

Russia Is Not Alone: Venezuela's Homophobic Tirade Against Capriles
By Patricia Rey Mallén
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Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro may keep his private life surrounded in mystery, but his close allies have no problem attacking that of the opposition's leader. Congress member Pedro Carreño, a loyal government supporter, said, in reference to a dispute with former presidential candidate Henrique Capriles: "Answer, you homo. Accept the debate, you fag." During a session in parliament, Carreño launched into a tirade against Capriles in which he lobbed other incendiary, homophobic insults -- but then tried to assure that the government is not concerned with people's sexual orientation, because "what they do with their a-- is not a problem."

Carreño's comments came in the context of a lengthy speech on the alleged corruption of Capriles' party. This is not the first time the governing Socialist party has questioned Capriles' private life and the reason the 41-year-old governor of the state of Miranda has never been married.

Capriles is not the only target of the government's accusations: Óscar López, a government official in Miranda and a close political partner of Capriles, has also been questioned in his sexual orientation when two photographs ended up in the hands of the government: one showed López dressed up as a woman; in the other he was hugging a man.

Nobody ignores the fact that Venezuela has not been very open in discussing LGBT rights. Several Latin American countries, most notably Uruguay and Argentina, have passed laws that recognize same-sex unions, either via marriage or de facto status. But not Venezuela. The Bolivarian Revolution has not even begun considering a recognition of gay rights.

Maduro has since tried to tone things after the tirade from Carreño, a controversial politician who has been under scrutiny before for incendiary comments. "I have never been and will never be a homophobe. The revolution has always claimed respect for all human beings," said the Venezuelan president on Wednesday, [in a meeting with LGBT support groups](#).

Several associations showed concern for the nature of Carreño's remarks. Venezuela Diversa, an LGBT and minority support group, said that the statements were a form of verbal violence, using hatred and aggression in a speech preying on sexual identity. Julio Borges, the national coordinator of Capriles' party Primero Justicia, said that he will report Carreño to the police.

Capriles, on the other hand, has remained mute on this issue, [focusing instead on the corruption accusations](#) and the government threat to take him to prison: "They say they want to imprison me... Let's see if they dare! I am waiting here!"