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## Terrorism and Assassinations in Venezuela

by MARIA PAEZ VICTOR

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Last Friday, the centre of Caracas was filled with thousands of mourning citizens as they accompanied two flag draped coffins loaded with flowers they had cast upon it in homage.

If a Member of Parliament representing the Venezuelan opposition had been brutally tortured and stabbed to death in his own home, the Western press –including Canada’s- would have splashed the news in headlines around the world.

Yet this has just happened to a Member of Parliament from the governing party of Venezuela, but the international press is mostly silent. International politicians have not wrung their hands with indignation or regret, as they have about the lawful incarceration of opposition leader Leopoldo López who publicly and repeatedly incited mobs to violence and caused has at least 47 deaths.

On Wednesday, October 1, 2014, Robert Serra, 27 years old, a lawyer and legislator from the governing party PSUV, the youngest Member of Parliament of Venezuela, and his partner Maria Herrera, were assassinated in their own home in a central area of Caracas. It was an outrageous and deliberate act of terror. Robert Serra and María Herrera were tortured, stabbed and then bled to death. He specialized in criminology, and was engaged in the task of helping to curb crime in the country. María Herrera assisted him in this vital work. Robert Serra came from a poor family; his mother worked as a street hawker to help him go to law school. He was famous for his

insightful interventions in parliament and was much beloved, some referred to him as “ a future Chávez”.

Their deaths were carried out systematically. Ernesto Samper, ex-president of Colombia and current president of UNASUR, said: *“This crime is evidence of the infiltration of Colombian paramilitary in Venezuela.”*

Just a few weeks ago, President Santos of Colombia deported to Venezuela a young man, Lorent Saleh, who had been meeting with paramilitaries in Colombia to conspire against the Venezuelan government. He appears in a video with Alvaro Uribe, ex-president of Colombia, who owes his political career to his connections to Escobar, the head of Colombian narco-traffic, and is accused by the Colombian Senate of being behind the proliferation of the paramilitary there. Saleh stated he was buying arms of war and contracting snipers and explosive experts because “they” were going to carry out selective assassination of 20 leaders of the Venezuelan government in order to bring it down. Then he said who “they” were: leaders of Venezuela’s opposition parties.

In Parliament, days before his assassination, Robert Serra had denounced -in no uncertain terms- the terrorist plans of Alvaro Uribe and Lorent Saleh.

The Venezuelan government of President Nicolás Maduro has been under relentless and continuous attack since it was elected. It has been submitted to economic sabotage with contraband and withholding of food and goods, a deliberate campaign of false rumors, and three months of street violence to create the appearance of chaos and lack of governability. These subversive actions were deftly overcome by a government that stuck to the letter of the law, refused to take the bait of meeting violence with violence, and its call for peace included setting up negotiations with the opposition facilitated by ministers of neighboring countries. The Venezuelan people overwhelmingly repudiated the violent opposition tactics, and gave Mr. Maduro’s popularity an even larger boost.

In an attempt to produce “regime change”, violence has been intensified now to include assassinations. This was agreed upon in a meeting at Guadarrama, Spain at the end of June hosted by the Spanish spy agency CNI and the FAES – a think tank of the party Partido Popular of ex-president of Spain, Jose Maria Aznar. The USA’s CIA carries out the financing and training of the CNI, as Edward Snowden has revealed.[i]

Two Venezuelan opposition leaders, Julio Borges and Ramon Muchacho, who were also behind the street violence, were present, and a video message from Maria Corina Machado was viewed. She could not be present as she is being investigated for her part in the street violence, which she enthusiastically led. Machado, as a standing member of Venezuela’s parliament, ignominiously accepted simultaneously the position of ambassador of Panama in order to address the OAS in 2014. According to the Constitution, she in effect, forfeited her condition of parliamentarian by representing a foreign government – and one, which at that time- was against Venezuela.

Machado, along with Lopez, instigated the street violence that cost so many deaths and millions in damages. Yet, holding such disdain for the rule of law, she was invited by the Canadian

Council for the Americas to speak at the prestigious Canadian law firm of Cassel Brock and Blackwell last May. This was a clear example either of Canadian willful ignorance or connivance.

The imperial forces believe Venezuela's oil is just too rich a prize to leave in the hands of its people. The sterling leadership that the country has shown in promoting the integration of Latin America for the purposes of solving its common social problems and to protect its natural resources is just unacceptable to the greed of multinationals, the United States, and their subservient allies who seem to think the petroleum is theirs to take.

The assassinations of Robert Serra and María Herrera, of Eliézer Otáiz head of Caracas Municipality 5 months ago, the killings during the street riots of last March that were led by paramilitary (not students as the world press stated) and the bombing death of district attorney Danilo Anderson ten years ago, as well as the hundreds of rural leaders that have been assassinated by paramilitary mercenaries hired by the large landowners, have only fed the determination of the Venezuelan people. They know that their Bolivarian government, no matter how besieged and no matter how big the problems, is a government on their side, not on the side of the powerful elites and their foreign owners that have never in Venezuelan history sided with the poor or the nation's best interest.

As the crowds wound their slow way towards the cemetery where Robert Serra and María Herrera were to be buried, the ubiquitous cry that was heard at every step was: "*Justice! Justice! We want justice!*" The Venezuelan authorities dare not ignore this clamor.