

## Venezuelan opposition leader Capriles delivers message of confidence in Miami

By Antonio Maria Delgado

[adelgado@EINuevoHerald.com](mailto:adelgado@EINuevoHerald.com)



JOSE A. IGLESIAS / EL NUEVO HERALD STAFF

Henrique Capriles Radonsky waves to supporters gathered at the James L. Knight Center following a speech in which he urged Venezuelans living in the United States to continue working for a Democratic change in Venezuela. He also urged the crowd to return to Venezuela once democracy has been restored.

Former Venezuelan presidential candidate Henrique Capriles — who has been criticized by certain segments of the opposition that would like to see him take a more radical position against Nicolás Maduro’s regime — came out Sunday to convince nearly 5,000 people at a Miami convention hall that he knows exactly what he’s doing.

Capriles, who ran against the late Hugo Chávez in an election in October and then did it again versus Maduro in April, said he feels that change will come soon to his country and called on Venezuelans to continue supporting him and join the fight.

“I feel that we are very, very close,” he said referring to the prospect of change. “That’s the way I see it.”

“But we need the support of all Venezuelans. We need trust. We need confidence. We’re going to drop whatever

we need to drop to bring change to Venezuela,” Capriles said. “It’s not a personal aspiration — it’s a collective project, and that makes a difference.”

The Venezuelan opposition leader also delivered a message for the large Cuban community in the United States.

“Today, we want to tell the Cuban people that change in Venezuela means change also in Cuba,” he said. “Freedom in Venezuela will also mean freedom for Cuba, and democracy in Venezuela will also mean democracy for Cuba.”

Yet the boast of confidence seemed unnecessary, at least among those attending the event organized by Miami Dade College and local representatives of the Table of Democratic Unity at the James L. Knight Center.

With the notable exception of a half-dozen people who tried to heckle at the event, the audience seemed to be captivated by the opposition leader. Many attendants had weathered an electrical storm and a strong rainfall to come and see him.

The event took place amid growing criticism that Capriles had wasted an opportunity in the days following the April election, when many of the millions of Venezuelans who voted for him were willing to take to the streets to protest and he asked them to stay home.

The momentum and emotional strength that surrounded Capriles had waned considerably since then, while Maduro managed to evade questioning about his legitimacy and people got used to seeing him answering the phone at the presidential palace — even as the opposition contested the electoral results.

The criticism seemed to dominate the leader's speech, as he insisted time and again that the opposition had not given up.

"That on April 14 things happened the way they did? Yes. Does that mean that we have given up, negotiated, surrendered? Never! ... We have not stopped our fight one single day. We are putting up a fight back home in Venezuela," Capriles said amid applause from the audience.

"I have come to ask you that now, more than ever, we have to fight, and you are called to accompany me in this fight," he insisted.

Yet that fight is not violent, said the governor of the state of Miranda, who also spoke about uniting all Venezuelans.

The way out of the political mess in our country cannot be resolved with coups or forced exits, he added. It must come from the conviction of the majority of the population, including a large part of sectors that traditionally supported Chávez, that the country needs change, he added.

"This is why the fight of the nation's democratic forces is fought in the communities, with representatives of the opposition trying to convince those popular sectors that the Chávez movement is greatly responsible for the hardship in which we live," Capriles said.

Only with strong popular support and a solid civic organization can we force the National Electoral Council, controlled by Chávez followers, to respect the results of the election, he said.

"We need those people. We need that popular force ... we must stop being a divided country ... we must build a united Venezuela, for this is not about one-half of the population imposing themselves on the other half," the opposition leader said.

"Venezuela is all of us, which means that we must have a country where all have the same rights and the same duties, and where no body is discriminated against because of what he thinks," Capriles said. "We cannot come out of this just to change color and continue the same."

"Unity will hardly be accomplished if both sides get into a violent confrontation," he said. Yet "being peaceful doesn't mean that we are fools. These are two different things."

In his speech, Capriles said the problems his country faced are very serious and require the participation of all Venezuelans to resolve them.

He highlighted the gravity of the insecurity prevailing in the country, where “50 people are murdered every day,” as well as the acute scarcity of basic products, causing hunger and despair among Venezuelans.

---

© 2013 Miami Herald Media Company. All Rights Reserved.  
<http://www.miamiherald.com>