

British and Irish Students Back Venezuela Against US Aggression



Caracas, April 02 (teleSUR-RHC) Student leaders from Britain and Ireland have joined the growing chorus of international opposition to U.S. President Barack Obama's decision to label Venezuela a "national threat."

In an open letter, published on Wednesday, student representatives write, "we support the thousands of youth and student activists out on the streets of Venezuela this month in response to the Executive Order who have been collecting millions of signatures saying 'Venezuela is not a Threat'."

On March 9, Obama signed an executive order declaring "a national emergency with respect to the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by the situation in Venezuela," and imposed a further round of sanctions on the country.

The president of University of the Arts London Students' Union, Shelly Asquith, told teleSUR, "It's really important that people everywhere show support for Venezuela against the ongoing threats and attacks from the U.S.," adding that its in the "interest the interests of democracy" that the elected government is defended against external intervention.

The students' letter explains, Obama's action "has been condemned by major regional bodies in Latin America and the Caribbean, governments all over the world and much of global civil society, including the ITUC." The students express their "support for the international 'Obama – Repeal the Executive Order' campaign," which has already seen 6 million people sign up to a global petition.

Signatories include a number of national representatives of Britain's National Union of Students, one of the world largest student unions, including NUS National Executive Member Aaron Kiely, Vice President (Communities)-Elect for NUS Scotland Gary Paterson, and NUS Women's Committee representative Barbara Ntummy.

"For millions of young people across the world, we see Venezuela as a beacon of hope for humanity. As Venezuela provides free education opportunities to all, whereas in Britain we see our education under attack, hundreds of thousands excluded, funding reduced and tuition fees for higher education of up to £9,000 a year," said Kiely.

"Obama and the US should immediately lift the sanctions, repeal the executive order and instead learn from Venezuela how to promote social justice." The advocacy for Venezuela was mirrored across the Irish Sea.

Oisín Hassan and Seán Fearonhe, vice presidents of the students union of Queen's University Belfast, were among the signatories from Ireland, as were many members of nationalist party Sinn Fein, which has a strong record of backing Latin American self-determination.

The student representatives say that in the face of the U.S. attacks they will "continue to support the advances in social progress and in providing free education for all that have taken place in Venezuela in recent years, and oppose US sanctions against Venezuela."

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