



**CENTRO PARA
LOS DEFENSORES
Y LA JUSTICIA**

**SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA**

SEPTEMBER 2021

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Centro para los Defensores y la Justicia (CDJ), **documented 49 attacks and security incidents during the month of September 2021** in Venezuela.

The Venezuelan State maintains repressive and controlling measures against those who promote, defend and demand human rights in the country. The deepening of restrictions on civic and democratic space affects the free and legitimate exercise of humanitarian and human rights activities.

The Logic of the Internal Enemy continues to be used as a mechanism to persecute civil society. Criminalization as a State Policy is perfected and the rights to free association, expression, opinion, and defense of human rights are seriously violated.

In an adverse and restrictive context, the risks for those who are in the first line of response to the social, political, and human rights crisis in the country are increased, without there being effective mechanisms for their protection.

Impunity for human rights violations, and specifically those committed against human rights and humanitarian defenders and organizations, is one of the main factors that encourages and allows these acts to continue to be committed as they are not investigated and punished.

There are still no efforts to build favorable and safe environments for the promotion, defense, and demand of rights in Venezuela. On the contrary, the failure of the State to comply with its international commitments and obligations in this matter shows a lack of interest in the effective protection of human rights.

We reiterate that in order to advance in the solution to the political and social crisis that the country is going through, the processes of dialogue and negotiation between political sectors, which are currently underway, must start from the perspective of human rights and, consequently, documentation actions, denunciation, visibility, and accompaniment must be promoted and respected without any type of retaliation, as they are essential for the strengthening of the rule of law and democracy.

01 VIOLENT ACTS AGAINST THE DEFENSE AND DEMAND OF HUMAN RIGHTS INCREASE

49 new violations against the right to defend human rights in Venezuela during September 2021.

The Logic of the Internal Enemy continues to negatively affect the defense, promotion, and demand of rights. Human rights defenders and organizations remain under attack, and violent acts by the State are progressively increasing.

There are no conditions for the free exercise of activities by individuals and organizations, actions within the humanitarian and human rights framework continue to be limited and controlled. The repression and social control of the State affect the operation of these organizations.

In addition to the reprisals against the human rights movement, there are the effects of the Complex Humanitarian Emergency that the country is going through, which also have an impact on the work of those who defend human rights. Thus, reinforcing a hostile and adverse environment for the exercise of the right to defend human rights.

The Criminalization Policy consolidates. Stigmatization, disqualification and intimidation, harassment, and threats increase as a consequence of the advance of the restrictions of the civic and democratic space.

SEPTEMBER 2021 ATTACKS



49 ATTACKS

49 attacks and security incidents documented during the month of September reflect the increase of more violent attacks such as acts of intimidation, harassment, and threats. Judicial harassment against defenders and organizations is used as a reprisal mechanism, as well as trying to have a frightening effect on other organizations.

Stigmatization campaigns continue to be the main way of attacking the defense, promotion, and demand of rights. Hate and smear speeches encourage violence, in addition to seeking to generate a dissuasive impact and create mistrust in the work of the civil society. This is a strategy used as part of State terrorism used to control the population by issuing “exemplary messages and punishments”.

The 49 events recorded during September were characterized by:

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE ATTACKS



During September the stigmatization campaigns and the accusations by State officials persisted, accusing the organizations of carrying out “destabilizing activities”, “attacking the country”, of being associated with the “far-right” and “coup attempts”, among others.

