

# Declaration of Independence of Venezuela – July 5, 1811

Editor's Note: July 5, 1811 heralded Venezuela's formal break with the Spanish crown when its members of congress approved the Venezuelan Declaration of Independence, which was clearly influenced by our July 4, 1776 declaration. In establishing an independent nation, the Venezuelan "Firma Acta de la Independencia," or "Signing of the Act of Independence," aimed to create a society based on democratic principals long denied to them. Venezuela was the first South American nation to have an uprising for independence, led at first by Francisco de Miranda, and then by Simon Bolivar and Jose Felix Ribas, who were inspired by the American Revolution. As you can see from the declaration, it serves as a moral operating system for the new republic, placing premiums on equality and freedom of expression, which were forbidden during their three centuries as a colony of Spain.

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In the Name of the All-powerful God. WE the Representatives of the united Provinces of CARACAS, CUMANA, VARINAS, MARGARITA, BARCELONA, MERIDA, and TRUJILLO, forming the American Confederation of Venezuela, in the South Continent, in Congress assembled, considering the full and absolute possession of our Rights, which we recovered justly and legally from the 19th of April, 1810, in consequence of the occurrences in Bayona, and the occupation of the Spanish Throne by conquest, and the succession of a new Dynasty, constituted without our consent: are desirous, before we make use of those Rights, of which we have been deprived by force for more than three ages, but now restored to us by the political order of human events, to make known to the world the reasons which have emanated from these same occurrences, and which authorize us in the free use we are now about to make of our own Sovereignty.

We do not wish, nevertheless, to begin by alleging the rights inherent in every conquered country, to recover its state of property and independence; we generously forget the long series of ills, injuries, and privations, which the sad right of conquest has indistinctly caused, to all the descendants of the Discoverers, Conquerors, and Settlers of these Countries, plunged into a worse state by the very same cause that ought to have favored them; and, drawing a veil over the 300 years of Spanish dominion in America, we will now only present to view the authentic and well-known facts, which ought to have wrested from one world, the right over the other, by the inversion, disorder, and conquest, that have already dissolved the Spanish Nation.

This disorder has increased the ills of America, by rendering void its claims and remonstrances, enabling the Governors of Spain to insult and oppress this part of the Nation, thus leaving it without the succor and guarantee of the Laws.

It is contrary to order, impossible to the Government of Spain, and fatal to the welfare of America, that the latter, possessed of a range of country infinitely more extensive, and a population incomparably more numerous, should depend and be subject to a Peninsular Corner of the European Continent.

The Cessions and Abdications at Bayona, the Revolutions of the Escorial and Aranjuez, and the Orders of the Royal Substitute, the Duke of Berg, sent

to America, suffice to give virtue to the rights, which till then the Americans had sacrificed to the unity and integrity of the Spanish Nation.

Venezuela was the first to acknowledge, and generously to preserve, this integrity; not to abandon the cause of its brothers, as long as the same retained the least hope of salvation.

America was called into a new existence, since she could, and ought, to take upon herself the charge of her own fate and preservation; as Spain might acknowledge, or not, the rights of a King, who had preferred his own existence to the dignity of the Nation over which he governed.

All the Bourbons concurred to the invalid stipulations of Bayona, abandoning the country of Spain, against the will of the People;— they violated, disdained, and trampled on the sacred duty they had contracted with the Spaniards of both Worlds, when with their blood and treasure they had placed them on the Throne, in despite of the House of Austria. By such a conduct, they were left disqualified and incapable of governing a Free People, whom they delivered up like a flock of Slaves.

The intrusive Governments that arrogated to themselves the National Representation, took advantage of the dispositions which the good faith, distance, oppression, and ignorance, created in the Americans, against the new Dynasty that had entered Spain by means of force; and, contrary to their own principles, they sustained amongst us the illusion in favor of Ferdinand, in order to devour and

harass us with impunity: at most, they promised to us liberty, equality, and fraternity, conveyed in pompous discourses and studied phrases, for the purpose of covering the snare laid by a cunning, useless, and degrading Representation.

As soon as they were dissolved, and had substituted and destroyed amongst themselves the various forms of the Government of Spain; and as soon as the imperious law of necessity had dictated to Venezuela the urgency of preserving itself, in order to guard and maintain the rights of her King, and to offer an asylum to her European brethren against the ills that threatened them; their former conduct was divulged: they varied their principles, and gave the appellations of insurrection, perfidy, and ingratitude, to the same acts that had served as models for the Governments of Spain; because then was closed to them the gate to the monopoly of administration, which they meant to perpetuate under the name of an imaginary King.

