



**CENTRO PARA  
LOS DEFENSORES  
Y LA JUSTICIA**

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**SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA**

**NOVEMBER 2021**

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*Centro para los Defensores y la Justicia (CDJ)*, **documented 36 attacks and security incidents during the month of November 2021** in Venezuela.

Acts of intimidation and harassment, as well as stigmatization campaigns were the main patterns of aggression documented during the month of November, showing that those who carry out actions to promote, defend and demand human rights in the country must do so in a hostile context. and unfavorable environments that do not guarantee human rights.

Human rights defenders in Venezuela are exposed to a variety of risks that limit the operation and free exercise of their activities and that affect their lives and physical and psychological integrity.

The Venezuelan State, far from advancing with the necessary corrections to guarantee the full validity of the human rights of the population, continues to violate them and deepen the Criminalization Policy to seek to obstruct, limit and affect the work of those who work in favor of these rights.

This means that the risks for human rights defenders and organizations continue to increase. The criminalization, the restrictive measures of the civic and democratic space, as well as the complex humanitarian emergency represent a set of obstacles for the defense, promotion and demand of rights. In addition to this, the actions and omissions of the State regarding the attacks suffered by defenders serve as an incentive for the perpetrators to continue committing said acts.

The lack of guarantees or effective public policies for the promotion and protection of those who defend, promote and demand human rights represents a violation of the international commitments to which the State has subscribed, which systematically violates the rights to free association, expression, opinion and defense of human rights.

# 01 **INTIMIDATION AND HARASSMENT INCREASE AS STIGMATIZATION CAMPAIGNS AGAINST THOSE WHO DEFEND, PROMOTE AND DEMAND HUMAN RIGHTS INTENSIFY**

**36 new violations against the right to defend human rights in Venezuela during November 2021.**

The State's Criminalization, Repression and Social Control Policy continues to limit the organizations' operations and as a consequence stigmatization, intimidation, harassment and threats increase.

As acts of stigmatization intensify through the systematic nature of hate and smear campaigns on social networks, official speeches and in traditional and digital media, acts of intimidation and harassment increase.

There is growing concern about the materialization of violent acts carried out against human rights defenders and civil society organizations. There has been an increase in the number of attacks due to the deepening of the use of the Internal Enemy Logic to criminalize those who demand that the State comply with its human rights obligations.

Despite the constant calls by various actors to the State, it still does not guarantee conditions for the free exercise of activities in the field of human rights and humanitarianism, and on the contrary perfects its repressive policy and social control to limit and control its actions, based on a policy of terror that, in addition to directly affecting the victims, intends to have an inhibitory effect on the rest of those who defend, promote and demand human rights.

### NOVEMBER 2021 ATTACKS



# 36 ATTACKS

36 attacks and security incidents documented during the month of November show that the official discourse and narrative is aimed at attacking people and organizations in Venezuela, which generates an increase in violence and greater obstacles to the exercise of the actions of civil society in the country.

The use of terms such as "enemies", "traitors to the homeland", "destabilizing agents", among others, continue to be the main way of attacking the defense, promotion and demand of rights. These speeches are a trigger for other actors to be driven and motivated to carry out acts of violence.

On the other hand, it is observed that judicial harassment increases as one of the retaliation mechanisms for documenting, denouncing and making visible the human rights crisis in Venezuela.

These events seek to discourage the work of human rights defenders and organizations, but also represent a danger to them as it serves as a trigger for different actors to commit attacks and also to be protected by the structural impunity for human rights violations existing in Venezuela.

The 36 events recorded during November were characterized by:

**CHARACTERIZATION OF THE ATTACKS**



**STIGMATIZATION**

**24**



**HARASSMENT AND  
INTIMIDATION**

**10**

**OTHERS**

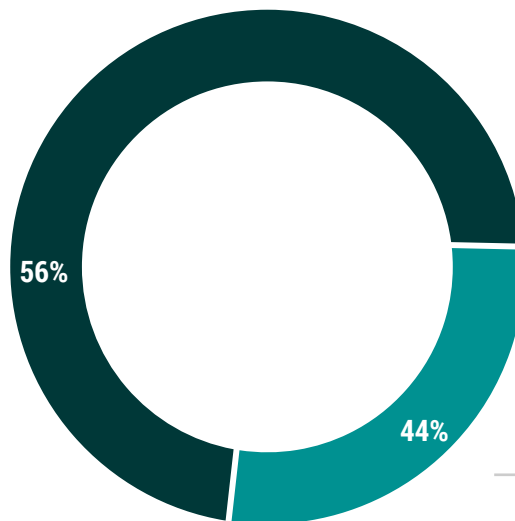
**OTHERS**

**2**

**VICTIMS OF THE ATTACKS**

Of the total of the documented attacks during the month of November 2021, 20 were directed at human rights organizations and organizations that carry out humanitarian actions, equivalent to 56% of the total. While 16 were against human rights defenders, representing the remaining 44%.

