

Public Letter to defenders of justice in Venezuela and
worldwide

Humanitarian Release for Judge Maria Lourdes Afiuni

Noam Chomsky

Cambridge, December 21st, 2011.

It has been a year since in December 2010 I joined with Dr. Charlie Clements and other committed human rights scholars and practitioners to petition President Chavez to release Venezuelan judge Maria Lourdes Afiuni on humanitarian grounds.

Judge Afiuni was imprisoned in December 9th, 2009, after she released a Venezuelan businessman on parole following the recommendations of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions. The businessman had in turn spent close to three years in prison without trial. During Judge Afiuni's detention, she experienced grave abuses that led to a severe deterioration of her physical and psychological condition.

Her wellbeing improved substantially after she was placed under house arrest. However, the lack of prompt medical attention, combined with the physical and psychological traumas she received, which included death threats and several kinds of aggressions from other inmates, left her debilitated. Judge Afiuni remains imprisoned in her home, but remains in permanent custody of a dozen national guards. She is prohibited from speaking to the press and from receiving solar rays. After more than two years in custody, there are no guarantees of a fair trial. I am convinced that Judge Afiuni has suffered enough and should be released.

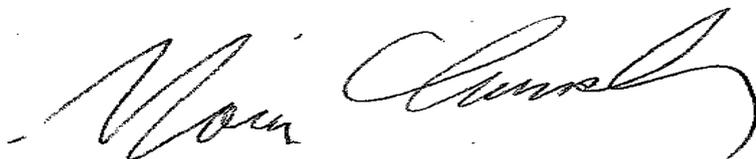
Recently President Chavez demonstrated his humanitarian and generous spirit by mediating in the liberation of Josh Fattal and Shane Bauer, two young Americans hikers detained in Iran for more than two years. This case

happens to be very close to my heart. I've been directly involved in it for several years. The timely intervention of President Chavez in ending this case renewed my hope there could be a prompt solution to the detention of Judge Afiuni.

The second anniversary of the detention of Maria Lourdes Afiuni occurred at a time when President Chávez himself is in a courageous fight against cancer. For this reason, he is certainly in a position to personally understand the importance of receiving adequate treatment and marshalling your inner strength for survival.

In this time of the year when people worldwide preach brotherhood and reconciliation, I am very optimistic regarding a positive resolution for Judge Afiuni's case. The Christmas-time pardons are an appropriate occasion for President Chávez to correct an injustice and avoid greater damage to her health by a humanitarian release. Through this letter to the Venezuelan people I encourage him to act in a manner consistent with the humanitarian values professed by the Bolivarian Revolution and end Judge Afiuni's imprisonment. I am hopeful he will do so.

Noam Chomsky

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Noam Chomsky". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.