

# *Venezuelan High Court Declares Amnesty Law Unconstitutional*

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Caracas, April 12 (RHC-teleSUR) -- In Venezuela, the Constitutional Court of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice has voted unanimously the Amnesty Bill unconstitutional.

The Court declared "unconstitutional" the provisions of the Law on Amnesty and National Reconciliation, based on, among other things: "inclusion of criminal offenses, including offenses of organized crime; the violation of constitutional principles of legality, criminality, justice and accountability in the process of drafting laws; the inclusion in the amnesty of administrative offenses that violate the protection of public assets and the fight against corruption; the violation of the constitutional principle of sovereignty; and the effects on society and the legal system, of ignoring the rights of victims."

On March 31st, Venezuela's opposition-controlled National Assembly approved the Amnesty Bill, which lawmakers supporting the government said will only serve to grant immunity to convicted criminals. The bill covers the period beginning with the arrival of former President Hugo Chavez to the presidency in 1999 to the present.

The legislative measure seeks to release approximately 115 incarcerated criminals, including some who participated in the coup against President Hugo Chavez in 2002, as well as many of those that both organized and participated in violent protests.

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