Huma Rights Organizations



Human Rights Defenders

During the period under study, we observed a continuity in the generalized accusations against the work of the organizations, specifically in the framework of the criminalization of international cooperation. Likewise, the efforts of the State persist in reducing credibility to the documentation and denunciation work of the organizations.

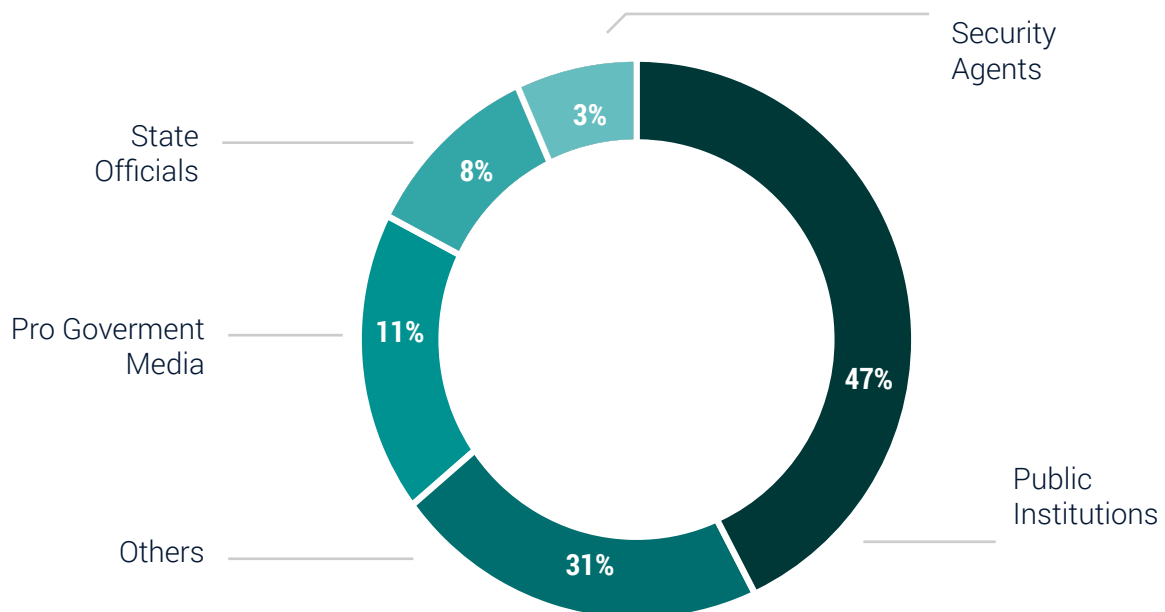
Some of the cases documented in November include the systematic nature of the stigmatization and harassment campaigns against the Programa Venezolano de *Educación-Acción en Derechos Humanos* – *PROVEA*; the accusations to the detriment of the *Transparencia Venezuela*; acts of intimidation and disqualification against the *Foro Penal* organization and its directors.

We also highlight the targeted attacks against defenders for the exercise of their activities. Among some of the registered cases are the human rights defenders Yonaide Sánchez and Nelson Freitez, who were harassed and attacked as part of their work of documenting and observing the electoral event in Lara state; as well as the judicial harassment and constant violations of the rights of the defenders Javier Tarazona, Rafael Tarazona and Omar García, members of the *FundaRedes* organization.

### PERPETRATORS

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

A total of 17 (47%) of the events were the responsibility of Public Institutions or government entities including the Justice System, the Chancellery and the Presidency; 11 (31%) 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), among others; 4 (11%) of the attacks were perpetrated from the state's traditional and digital media; 3 (8%) were made 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; finally 1 (3%) 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 DEMANDING OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The Logic of the Internal Enemy remains the central axis to define the line of attack against the defense, promotion and demand of human rights.

Within the patterns of aggression recorded, we find that stigmatization is presented as the main form of attack, smear campaigns, disqualification and discredit serve as the main drivers of criminalization against those who defend rights in the country and promote the execution of violent acts against the life and personal and psychological integrity of these people.

During the month of November, acts of stigmatization persisted, as has been documented in previous months, based on official statements, and accusations made against human rights defenders and organizations focused on the criminalization of international cooperation and in trying to delegitimize the complaints presented by the organizations.

There is an intensification in the continuous accusations by official actors against the human rights movement of receiving foreign financing for supposed interventionist purposes, being identified as “destabilizing agents”. Likewise, the intentions persist to link those who defend, promote and demand human rights with acts of corruption and political proselytism<sup>1</sup>, this under the deepening of the use of criminal law to prosecute under the enemy’s logic.