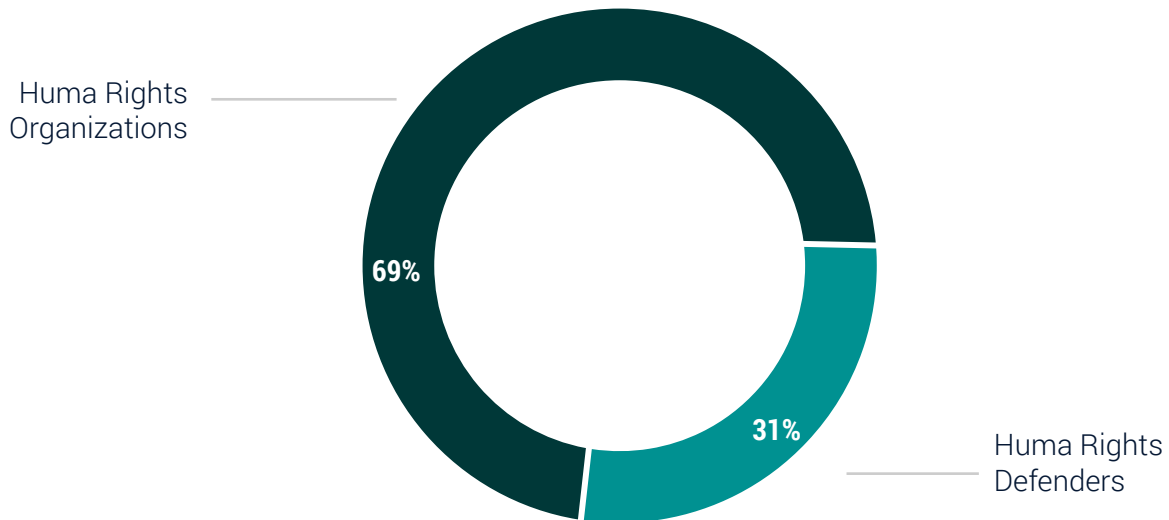
We are concerned about the increase in acts of intimidation and harassment by officials and other actors who take part in different structures of the Popular System of Protection for Peace (SP3 by its Spanish name) or those who identify with the ruling party, thus violating the activities of the organizations and representing an impact on the personal and psychosocial security of defenders.

New threats were registered to initiate criminal investigations against individuals and rights organizations for their activities, as part of the use of criminal law to persecute, harass and criminalize.

The prosecution process against the three human rights defenders of the FundaRedes organization continues, with new acts of judicial harassment, evidencing the use of criminal prosecution as a form of repression and retaliation.

VICTIMS OF THE ATTACKS

Of the total of the documented attacks during the month of September 2021, 34 were directed against human rights organizations and organizations that carry out humanitarian actions, equivalent to 69% of the total. While 15 were individualized directed against human rights defenders, representing the remaining 31%.



The generalized attack against the work of the organizations continues, mainly in the framework of the criminalization of international cooperation, as well as the attempts to discredit their documentation and complaint processes, in addition to the questioning of their independence.

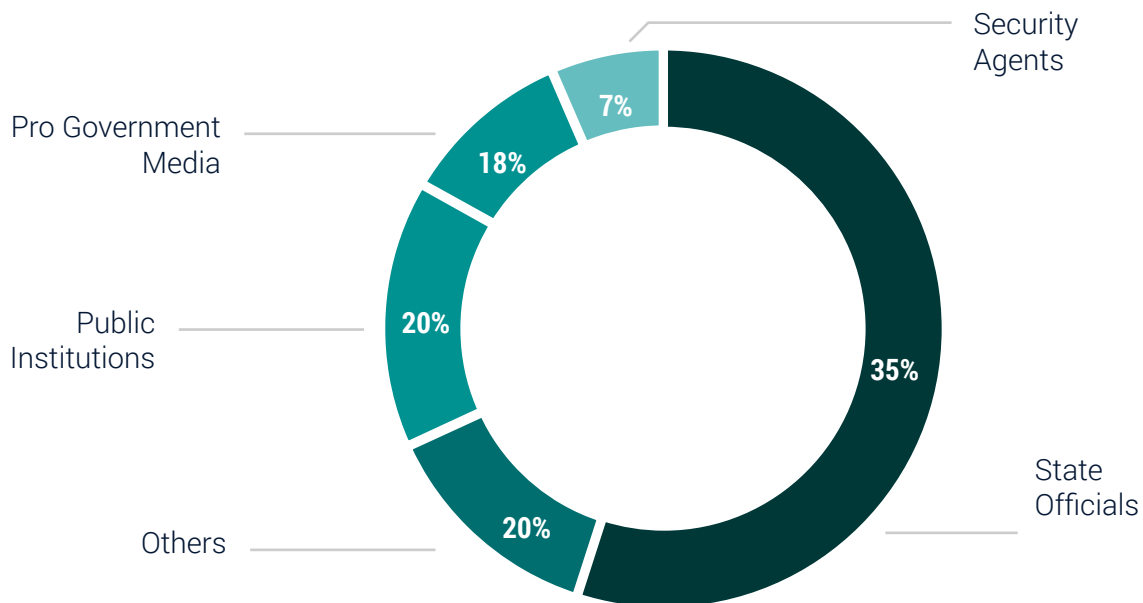
Some of the cases documented in September include the systematic nature of the stigmatization and harassment campaigns against the *Venezuelan Human Rights Education-Action Program - PROVEA*; the accusations to the detriment of the Transparency Venezuela organizations; Access to Justice, *Bloque Constitucional*, *Instituto Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS)*, *Promedehum* and *Foro Penal*. Acts of intimidation and threats against the *Fundación de Derechos Humanos de los Llanos - Fundehullan*.

