

# The Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice

## Basis of Unity

Humanity today is threatened by war, economic crises, starvation, poverty and crime: all created by the drive of capitalists and imperialist powers to maximize their profits at the expense of the people of the world. To oppose each of these crimes against humanity, we must focus all of our work and action to build a foundation to advance the interest of an overall struggle of working and oppressed people against international capital, its tools of dividing the working class, and its local oppressive institutions. The fundamental principle of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice is to promote in action the unity and active solidarity of all poor and working people, locally and internationally. We must recognize that this principle is meaningless without active struggle, because the pursuit of this principle goes sharply against the interest of the ruling capitalist class and they will use whatever means they have at their disposal to keep us divided and hostile amongst ourselves.

Fire This Time is a revolutionary socialist movement for dismantling capitalism and imperialism with a mass majority of working and oppressed people to create a world without oppression and exploitation. We are a politically based action organization committed to building the social and political power of poor and working people in BC, Canada and internationally. We believe the only way to effectively challenge the capitalist and imperialist states and governments and their corporate agenda is through the organization of masses of people in motion in workplaces, communities and in the streets. We are dedicated to mobilizing and unifying poor and working people against the all forms of capitalist governments and their anti-poor, anti-working class legislation and policies. We are committed to organizing with working and poor people from the most attacked and exploited communities in Canada and beyond: communities of colour, immigrants, refugees, “illegals”, low-wage workers, people with disabilities, queer people, indigenous communities, unemployed people and low-income families. We oppose all forms of oppression and exploitation: from sexism to racism, from homophobia to colonialism and all other institutions, thought, beliefs, actions and behaviors that humiliate and demean people to bring hostility and division amongst us.

Our movement must be integrated in the wider revolutionary context of international struggle against capitalism and imperialism; although we are mainly engaged in local politics, in essence the scope of our work is internationalist. Supporting the struggles of oppressed people abroad weakens the hegemony and power of the capitalist class in other lands and consequently weakens their rule at home, therefore aiding the battles of oppressed people in Canada against their own government. In addition, the practice of international solidarity solidifies the co-operation essential in building a world movement for social justice. We must expand on this both implicitly and explicitly to make the connections relevant to people's daily domestic struggle, to overcome geographic division, and to make it clear that when we engage in struggle we do not struggle alone but alongside millions of working and poor people around the world. Within capitalist and imperialist global domination there is no local struggle that does not have an international character. Every international is local and every local is international.

The Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice will support and engage with other progressive and revolutionary movements and struggles whether for immediate or long-term demands, locally, nationally and internationally. Our main goal is to end poverty and injustice through education, participation, agitation and direct action. We seek to reach a collective level of mass consciousness that allows oppressed people to think socially and act politically to achieve social justice locally and internationally by any means necessary.

# REVOLUTIONARY VOICES

*a supplement of the fire this time newspaper*

## Eight Ways Venezuela's Violent Opposition Is Hopelessly Hypocritical

By Ryan Mallett-Outtrim March 20th, 2014  
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Venezuela's opposition is sending a few mixed messages about violence and freedom. Unlike the moderate opposition (which is laden with its own hypocrisies), the extremist opposition groups are a minority within the wider anti-Maduro movement. Despite an overwhelming majority of the population opposing their violence, the barricaders and other aggressive opposition elements somehow maintain the support of much of the private press, and established opposition parties. They draw sympathy from human rights organisations like Human Rights Watch, which pretends the violent opposition aren't armed. The State Department likewise appears to have nothing less than unconditional support for violent opposition groups.

It's hard to believe the opposition protesters oppose violence when they start shooting at people on the street. They want a free media, but they try to lynch journalists. They demand to be let into the political process, but refuse to join peace talks, while exacerbating the scarcity against the top eight shameless imaginative opposition hopelessly are the top contradictions.



### 1. Protests against scarcity by blocking supplies

The opposition doesn't seem to have figured out that there is a very close correlation between the number of delivery trucks they torch, and the number of deliveries that aren't made.

Just a few hours before writing this article, I passed one such torched truck in Merida, near one of the city's largest supermarkets. There was a banner hanging off the burned skeleton of the vehicle, with a complaint about food scarcity. Anyone who thinks it makes sense to protest food scarcity after destroying a delivery truck outside a supermarket probably needs to spend some time in a quiet corner contemplating the dictionary definition of cogent.

