

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10118-3299
Tel: 212-290-4700
Fax: 212-736-1300
Email: hrwnyc@hrw.org

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January 28, 2009

Miguel Tinker Salas
Professor of History
Pomona College

Gregory Wilpert
Adjunct Professor of Political Science
Brooklyn College

Greg Grandin
Professor of History, Director of Graduate Studies
New York University

Dear Mr. Tinker Salas, Mr. Wilpert, and Mr. Grandin:

I am writing in reply to your January 12 letter, which was a response to our December 29 letter in which we address your December 16 letter and its critique of our report "A Decade Under Chavez: Political Intolerance and Lost Opportunities for Advancing Human Rights in Venezuela."

Once again we have taken the time to review your criticisms to see if they are well-founded, and once again we have concluded they are not. Your latest letter essentially recycles your previous allegations, which I responded to at length in my own letter to you. I see no point in recycling that response here.

One observation in your most recent letter that I do fully agree with is that anyone interested in evaluating your criticisms should read those earlier letters and, above all, the report itself. I have no doubt that reasonable people might have differing views regarding some of the more complex issues we address in the document. But I do not see how scholars who actually read our report can reasonably conclude, as you do, that it "does not meet even the most minimal standards of scholarship, impartiality, accuracy, or credibility." On the contrary, what they will find is an objective and rigorous analysis of some of the very serious human rights problems that are facing Venezuela today.

Human Rights Watch welcomes and actively seeks out constructive criticism of our work. We find it helps us to refine our arguments and correct any errors we may have made in our reporting. Less helpful

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are critics who opt instead to disseminate baseless allegations regarding our findings, our sources, and our motives.

You claim to be interested in fostering a dialogue. Yet you do so by misrepresenting our work and demanding that I order my colleagues to retract their criticisms of the Chávez government. Clearly we have a different notion of what constitutes meaningful dialogue.

It seems to me that there is no purpose in continuing this back and forth any further at this time. However, if in the future you have criticisms that actually reflect the content of our work—or other information and analysis that you believe might enhance our understanding of developments in Venezuela—please do not hesitate to share them with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth Roth". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Kenneth Roth