Likewise, we highlight acts of intimidation against two defenders who are members of the *Movimiento Vinotinto* organization, the judicial harassment against Javier Tarazona, Rafael Tarazona, and Omar García, members of the *FundaRedes* organization.

PERPETRATORS

The main perpetrators for the attacks and security incidents documented during the month of September were distributed as follows:

A total of 17 (35%) of the events were carried out by public officials, mainly deputies and members of the national executive, who made use of their profiles on social networks, or statements in government media to stigmatize, threaten and intimidate; 10 (20%) were carried out by people or groups affected by the political interests of the State, members of the associated entities or that make up the Popular System of Protection for Peace (SP3); another 10 (20%) were the responsibility of Public Institutions or government entities; 9 (18%) of the attacks were perpetrated from the State's traditional and digital media and their social media accounts; finally 3 (7%) of the events were the responsibility of State security agencies.



02 THE LOGIC OF THE INTERNAL ENEMY IS THE BASIS FOR THE CRIMINALIZATION OF THE ACTIONS OF DEFENSE AND DEMAND OF HUMAN RIGHTS

As the Criminalization Policy against the defense, promotion, and demand of human rights advances, the application of the National Security Doctrine is deepening, having as its central axis the *Logic of the Internal Enemy*.

Consistent with the systematic patterns of aggression documented by the CDJ, in September, stigmatization continued to be the main form of attack. The speeches and statements of public officials, through which it is intended to locate those who defend human rights as internal enemies of the Nation, and their activities are classified as interference and destabilizing, continue to be presented as the starting point for the execution of the Criminalization Policy.

The seriousness of these stigmatization campaigns lies, among various aspects, in that they lead to the materialization of other types of attacks, which due to their violent nature compromise the integrity, freedom, operability, and security of organizations and people who defend rights. humans and carry out humanitarian action.

During the month, State institutions and officials from different public powers made use of social media and media platforms to continue to discredit and denounce the actions of the Venezuelan human rights movement and the organizations that integrated it¹. The accusations of these actors continue to seek to link the work of human rights and humanitarian assistance organizations with illicit activities, as well as with interference and interventionist activities, qualifying them even within the accounts of terrorism and organized crime, in order to generate an opinion matrix that antagonizes the work of defense, promotion and demand of human rights.

Different communication platforms affiliated with the National Public Media System, and others in favor of the guidelines of State representation, added to the stigmatization by publishing and reproducing the content that seeks to question the independence of organizations and defenders, accusing them of receiving, and even steal resources from political parties and foreign entities. Among the main media responsible for these events are: *La Iguana TV, Con el Mazo Dando, La Hojilla, Lechuguinos and Correo el Orinoco*².