Likewise, in November the use of social networks was maintained in order to generate campaigns aimed at discrediting and questioning the work of those who defend and demand rights. Disqualifying campaigns resulted from this and comments were generated from various actors aligned with the government, in which it is intended to antagonize the actions of the organizations because they are considered as contrary to the interests of the State, identifying them as enemies of the nation.

Those responsible for these events are mainly State officials or people related to or associated with the government. On the one hand, the personal and institutional accounts of officials or public entities have served as a platform for spreading hateful and discrediting messages against the human rights movement. On the other hand, the media associated with the National Public Media System, as well as autonomous media related to the government, including web platforms and television programs, were responsible for the generation and dissemination of stigmatizing content against human rights organizations. Among the main programs and portals are *Lechuguinos*, *Con el Mazo Dando*, *La Hojilla*, *Movimiento Rojo*, *Misión Verdad* and *Zurda Konducta*.

<sup>1</sup> Presidency of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. “Venezuela guarantor of human rights”. 03.11.21. Page 11. Available at: <http://www.minci.gob.ve/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Venezuela-ratifica-principio-de-complementariedad-con-la-CPI-en-defensa-de-los-DDHH.pdf>

Tweet from Pablo Fernández. 10.11.21: Available at: <https://twitter.com/pabloefb/status/1458438670097297413?t=905ZxUVhTVr-jD3HXvdlbbA&s=19>

Youtube. Red Movement. “Julio Borges: Boss of the NGOs. 11.11.21. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLg8y-3\\_T8o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLg8y-3_T8o)

Youtube. Red Movement. “Julio Borges: Boss of the NGOs. 11.11.21. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLZ-mufQzgLw>

On the other hand, the CDJ is concerned that, based on an official speech, the Logic of the Internal Enemy continues to materialize in attacks and acts of intimidation and harassment in social networks against organizations and human rights defenders, from diversity of actors that includes public officials, members of the structures of the Popular System of Protection for Peace and other actors involved in the United Socialist Party of Venezuela<sup>2</sup>.

During the month, it is also worth noting the persistence in the intimidation and judicial harassment by the State of the FundaRedes organization and its three members, who still remain under and arbitrary prosecution process, having registered a new unjustified delay to their preliminary hearing<sup>3</sup>. Likewise, they highlight the acts of violence that occurred to the detriment of Yonaide Sánchez and Nelson Freitez, who were attacked by civilian armed groups in the framework of the electoral event held on November 21<sup>4</sup>. These types of events show that members of the Protection System for Peace continue to be one of the executing arms of the State to neutralize and criminalize the work of defense of human rights.

From the CDJ we express our concern about the systematic nature of the Criminalization Policy of the defense of human rights. Despite the various calls made to the State by international protection organizations, and by Venezuelan civil society, the attack pattern continues to be perfected in order to limit and hinder the defense, promotion and demand of human rights and to send a message of punishment exemplary to those who do this work.

## 8

#HABLEMOSDDHH

<sup>2</sup> Tweet from Melanie Agrinzones. 11.11.21. Available at: [https://twitter.com/Miaulanie\\_/status/1458837084953886733](https://twitter.com/Miaulanie_/status/1458837084953886733)  
[https://twitter.com/Miaulanie\\_/status/1458945764848279552](https://twitter.com/Miaulanie_/status/1458945764848279552)

Tweet from Raquel Sanchez. 02.11.21. Available at: <https://twitter.com/Raquelysc/status/1455544168017768469?t=A8-gwQ456m-LewJd9U5oif6g&s=08>

Tweet from Pablo Fernadez. 12.11.21. Available at: <https://twitter.com/pabloefb/status/1459189319596490759?s=19>

Statements of the "La Hojilla" Program, Min. 1:01:00 - 1:01:13. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apxvhPHzqpU>

Tweet from the Samuel Robinson Institute. 19.11.21. Available at: [https://twitter.com/isrobinson\\_/status/1461650473153347586?t=f2QRKuyf3mu4ru1sHTp5GA&s=19](https://twitter.com/isrobinson_/status/1461650473153347586?t=f2QRKuyf3mu4ru1sHTp5GA&s=19)

Facebook or the methods of US intervention in Venezuela. Mission Truth Newspaper. 11.15.21. Available at: <https://misionverdad.com/venezuela/facebook-o-los-metodos-de-intervencion-estadoamericanos-en-venezuela>

Tweet from Alex Lanz. 11.21.21. Available at: <https://twitter.com/alanz/status/1462533205907714055>

Retweet by Pedro Carvajalino. 11.21.21. Available in:

<https://twitter.com/alanz/status/1462533205907714055>

Tweet from Oswaldo Rivero. 11.21.21. Available at: <https://twitter.com/mangozurda/status/1462059987765764098>

<https://twitter.com/mangozurda/status/1462059990370373638>

With the Mallet Giving. 24.11.21. Minutes: 40:24 - 41:29. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuBhdJfILO>

