



# Venezuela Imports Chinese ZTE Social Control System

**OE Watch Commentary:** Chinese telecommunications company, ZTE, helped Venezuela create a social control system with a “smart” identity card. According to the accompanying excerpted article from Caracas-based *Descifrado*, the card was created in January 2017 and currently has over 18 million registered Venezuelans. El Carnet de la Patria, or the fatherland card, allows the national government to monitor Venezuelans’ social, political, and economic behavior. This was originally uncovered by Angus Berwick in Caracas and published in *Reuters*. The investigation revealed that a database stores personal information, such as social network presence, political membership, voting history, and even health records. According to *Descifrado*, in April 2008, then-Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez sent officials from the Ministry of Justice to visit their counterparts at the Chinese technology center in Shenzhen and to learn about the operation in China. A decade later, Venezuela imported the ZTE technology as part of an official \$70 million effort to strengthen “national security.” Venezuela hired ZTE in 2017 to develop the database with identity cards and create a mobile payment system to use with the card.

According to the accompanying excerpt from *El Siglo*, a daily newspaper in Maracay, Venezuela, CANTV is Venezuela’s state telecommunications company which depends on ZTE for the database. A team of ZTE employees has been in Venezuela working with CANTV since last year to establish the system. To convince citizens to use the card, a series of benefits are offered such as holiday bonuses or special prices for certain products. The accompanying statement by the office of Venezuela’s Vice President referenced President Maduro’s message to the people of Venezuela, that this a “social protection system” and that it promotes “the protection, social equality, solidarity, socialism, happiness and peace of the Venezuelan people.” While the system allows Venezuelans access to subsidized food, health, and other social programs on which the majority of people depend, they must provide the government with a significant amount of data in order to get what they need. **End OE Watch Commentary (Keshavarz and Bunker)**



Venezuelan Carnet de la Patria reverse. QR code, serial and code redacted to protect owner’s identity (2018). Source: Jamez42 [CC BY-SA 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carnet\_de\_la\_Patria\_Overse.jpg and https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carnet\_de\_la\_Patria\_Reverse.jpg.

*“A team of ZTE employees now operates within a special unit of CANTV, Venezuela’s state telecommunications company that manages the database”*

<p><b>Source:</b> “ZTE ayuda a Venezuela a crear control social al estilo chino con el carnet de la patria (ZTE helps Venezuela create Chinese-style social control with fatherland identity card),” <i>Descifrado</i>, 14 November 2018. <a href="http://www.descifrado.com/2018/11/14/la-ayuda-que-recibe-el-gobierno-para-el-control-social-al-estilo-chino-con-el-carnet-de-la-patria/">http://www.descifrado.com/2018/11/14/la-ayuda-que-recibe-el-gobierno-para-el-control-social-al-estilo-chino-con-el-carnet-de-la-patria/</a></p>	<p><b>Source:</b> “Empresa china ZTE ha ayudado al gobierno venezolano a implantar su ‘carnet de la patria’ (Chinese company ZTE has helped the Venezuelan government implement its own ‘identity card’),” <i>El Siglo</i>, 15 November 2018. <a href="https://elsiglo.com.ve/2018/11/15/empresa-china-zte-ha-ayudado-al-gobierno-venezolano-a-implantar-su-carnet-de-la-patria/">https://elsiglo.com.ve/2018/11/15/empresa-china-zte-ha-ayudado-al-gobierno-venezolano-a-implantar-su-carnet-de-la-patria/</a></p>	<p><b>Source:</b> “Carnet de la Patria impulsa la Protección Social al pueblo venezolano (Identity card promotes social protection for the people of Venezuela),” <i>Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela</i>, 14 November 2018. <a href="http://www.vicepresidencia.gob.ve/index.php/2018/11/14/carnet-de-la-patria-impulsa-la-proteccion-social-al-pueblo-venezolano/">http://www.vicepresidencia.gob.ve/index.php/2018/11/14/carnet-de-la-patria-impulsa-la-proteccion-social-al-pueblo-venezolano/</a></p>
<p><i>“At ZTE headquarters in 2008, the Venezuelan delegation learned how China was developing a system that would help Beijing follow social, political, and economic behavior through smart cards.”</i></p> <p><i>“A team of ZTE employees now operates within a special unit of CANTV, Venezuela’s state telecommunications company that manages the database.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Through this card, citizens can access grants and supplies, but they must also provide the government with a large amount of personal data.”</i></p>	<p><i>“It should be noted that to date, 18,396,476 Venezuelans are registered in the social protection system.”</i></p>