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¹ Twitter Video and written statement. 07.09.21. Available at: <https://twitter.com/Lunayhon/status/1435229019222552578?t=xdFD-6fnSI03rW2GmDgWws&s=08>

Instagram. Video and written statement. 07.09.21. Available at: https://www.instagram.com/tv/CTHJubnyh/?utm_medium=copy_link

Retweet by Ricardo González Alvarado. 13.09.21. Available: <https://twitter.com/antvenezuela/status/1437404793232896004>

Retweet by Larry Devoe. 13.09.21. Available: <https://twitter.com/CancilleriaVE/status/1437407513322926085>

Retweet by Pedro Carvajalino. 23.09.21. Available in: <https://twitter.com/JFjusticiafuser/status/1441113223420203011>

Twitter Tweet by Jesús La Mayor. 24.05.21. Available at: <https://twitter.com/jesulamayor2/status/1441506233895227397>

Tweet from Carlos Mogollón https://twitter.com/_CarlosMogollon/status/1442580520181768193?s=19

²Francisco Sierra Corrales. Pummel. "The justice system under mock examination in Mexico." 13.09.21. Available at: <https://www.aporrea.org/ddhh/a305845.html>

Venezuela rejects US interference in dialogue with the opposition. Orinoco Mail. 24.09.21. Available at: <http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/venezuela-rechaza-la-injerencia-de-ee-uu-en-el-dialogo-con-la-oposicion/>

Zurda Konducta. Minutes. 1: 22: 37-1: 23: 00. 16.09.21. Available in: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAYq9dFECyg&ab_channel=ProgramasCompleto

Con el Mazo Dando. 29.09.21. Minutes 56:07 - 56:59. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KU2QD3kUaUk>

The criminalization of international cooperation continues to characterize the official discourse against those who carry out activities in defense of human rights and humanitarian assistance. Within the framework of the 48th Period of Sessions of the United Nations Human Rights Council and the presentation of the report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Venezuela (FFM) and the report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), on the situation of human rights in Venezuela, in September discrediting and stigmatizing messages were produced against human rights organizations that serve as a source for reports and pronouncements thanks to their documentation and denounce, as a form of reprisal.

Public entities and officials, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and government media “rejected” the findings of the reports presented, questioning the veracity of the sources used and cited, accusing them again of following a “political script” and of presenting “fake news” to feed the reports of international organizations³.

On the other hand, state violence continues to advance and there is an increase in threats of criminal prosecution and the materialization of acts of intimidation and harassment against organizations and human rights defenders. As a result of stigmatization, hate speech, and discrediting, these actions of a more violent type take place, which compromises the safety and life of people who carry out actions in the field of human rights and humanitarianism. The attacks occur consistently with the official calls to “identify and neutralize” those who are considered enemies⁴.

On the other hand, the lack of democratic institutions and the cooptation of public powers are factors that allow the Internal Enemy Logic to be applied. Instead of ensuring respect for human rights, the public powers serve as the executive arm of repression, control, and criminalization.

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³Ministry of Popular Power for Foreign Relations. Statement: Venezuela takes note of the report published by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights that confirms the perverse effect of the sanctions. 13.09.21. Available at: <http://mppre.gob.ve/comunicado/informe-derechos-humanos-onu-perverso-bloqueo/>

Venezuela takes note of the report published by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights that confirms the perverse effect of the sanctions. Orinoco Mail. 13.09.21. Available in:

<http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/venezuela-toma-nota-del-informe-publicado-por-la-oficina-de-la-alta-comisionada-de-onu-para-los-ddhh-que-ratifies-perverse-effect-of-sanctions/>

Retweet by Ricardo González Alvarado. 13.09.21. Available: <https://twitter.com/antvenezuela/status/1437404793232896004>

Ministry of Popular Power for Foreign Relations. Statement: Venezuela takes note of the report published by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights that confirms the perverse effect of the sanctions. 13.09.21. Available at: <http://mppre.gob.ve/comunicado/informe-derechos-humanos-onu-perverso-bloqueo/>

Venezuela takes note of the report published by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights that confirms the perverse effect of the sanctions. Orinoco Mail. 13.09.21. Available in:

<http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/venezuela-toma-nota-del-informe-publicado-por-la-oficina-de-la-alta-comisionada-de-onu-para-los-ddhh-que-ratifies-perverse-effect-of-sanctions/>

FIRM POSITION! Venezuela rejects false assertions in the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (+ COMMUNICADO). Lechuguinos. 13.09.21. Available in:

<https://www.lechuguinos.com/venezuela-rechaza-falsas-aseveraciones-ddhh/>

Retweet by Larry Devoe. 13.09.21. Available: <https://twitter.com/CancilleriaVE/status/1437407513322926085>