Notwithstanding our protests, our moderation, generosity, and the inviolability of our principles, contrary to the wishes of our brethren in Europe, we were declared in a state of rebellion; we were blockaded; war was declared against us; agents were sent amongst us, to excite us one against the other, endeavoring to take away our credit with the other Nations of Europe, by imploring their assistance to oppress us.

Without taking the least notice of our reasons, without presenting them to the impartial judgment of the world, and without any other judges than our own enemies, we are condemned to a mournful incommunication with our brethren; and, to add contempt to calumny, empowered agents are named for us, against our own express will, that in their Cortes they may arbitrarily dispose of our interests, under the influence and force of our enemies.

In order to crush and suppress the effects of our Representation, when they were obliged to grant it to us, we were submitted to a paltry and diminutive scale; and the form of election was subjected to the passive voice of the Municipal Bodies, degraded by the despotism of the Governors: which amounted to an insult to our plain dealing and good faith, more than a consideration of our incontestable political importance.

Always deaf to the cries of justice on our part, the Governments of Spain have endeavored to discredit all our efforts, by declaring as criminal, and stamping with infamy, and rewarding with the scaffold and confiscation, every attempt, which at different periods some Americans have made, for the felicity of their country: as was that which lately our own security dictated to us, that we might not be driven into a state of disorder which we foresaw, and hurried to that

horrid fate which we are about to remove for ever from before us By means of such atrocious policy, they have succeeded in making our brethren insensible to our misfortunes; in arming them against us; in erasing from their bosoms the sweet impressions of friendship, of consanguinity; and converting into enemies a part of our own great family.

At a time that we, faithful to our promises, were sacrificing our security and civil dignity, not to abandon the rights which we generously preserved to Ferdinand of Bourbon, we have seen that, to the relations of force which bound him to the the French, he has added the ties of blood and friendship;

Emperor of in consequence of which, even the Governments of Spain have already declared their resolution only to acknowledge him conditionally\_.

In this mournful alternative we have remained three years, in a state of political indecision and ambiguity, so fatal and dangerous, that this alone would suffice to authorise the resolution, which the faith of our promises and the bonds of fraternity had caused us to defer, till necessity has obliged us to go beyond what

we at first proposed, impelled by the hostile and unnatural conduct of the Governments of Spain, which have disburdened us of our conditional oath, by which circumstance, we are called to the august representation we now exercise.

But we, who glory in grounding our proceedings on better principles, and not wishing to establish our felicity on the misfortunes of our fellow-beings, do consider and declare as friends, companions of our fate, and participators of our felicity, those who, united to us by the ties of blood, language, and religion, have suffered the same evils in the anterior order of things, provided they acknowledge our *absolute independence* of the same, and of any other foreign power whatever; that they aid us to sustain it with their lives, fortune, and sentiments; declaring and acknowledging them (as well as to every other nation,) in war enemies, and in peace friends, brothers, and co-patriots.

In consequence of all these solid, public, and incontestable reasons of policy, which so powerfully urge the necessity of recovering our natural dignity, restored to us by the order of events; and in compliance with the imprescriptible rights enjoyed by nations, to destroy every pact, agreement, or association, which does not answer the purposes for which governments were established; we believe that we cannot, nor ought not, to preserve the bonds which hitherto kept us united to the Government of Spain; and that, like all the other nations of the world, we are free, and authorised not to depend on any other authority than our own, and to take amongst the powers of the earth the place of equality which the Supreme Being

and Nature assign to us, and to which we are called by the succession of human events, and urged by our own good and utility.

Notwithstanding we are aware of the difficulties that attend, and the obligations imposed upon us, by the rank we are about to take in the political order of the world; as well as the powerful influence of forms and habitudes, to which unfortunately we have been accustomed: we at the same time know, that the shameful submission to them, when we can throw them off, would be still more ignominious for us, and more fatal to our posterity, than our long and painful slavery; and that it now becomes an indispensable duty to provide for our own preservation, security, and felicity, by essentially varying all the forms of our former constitution.

