

The Radio Caracas TV channel case in Venezuela

European Parliament resolution of 24 May 2007 on the Radio Caracas TV channel case in Venezuela

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas media pluralism and freedom of expression are indispensable pillars of democracy,
- B. whereas media freedom is of primary importance for democracy and respect for fundamental freedoms, given its essential role in guaranteeing the free expression of opinions and ideas and in contributing to people's effective participation in democratic processes,
- C. whereas the non-renewal of the broadcasting licence of the private audiovisual group Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV), which expires on 27 May 2007, may endanger the future of a media organisation employing 3 000 people,
- D. whereas the non-renewal of the licence of this audiovisual organisation, one of Venezuela's oldest and most important, will deprive a large section of the public of a pluralist source of information, thus undermining the right of the press to hold the authorities to account,
- E. whereas the President of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, has announced that he is not going to renew RCTV's broadcasting licence, which expires on 27 May 2007,
- F. whereas RCTV is, according to the statements of the Venezuelan Government, the only media organisation affected by this decision concerning the non-renewal of a licence,
- G. whereas Articles 57 and 58 of Venezuela's Constitution guarantee freedom of expression, communication and information,
- H. whereas Venezuela is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights,
- I. whereas RCTV has appealed to the Venezuelan High Court of Justice, but the Court has failed to rule within the time-limit laid down by law,
- J. whereas the position with which the RCTV management is being reproached should be the subject, if the authorities consider it necessary, of ordinary legal proceedings,
- K. whereas this decision, which was publicly announced on 28 December 2006 by the Head of State himself, thus establishes an alarming precedent for freedom of expression in

Venezuela,

1. Reminds the Government of Venezuela of its obligation to respect, and ensure respect for, freedom of expression and opinion and freedom of the press, as it is bound to do under its own Constitution and under the Inter-American Democratic Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights, to which Venezuela is a signatory;
2. Calls on the Government of Venezuela, in the name of the principle of the impartiality of the State, to ensure equal treatment under the law for all media, whether private or public, irrespective of all political or ideological considerations;
3. Calls for a dialogue between the Venezuelan Government and the country's private media, while strongly deploring the Government's total unwillingness to engage in dialogue in general, and in the case of RCTV in particular;
4. Calls, therefore, on the relevant delegations and committees of Parliament to examine this issue;
5. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, the Mercosur Parliament and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.