Item: 2 General Debate - 3rd Meeting, 48th Regular Session Human Rights Council. Statements by concerned countries (Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka and Venezuela), followed by a general debate. Minutes 16.44 to 21:27. EN: <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1h/k1h86r2h94>

ID: Fact-finding Mission on Venezuela - 19th Meeting, 48th Regular Session Human Rights Council. Interactive dialogue with: Independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on a written report mandated in resolution 45/20 (A / HRC / 48/69). Minutes 15:24 to 15:30. In: <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1a/k1a7lj2kq2>

⁴ Twitter Complaint from Georly León. 07.09.21. Available at: <https://twitter.com/georlyleoguerr/status/1435439949051015169?s=08>

An emblematic example that highlights this situation in the case of the persecution of human rights defenders and the use of criminal law as a form of punishment, is that of the three defenders of the FundaRedes organization, Javier Tarazona, Rafael Tarazona, and Omar García de Dios, who, at the time of the presentation of this report, have been arbitrarily detained for more than 100 days and have been illegally deprived of their liberty, continue to be subjected to a judicial process immersed in irregularities. Among the various human rights violations surrounding the case is judicial harassment, framed in situations and actions that violate the right to due process; among them, the unjustified and repeated postponement of hearings and the refusal to allow his private and trusted defense team to be sworn in⁵.

Along the same lines is the case of the five members of the organization *Acción Zuliana por la Vida (Azul Positivo)* who have remained under arbitrary criminal proceedings since January with limitations on their full freedom, as part of the Venezuelan State's Criminalization Policy against the defense and demand of rights.

The CDJ is concerned about the continuous efforts by the State to locate and identify individuals and organizations as "enemies", in order to criminalize and neutralize their work. As long as that the State continues to use the Internal Enemy Logic to violate the right to defend human rights, the systematic patterns of attack against the defense and demand of rights will continue to be perfected, and therefore the risks for those who are in the first line of action developing legitimate activities of documentation, denunciation, assistance and humanitarian action in the country will increase.

The defense, promotion, and demand of human rights are not a crime, any act committed in order to limit, affect or obstruct these actions contravenes international obligations. Therefore, we demand the immediate end of the Criminalization Policy and the construction of conducive and safe environments for the defense of human rights.

03 THE DEFENSE AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ARE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW

The Complex Humanitarian Emergency situation that the country is going through and the human rights crisis require a response and the exercise of actions to address the situation and protect the human dignity of Venezuelans, especially in the face of the omissions and actions of the State regarding the obligations to respect, guarantee and protect rights.

The actions of documentation, denunciation, dissemination of the human rights situation, and the accompaniment of the victims are essential activities to advance in the solution of the structural problems that the country faces and that originate and perpetuate the crisis.

The work of human rights defenders and organizations is fundamental for the universal implementation of human rights, the prevalence democracy, and the strengthening of the rule of law. Therefore, given the increase in aggressions, limitations, and obstacles against the work of human rights and humanitarian action organizations in Venezuela, we reiterate the importance of the actions undertaken by civil society that is in the first line of action responding and attending to the socio-economic needs of the population and seeking the achievement of justice and respect for fundamental freedoms and the need for the immediate cessation of aggression and reprisals against them.

From the Centro para los Defensores y la Justicia, we insist on the need to include the human rights perspective in the processes of solving the political, economic, and social situation facing the country. The different political actors and the international community must ensure that a conducive and safe environment is established for the defense and demand of rights in order to guarantee that every person and organization that promotes, defends, and demands these rights does so without fear of reprisals or arbitrary limitations.

04 INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE CRIMINALIZATION OF THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA

The situation of criminalization of the defense and demand of human rights in Venezuela continues to be a source of concern for the international community. International organizations and bodies for the protection of human rights and diplomatic actors continue to speak out in rejection of the attacks committed and demand that the State fulfill its duty to promote and protect the work of human rights defenders.