In consequence whereof, considering, by the reasons thus alleged, that we have satisfied the respect which we owe to the opinions of the human race, and the dignity of other nations, in the number of whom we are about to enter, and on whose communication and friendship we rely: We, the Representatives of

the United Provinces of Venezuela, calling on the SUPREME BEING to witness the justice of our proceedings and the rectitude of our intentions, do implore his divine and celestial help; and ratifying, at the moment in which we are born to the dignity which his Providence restores to us, the desire we have of living and dying free, and of believing and defending the holy Catholic and Apostolic Religion of Jesus Christ. We, therefore, in the name and by the will and authority which we hold from the virtuous People of Venezuela, DO declare solemnly to the world, that its united Provinces are, and ought to be, from this day, by act and right, Free, Sovereign, and Independent States; and that they are absolved from every submission and dependence on the Throne of Spain, or on those who do, or may call themselves its Agents and Representatives; and that a free and independent State, thus constituted, has full power to take that form of Government which may be conformable to the general will of the People, to declare war, make peace, form alliances, regulate treaties of commerce, limits, and navigation; and to do and transact every act, in like manner as other free and independent States. And that this, our solemn Declaration, may be held valid, firm, and durable, we hereby mutually bind each Province to the other, and pledge our lives, fortunes, and the sacred tie of our national honor. Done in the Federal Palace of Caracas; signed by our own hands, sealed with the great Provisional Seal of the Confederation, and countersigned by the Secretary of Congress, this 5<sup>th</sup> day of July, 1811, the first of our Independence.

For the Province of Caracas, Isidoro Antonio Lopez Mendez, Deputy of the City of Caracas.—Juan German Roscio, for the district of the Town of Calabozo.— Felipe Fermin Paul, for the district of San Sebastian. —Francisco Xavier Uztariz, for the district of San Sebastian.— Nicolas De Castro, Deputy for Caracas. —Juan Antonio Rodriguez Dominguez, President, and Deputy for Nutrias in Barinas.—Luis Ignacio Mendoza, Vice-President, Deputy of Obispos in Barinas. —Fernando de Peñalver, Deputy for Valencia. —Gabriel Perez de Pagola, Deputy of Ospino.—Salvador Delgado, Deputy for Nirgua.—The Marquis Delgado, Deputy for Nirgua.—The Marquis del Toro, Deputy for the City of Tucuyo.—Juan Antonio Dias Argote, Deputy for the Town of Cura.— Gabriel de Ponte, Deputy for Caracas.— Juan Jozé Maya, Deputy of San Felipe.—Luis Jozé de Cazorla, Deputy of Valencia.—Dr. Jozé Vicente Unda, Deputy of Guanare.— Francisco Xavier Yanes, Deputy of Araure.—Fernando Toro, Deputy of Caracas. —Martin Tovar Ponte, Deputy of San Sebastian.— Juan Toro, Deputy of Valencia.—José Angel de Alamo, Deputy for Barquisimeto.—Francisco Hernandez, Deputy for San Carlos.—Lino De Clemente, Deputy of Caracas.—For the Province of Cumanà —Francisco Xavier de Mayz, Deputy for the Capital.—Jozé Gabriel de Alcalà, Deputy for ditto. —Juan Bermudez, Deputy for the South.—Mariano de la Cova, Deputy for the North —For Barcelona— Francisco Miranda, Deputy of Pao.—Francisco Policarpo Ortiz, Deputy for San Diego.—For Barinas— Juan Nepomuceno de Quintana, Deputy for Achaguas. —Ignacio Fernandez, Deputy for the Capital of Barinas.—Ignacio Ramon Briceño, Representative of Pedraza.— Jozé de Sata y Bussy, Deputy for San Fernando de Apure.—Jozé Luis Cabrera, Deputy for Guanarito.—Ramon Ignacio Mendez, Deputy for Guasualito.—Manuel Palacio, Deputy for Mijagual. —For Margarita—Manuel Placido Maneyro.— For Merida.—Antonio Nicolas Briceño, Deputy for Merida.—Manuel Vicente de Maya, Deputy for La Grita—For Truxillo Juan Pablo Pacheco—For the Town of Aragua, in the Province of Barcelona.— Jozé Maria Ramirez. (Seal.) Legalised.—Francisco Isnardy, Secretary.

Source of English Translation: Embassy of Venezuela

<http://embaven-chipre.com/index.php?id=77>

Link to Spanish text and images of original:

<https://scholarship.rice.edu/jsp/xml/1911/9253/1/>

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Further reading:

*Independence in Latin America: Contrasts and Comparisons*, Richard Graham, Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2013