Meanwhile in reality, scarcity levels remain high in Venezuela, with many basic consumer

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products ranging from flour to milk being difficult to reliably obtain. Unsurprisingly, however, blocking roads only makes a bad situation worse. In the opposition stronghold of Merida, even cooking gas deliveries became intermittent in February, as the city's main thoroughfares are semi-permanently blocked by opposition groups.

## **2. Protests violence...with more violence**

Occasionally, barricades are adorned with posters demanding “no más violencia”. Venezuela is one of the most violent countries in the hemisphere, so it's no surprise security is a major issue in public discourse. But smashing over US\$1 million in public property isn't exactly a sure-fire way to make people feel safer. Nor is hanging barbed wire over roads to decapitate motorcyclists. In fact, now that there are groups of masked opposition thugs wandering around with guns, explosives and traps like home-made caltrops, it's harder than ever to feel safe. The MUD has set a reduction in crime as a precondition for peace talks – something which might be difficult to achieve while their supporters keep shooting at people in the streets.

## **3. Defending media freedom by attacking journalists**

Despite the fact that the majority of Venezuela's media remains privately owned and anti-government in terms of editorial lines, one of the opposition's favourite complaints is that they have no voice in the mass media. Henrique Capriles himself cited a lack of access to media as his reason for creating his humbly titled online show, CaprilesTV. On 4 March, the opposition held a march demanding “greater media freedom”. The next day, they attacked three journalists from private media outlets. It takes something really special to claim you defend journalists one day, and beat one with a lead pipe the next.

Unfortunately, that's just the tip of this self-satirising iceberg. The opposition groups have repeatedly lashed out at the media. The majority of attacks have targeted public media outlets such as VTV, which was under a semi-permanent state of siege throughout February 2014. Community media outlets have been vandalised, and Venezuelanalysis journalists have also been attacked. One VA writer had rocks thrown at him when he tried to approach a group, while another was held at gunpoint after she photographed a group attacking public transport.

## **4. Wants to be listened to, but doesn't want to listen**

The opposition has justified going to the streets by claiming they have been largely ignored by the government. Yet when the Maduro actually invites them to attend peace talks, they boycott them. Perhaps it's not Maduro that's doing the ignoring.

## **5. Opposes the killing of peaceful protesters...by killing more peaceful protesters**

Attend any opposition rally and it isn't hard to find someone out to slam the government for the deaths of opposition protesters. Every death is indeed a tragedy, unless they can't be martyred. Trying to find anyone at an opposition rally condemning the shooting of Gisela Rubilar isn't easy. To be fair, though, I have seen one person with a placard condemning her death; but they had the wrong face glued on. Moreover, they didn't seem interested in entertaining the idea that the opposition group that had fired at people clearing barricades in the area the night before may have been involved in Rubilar's shooting.

## **6. Opposes corruption by demanding bribes**

One of the opposition's most salient complaints of the Venezuelan government is its failure to deal with corruption. It's a reasonable criticism, given that Venezuela scores an abysmal 20/100 in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. However,

the opposition hasn't exactly shown itself to be anything near a credible alternative. Opposition groups are increasingly demanding tolls for anyone to pass their barricades. People who feel emotions generally refer to these tolls as bribes.

Worse still, the opposition's organisational structure is murkier than a bowl of mondongo on Monday afternoon. Their nationwide campaign of violence is well organised, with logistical support and at least hundreds of people coordinating across the country. However, nobody seems to know who is running barricades, and how. They clearly receive some funding, but nobody knows from where. Corruption festers where there is a lack of democracy and public criticism – and the opposition on the street is open to neither.

## **7. Calls Maduro a dictator, while acting like a dictatorship**

Since February the opposition protests have defined life in Merida. Checking where they are attacking people has become as habitual as watching the weather forecast. It's hard to believe opposition groups really oppose authoritarianism when they force you to pay tolls to pass their barricades, decide where you can walk, decide when you can turn your light on in your own home, decide if supplies can reach your neighbourhood and decide you when you're able to go to work. While the protests were at their worst, businesses figured out that the barricaders like to sleep in; so they started opening in the mornings, and closing before lunchtime. In other words, shops were forced to change their opening hours to suit the sleep patterns of these thugs. If everyone wasn't being forced to change their routines to accommodate the whims of the barricaders, maybe their claims that they support freedom would carry some weight.

## **8. Complains Chavismo has ruined Venezuela...demands US intervention**

Anyone who signs this petition (*note: this refers to a reactionary petition against the Venezuelan Government*) needs to have a long conversation with someone from Iraq or Afghanistan. Simple.



*Five police patrol vehicles were torched in Caracas in 12 February 2014*