On September 13, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights presented a new report prepared by her office at session No. 48 of the Human Rights Council. The document reflects that *“during the reporting period, OHCHR documented 17 cases of human rights violations related to the defense of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, including 4 cases of threats and intimidation (including two women) and 12 cases of arbitrary detention. Many of the documented cases were accompanied by acts of violence and implied the criminalization of legitimate activities” (...); It also states that “OHCHR observes the limited progress made in protecting human rights defenders, investigating human rights violations committed against them, and guaranteeing the right to participate in public affairs, such as it was previously recommended”.* The report’s recommendations include: Immediately cease all acts of intimidation, threats, and reprisals by members of the security forces against the families of victims of human rights violations who are seeking justice⁶. During the oral intervention, the High Commissioner expressed the concerns expressed in the report and indicated: *“I am concerned about the additional restrictions and the continuous reports of intimidation and criminalization of human rights defenders and union leaders for their legitimate activities. I encourage the establishment of dialogue initiatives to resolve the current impasse regarding the elections for autonomous universities”*⁷.

On September 14, in a session of the Human Rights Council, representatives of different countries spoke before the presentation of the new report by the Office of the High Commissioner. Some of the States expressed their concern about the restrictions on civic and democratic space in the country⁸.

On September 16, the second Conclusive report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela was published, this time focused on the role of the justice system in the repression. Among the cases reflected are 3 cases of prosecution and judicial harassment against human rights defenders, specifically the cases of journalist and defender Luis Carlos Díaz, the case of the five members of the organization *Acción Zuliana por la Vida (Azul Positivo)*, and that of the defender of sexual and reproductive rights Vanessa Rosales. This report reflects how the repression, control, and criminalization of the State also affects the work of defenders who are victims of persecution because they are considered or perceived as dissidents⁹.

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⁶ A/HRC/48/19. Situation of human rights and technical assistance in the Bolivarian Republic from Venezuela. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session48/Documents/A_HRC_48_19_UnofficialSpanishVersion.pdf

⁷ 48th session of the Human Rights Council. Geneva, September 13, 2021 Presentation of the report of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights and technical assistance in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights. In: <https://venezuela.un.org/es/144101-presentacion-del-informe-de-la-alta-comisionada-sobre-la-situacion-de-los-derechos-humanos-y>

⁸ 3rd Meeting, 48th Regular Session Human Rights Council. <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1y/k1y9yum98f>

⁹ A/HRC/48/CRP.5 September 16, 2021. Human Rights Council Forty-eighth session September 13 to October 8, 2021. Agenda Item 4: Human rights situations that require the attention of the Tip. Detailed Findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. In: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFMV/A-HRC-48-CRP.5_SP.pdf

On September 24, during the development of the interactive dialogue concerning the report of the Independent International Fact-finding Mission, held at the Human Rights Council session, representatives of different countries spoke out and expressed their concern about the attacks against civil society, and what can be done about the situation of human rights defenders and humanitarian actors¹⁰.

On September 29, the communication dated July 27 sent by 4 special procedures of the Human Rights Council was published, which includes the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Rapporteur Special on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the fight against terrorism to the Venezuelan State due to criminalization, attacks, harassment and threats against human rights defenders. The communication is in reference to the cases of Orlando Moreno, Gerardo Ernesto Carrero Delgado, Javier Tarazona, Rodney Antonio Álvarez Rodríguez, Guillermo Zárraga, Eudis Giroto and Karen Caruci¹¹. The document states, among other things, that *“Since the beginning of 2020, in the context of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in attacks or security incidents against the work of defenders and organizations. from the human rights. These events would include acts of intimidation, harassment, stigmatization, arbitrary raids, confiscation of equipment and supplies, freezing of bank accounts, alleged arbitrary detentions, prosecution, death threats, criminalization of international cooperation, retaliation for complaints before international organizations, digital attacks, and legal restrictions on freedom of association”*.

