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**Venezuela violated freedom of speech by refusing to renew TV license,
groups assert in court papers**

Amicus brief filed by CPJ and New York City Bar Association

New York, May 12, 2014—Venezuela’s May 2007 refusal to renew the broadcast license of Radio Caracas Television, or RCTV, violated Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights and is “a violation of settled inter-American principles of freedom of speech and the rule of law,” the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#) (CPJ) and the [New York City Bar Association](#) said in an amicus brief filed today before the Costa Rica-based Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

The case, *Marcel Granier and others vs. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*, is the first brought before the Inter-American system that directly involves a state’s decision not to renew the license of a free-to-air television station, which, in the case of RCTV, operated in Venezuela since 1953 and had an editorial stance that was critical of the administration of the late President Hugo Chávez. The hearings are set to start on May 28 in Costa Rica.

“Undisputed statements by high-ranking Venezuelan government officials make clear that the administration of the late President Hugo Chávez was not prepared to tolerate the

views and ideas aired by RCTV,” the brief states, making this a “textbook example of retaliatory content-based censorship, which has long been recognized as a particularly pernicious form of restriction on speech.”

The brief was submitted for the New York City Bar Association by the Committee on Communications & Media Law and the [Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice](#), and was prepared by the New York-based law firm [Debevoise & Plimpton LLP](#), whose lawyers include litigation partner Jeremy Feigelson and Thomas H. Norgaard, a Venezuela and U.S.-trained lawyer focused on international law matters.

The brief concludes, “Freedom of speech in Venezuela suffered a vital blow in violation of Article 13 of the Convention when Venezuela, with a view to censor RCTV’s editorial stance, refused to renew its concession. The ability of individuals and the press to openly debate, discuss and criticize government policy is a fundamental component of any democratic society, and largely depends on the ability of the media to convey diverse strands of thought. Venezuela’s actions have diminished that ability.”

The full brief can be downloaded at the following links:

<http://bit.ly/1mijhs0> (English)

<http://bit.ly/1uValr8> (Spanish)

About the Committee to Protect Journalists

The Committee to Protect Journalists promotes press freedom worldwide and defends the right of journalists to report the news without fear of reprisal. CPJ ensures the free flow of news and commentary by taking action wherever journalists are attacked, imprisoned, killed, kidnapped, threatened, censored, or harassed. www.cpj.org

About the New York City Bar Association

The New York City Bar Association, since its founding in 1870, has been dedicated to maintaining the high ethical standards of the legal profession, promoting reform of the law and access to justice, and providing service to the profession and the public. The Association, through its 24,000 members, continues to work for political, legal and social reform, while implementing innovative means to help the disadvantaged. Protecting the public’s welfare remains one of the Association’s highest priorities. www.nycbar.org

About the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice

The Vance Center advances global justice by engaging lawyers across borders to support civil society and an ethically active legal profession. A non-profit program of the New York City Bar Association, the Vance Center brings together leading law firms and other partners worldwide to pioneer international justice initiatives and provide pro bono legal representation to social justice NGOs. www.vancecenter.org