracy in Venezuela”.

2. Following from this point, point 2 of the “resolved” section calls upon the government to change its behavior by ensuring free and fair elections; ceasing arrest of activists; halting violence against protestors; etc. Members of the EC agreed that it was reasonable and necessary to make specific demands on the Venezuelan government, particularly in regards to ceasing violent repression, ensuring respect for democratic processes and procedures, and guarantees for respect of the human rights of all Venezuelan citizens. However, concern was raised that the resolution appears too partisan or one-sided, without also making a claim on opposition behavior.

3. As noted earlier, point 3 in the “resolved” section, which ‘instructs’ the EC and the Venezuela Section to jointly appoint a delegation to Venezuela to prepare a report on the current situation, was objected to on two grounds.

The first objection is procedural: a section resolution cannot dictate LASA action, leading a majority of EC members to object to this aspect of the proposal resolution.

Even so, given the severity of the crisis in Venezuela, as well as well-founded concerns of serious human rights violations, the EC considered with great seriousness the Venezuela Section’s call for a delegation to investigate the situation and produce a report. After extensive deliberation at the EC meeting in Lima, the majority rejected this possibility, not merely because of safety concerns. Having analyzed the recent experience of a LASA delegation to Brazil in the aftermath of the coup against Dilma, which was highly contentious, took nearly a year to complete its report, and therefore had little effective impact, the majority of EC members came to the conclusion that it was not desirable *in general* for LASA to send fact-finding delegations in rapidly changing and politically charged situations. Given the polarized nature of the current situation in Venezuela, it is unlikely that a delegation that is representative of the various positions on the situation would come to a definitive conclusion.

The Executive Committee of LASA  
05/30/2017

Joanne Rappaport, President; Aldo Panfichi, Vice president, Gilbert Joseph, Evelina Dagnino, Jo-Marie Burt; Marian Helena Machado; Patricia Tovar, Daniela Spenser, Claudia Ferman, Robin Derby