On September 29, the report of the United Nations Secretary-General on Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives, and mechanisms in the field of human rights was also presented. The document addresses the situation of intimidation and retaliation against human rights defenders and civil society in Venezuela *“who cooperated or were perceived as cooperating with the UN, particularly those implementing UN humanitarian programs”*. The organizations are reported to have been labeled “criminals,” “mercenaries,” “thieves,” “terrorists,” and “enemies of the state,” including in UN forums and on government-affiliated online portals. Among some of the cases reflected are the accusations against *Comité de Familiares de Víctimas del Caracazo (COFAVIC)*; *el Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social (OVCS)*; *el Centro de Justicia y Paz (CEPAZ)*; *Control Ciudadano* and its director *Rocío San Miguel*; and *Espacio Público* y and its director *Carlos Correa*; as well as the arbitrary detention of the five members of the *Azul Positivo* organization, *Johan Manuel León Reyes*, *Yordy Tobías Bermúdez Gutiérrez*, *Layners Christian Gutiérrez Díaz*, *Alejandro Gómez Di Maggio* and *Luis Ramón Ferrebuz Cabrera*¹².

Regarding the pronouncements of international organizations with a mandate to protect defenders, the following statements were highlighted:

The World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) and the Center for Justice and International Law (Cejil), together with the Venezuelan organization *Cofavic*, on September 15, 2021, made a joint intervention at the 48th session of the Human Rights Council, in which they denounced the increase in aggressions against defenders in Venezuela¹³.

¹⁰19th Meeting, 48th Regular Session Human Rights Council. ID with Fact-finding mission on Venezuela. <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k19/k1966rofzk>

¹¹Venezuela: criminalization, attacks, harassment and threats against human rights defenders (joint communication) <https://spcom-reports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=26550>

¹²A/HRC/48/28. Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights – Report of the Secretary-General https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session48/Documents/A_HRC_48_28_AUV_EN.docx

¹³OMCT-COFAVIC-CEJIL intervention before the 48th session of the Human Rights Council. September 15, 2021 <https://www.omct.org/es/recursos/declaraciones/venezuela-150-laciones-de-amenazas-en-contra-de-organizaciones-y-personas-defensoras-en-venezuela-desde-January>

On September 24, 7 international organizations, among which are the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), the Foundation for Due Process (DPLF), the World Organization against Torture (OMCT), and the International Federation of Rights Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders), the Washington Office for Latin American Affairs (WOLA), Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights and Amnesty International; they issued a joint statement in which they expressed their concern over *“the implementation of an administrative measure that criminalizes and limits the defense work of civil society organizations”*. The text describes the extremely adverse context in which the organizations that defend human rights in Venezuela carry out their work, characterized by attacks, raids, and arbitrary detentions. In particular, they express concern about *“the progress in the compulsory implementation of the Administrative Ruling for the Unified Registry of Obligated Subjects before the National Office Against Organized Crime and Terrorism Financing (ONCDOFT by its Spanish name) without a focus on human rights compatible with international standards. and with an approach that takes into account the work of NGOs that defend rights”*¹⁴.

05 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the complexities that surround the Venezuelan socio-political environment, we reiterate that the work of promotion and defense of human rights, as well as humanitarian action, are essential for the protection of human dignity. It is essential to create effective mechanisms for the full and free exercise of human rights and the protection of those who defend them. As organizations and human rights defenders are essential actors for democracy, their actions must be promoted and protected.

It is essential that the use of the *logic of the Internal Enemy* to criminalize and repress stops being used. The acts of violence, repression, and social control of the State must cease.

It is necessary that state actors, international organizations, and the international community work to advance the construction of conducive and safe environments so that those who promote, demand, and defend rights can do so freely and without fear of being victims of reprisals.

As the reduction of civic and democratic space deepens, the challenges and risks for those who defend and demand human rights and for those who carry out humanitarian actions in the country will continue to increase.

We urge the State to fully comply with its international obligations to respect, protect and guarantee rights, including that of defending human rights and humanitarian action, immediately cease the Criminalization Policy and refrain from implementing the *logic of the Internal Enemy*.

We reiterate that in order to advance in the solution to the political and social crisis that the country is going through, the processes of dialogue and negotiation between political sectors, which are currently underway, must start from the perspective of human rights.

We continue working for the establishment of effective public policies and mechanisms that seek and promote the effective protection of people and organizations that defend human rights in Venezuela.

From the CDJ we reaffirm our commitment to respect and guarantee the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and demonstration, freedom of expression. As well as the effective application of the Declaration on the right and duty of individuals, groups, and institutions to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms; known as the Declaration of Defenders, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 9, 1998.

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