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**“The student movement is proposing coordinated street actions with a clear strategy aimed at restoring rights and guarantees”**

*Student leader Miguelángel Suárez, president of the University Student Councils Federation at the Central University of Venezuela (FCU-UCV), and Martías Silveira, student representative to the University Council of Andrés Bello Catholic University (UCAB), analyze the impact of the events of January 3 and reaffirm their commitment to peaceful protest for the recovery of democracy.*

On January 27, Miguelángel Suárez came face to face with power. “It was a moment of tremendous tension –power personified,” admits the president of the FCU-UCV.

That day, Suárez approached Acting President Delcy Rodríguez during her surprise walk through the UCV campus. The visit was surprising because, according to the University Council led by rector Víctor Rago Albuja, the university authorities “were at no time officially informed” of the visit.

Standing before the interim head of state and her entourage –which included Army General Gustavo González López, now in charge of the Presidential Honor Guard and the Military Counterintelligence Directorate (DGCIM)– the student advocated for the release of all political prisoners.

“I believe it was also a representation of the irreverence and gallantry inherent to the student movement. It wasn’t just me; there were at least 25 students who decided to take this action to raise our voices for our political prisoners, for those who are suffering today, and perhaps to serve as a representative of a broader outcry that belongs not only to the families, but to an entire country,” summarizes the FCU spokesperson.

Could Suárez have acted differently? Could he have handed Rodríguez a document, used different words, or formally requested a meeting? In hindsight and with cooler judgment, everyone knows what should have been done.

“There was tension because of what it means to do this in Venezuela, but with the clear conviction that we must fight to broaden the public sphere and ensure that this kind of action is not a taboo, but rather that a public servant can be questioned at any moment by a citizen,” the student leader responds.

## **A New Moment**

It can well be said that Venezuela’s history is divided into before and after January 3, 2026. Although the arrival of the new year was celebrated with the twelve chimes on December 31, it was in fact 72 hours later that the Republic woke up in a new phase.

The impact shook the student movement. “January 3 changes the political landscape; the country is different; the cracks in a system that presented itself as impenetrable were exposed, and by changing that political paradigm, an opportunity has opened up –one that we want to seize in order to once again have an impact on the public space,” Suárez explains.

In this scenario, the FCU president observes that “perhaps the costs of repression have increased, and we can serve as the driving force in reclaiming the public sphere so that Venezuelans can move forward in restoring political and civil guarantees, in view of a possible process of transition to democracy.”

Matías Silveira, university council representative at Andrés Bello Catholic University (UCAB), emphasizes that January 3 has reignited the spirit of the student movement, increasing young people’s willingness to participate.

“A month ago this was unthinkable –that people would call for a demonstration, that different universities would gather much more frequently to talk. Given the circumstances, a window of opportunity has opened in which we have been able to sit not only among the different actors of the student movement, but also with other sectors of civil society,” Silveira acknowledges.

## **Mobilized**

Suárez emphasizes that “the student movement is proposing street actions, but coordinated ones, with a clear strategy aimed at restoring the civil and political rights and guarantees that we, as young people and students, need.” On the list, he highlights the demands that directly concern them: respect for university autonomy, adequate funding for higher education institutions, and “the current impossibility, after graduation, of securing decent employment.”

“We need to build enough muscle to truly reclaim the streets,” Silveira observes. “What is the substance and purpose of people taking to the streets? If tomorrow all political prisoners are released, what happens to the student movement’s agenda?”

That’s what must be worked out before launching large-scale mobilizations,” he adds.

The UCAB student representative considers it necessary “to arrive at those mobilizations with proposals –not only to express discontent and make demands, but also to contribute, by bringing solutions to the table that reflect the judgment and perspective of civil society.”

## **Danger**

Some sectors warn about the risk that protest could degenerate into violence, potentially leading to another cycle of repression and affecting progress toward an eventual transition. Do student leaders share that concern?

“I think that perspective is quite far removed from the organizational and educational capacities that can emerge from the student movement and from prior experience, which shows that in a scenario of confrontation the only winner is the State, given the resources and capacities it possesses. We believe in peaceful, organized protest with clear objectives,” Suárez responds.

Silveira reaffirms the commitment to peaceful protest, emphasizing that the students aspire to set an example and speak through their actions. “We want to demand a democratic and peaceful transition, because Venezuela has already endured more than two decades of violence, aggression, and censorship. We must demonstrate that freedom must be accompanied by a civic, peaceful, and democratic component.”

## Moving forward

Young people are rising again and marching toward the promise of a better future. “The student movement’s short-term goal is to organize itself. We recognize that there is an opportunity; repression appears to have eased somewhat. We know we are still within the same system, but under different conditions,” Suárez notes.

“In the medium term, the goal is to unify an agenda demanding the restoration of civil and political rights inherent to the youth and university sphere. In the medium and long term, the objective is to become an influential actor in decision-making related to those policies,” adds the FCU president, identifying the steps they seek to take at this stage.

Silveira stresses the importance of endurance and continuity. “We don’t want the student movement to be like a wave that builds momentum and then fades away. It must become a process in which different sectors of civil society join over time so that it gains strength.”

The UCAB spokesperson believes the time has come “to build a student movement with an enriched and sufficiently mature perspective, capable of taking action in pursuit of Venezuela’s freedom.”