

## Venezuela to upgrade Palestinian ties

By [Global Research](#)

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Venezuela plans to open an embassy in Palestinian territories and upgrade its ties to ambassadorial level, President Hugo Chavez said on Friday, to support Palestinians in their struggle against Israel.

“We have decided to designate an ambassador and open an embassy in Palestine,” Chavez said after talks with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

“We now have a charge d’affaires; we will name an ambassador in coming days as part of accords to boost our bilateral relations,” he said.

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Among aid agreements signed Friday were scholarships for 20 Palestinians to study medicine in Venezuela. Chavez said he saw Venezuela offering many more educational grants.

“We must tell the Palestine people how many scholarships we will give to Palestinian youth so they come and study what they need,” he said. “They can be short and long, pre-graduate or post-graduate, technical and training studies.”

“Against the genocidal state”

In January, Venezuela cut diplomatic relations with Israel over the Israeli offensive in Gaza of nearly a year ago, which Chavez then called a Palestinian “holocaust.”

“We ... are on the side of the Palestinian people’s memorable struggle ... against the genocidal state of Israel that knocks down, kills and aims to terminate the Palestinian people,” Chavez said on Friday.

Chavez ordered his education minister to circulate maps Abbas gave him to illustrate the small dimensions of the Gaza Strip, where he said 1.5 million people lived in “concentration camp” like conditions, their movements to the outside world virtually blocked by Israel.

Chavez sealed Abbas’ “historic” visit by conferring Venezuela’s top award, called the Order of the Liberator after Bolivar, and gave him a replica of the national hero’s sword.

“You are the liberators of Palestine,” said Chavez. “In one hand you brandish a sword, in the other an olive branch. You don’t want to unsheathe, but you must always keep the sword handy.”

Abbas, who earlier laid a wreath at the tomb of Bolivar, thanked Venezuelan lawmakers for their support as they approved an agreement boosting ties between the two peoples.

“I know that Venezuela, its government and its people, will continue their support for the cause of our people to create an independent Palestinian state,” Abbas said.

“The Israel of South America”

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” Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas

Chavez charged the United States, using a recent agreement to expand U.S. troops’ access to Colombian military bases, aimed to turn Colombia into “the Israel of South America.”

The U.S. presence in Colombia endangered Venezuela due to the doctrine of “pre-emptive security,” he said. “They assume the right to attack any country with whatever excuse.”

“Colombia, the Israel of South America — this is an aim of the United States,” he said. The United States could spy from Colombia on other South American countries, he added.

Last month, Colombia and the United States signed a pact increasing U.S. access to military bases in Colombia. Washington is relocating its regional anti-narcotics hub to Colombia from Ecuador.

Colombia, the most reliable U.S. ally in South America, has drawn about \$6 billion in mostly U.S. military aid since 2000.

Chavez said that he told U.S. President Barack Obama at a regional summit in Trinidad in April that they could work together to help resolve Colombia’s internal conflict, apparently referring to the fight between leftist rebels there and the government.

“Lamentably it seems Obama listens only to matters of war,” Chavez said.

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