<sup>3</sup> FundaRedes alert tweet. 04.11.21. Available at: [https://twitter.com/FundaREDES\\_/status/1456296879004737540?t=6PD00zbnCm-04mfEND1Yq6w&s=19](https://twitter.com/FundaREDES_/status/1456296879004737540?t=6PD00zbnCm-04mfEND1Yq6w&s=19)

<sup>4</sup> Twitter Video of the complaint by Yonaide Sánchez and Nelson Freitez. 11.21.21. Available at: <https://twitter.com/YonaideSF/status/1462551914919473154/video/1>



# 03 INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE CRIMINALIZATION OF THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA

The increase in the criminalization of the defense and demand of human rights in Venezuela continues to generate concern in the international community. International organizations and bodies for the protection of human rights continue to express their concern and rejection of the attacks committed, and urging the State to comply with its international obligations to promote, guarantee, respect and protect the work of human rights defenders.

In this regard, on November 24, a joint communication sent by the special procedures of the Human Rights Council was published, specifically the mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the fight against human rights terrorism; of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; to the Venezuelan State due to pending or recently adopted legislation, regulations or policies regarding international cooperation and issues related to human rights, regulation and registration of organizations, organized crime and terrorism<sup>5</sup>. Specifically, reference is made to the following norms: Law for the Defense of National Sovereignty and Self-determination; Decree No. 2323: Declaration of the State of Exception and Economic Emergency; Decree No. 4135: Creation of the National Body Against Terrorism; Automated Special Registry of Non-Resident Non-Governmental Organizations (REGONG by its Spanish acronym); Circular SIB-DSB-CJ-OD-06524 (SUDEBAN by its Spanish acronym); Administrative Ruling N° ONCDOFT-002-2021; and the Draft Law on International Cooperation.

The document emphasizes the importance that this type of regulation is in accordance with international standards on the matter and does not represent arbitrary obstacles or limitations to human rights. The experts analyze the aforementioned norms based on the obligations to respect, guarantee and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms; as well as their relationship between them with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); and the American Convention on Human Rights.

<sup>5</sup> <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=26801>

On November 23, Mrs. Isabel Santos, head of the Electoral Observation Mission of the European Union (MOEUE), within the framework of the presentation of the preliminary observation report of the electoral event of the 21 of the same month, spoke in relation to the information received regarding the attacks suffered by two human rights defenders in the state of Lara as part of the documentation of incidents during the process<sup>6</sup>.

For its part, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint program of the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) issued two new urgent appeals in relation to the situation of people human rights defenders in Venezuela. On November 4, it pronounced on the case of the 3 defenders of FundaRedes, stating that he *“welcomes the release of Rafael Tarazona and Omar García. However, it vehemently condemns the continuation of the judicial harassment against him, as well as the arrest of José Javier Tarazona and the opacity of information around his current state of health”. (...) Likewise, he urged “to urgently provide adequate medical assistance to José Javier Tarazona and to release him immediately and unconditionally, since his detention is arbitrary and puts his health at serious risk”. (...) Finally, the organizations urged “to put an end to all types of harassment, including at the judicial level, against Rafael Tarazona, Omar García and José Javier Tarazona and against their next of kin, and to take the necessary measures to guarantee the protection of FundaREDES membership, who are at serious risk of threats and harassment for their work in defense of human rights”*<sup>7</sup>.

The second action issued by the Observatory was on November 9, given the situation of harassment and intimidation against the human rights lawyer Theresly Malavé Wadskier and urged the Venezuelan authorities to *“put an immediate end to all types of harassment, including judicial level, against Theresly Malavé Wadskier and to immediately adopt the most appropriate measures to guarantee her safety and physical and psychological integrity, as well as that of her family and the JUYPROVEN team”*<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup>European Union Mission reads report on mega-elections in Venezuela, November 23, 2021. In: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dG5oy-5gmGU>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.omct.org/es/recursos/llamamientos-urgentes/venezuela-jos%C3%A9-javier-tarazona-contin%C3%BAa-detenido-arbitrariamente>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.omct.org/es/recursos/llamamientos-urgentes/venezuela-hostigamiento-contra-la-abogada-de-derechos-humanos-theresly-malav%C3%A9-wadskier>

# 04 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As long as the actions of documentation, denunciation, visibility and accompaniment of human rights continue to be criminalized, no progress can be made in effective solutions that guarantee the recovery of Democracy and the rule of law.

The defense, promotion and demand of human rights must be promoted and respected without any type of retaliation, as they are essential elements for the existence of democracy and the rule of law.

In a context such as that of Venezuela, the work carried out by people and organizations that defend human rights are essential given the different political, social and economic circumstances that generate violations of the rights of the population. Faced with the actions and omissions of the State in relation to its obligations to respect, guarantee and protect rights, the activities of those who promote, defend and demand rights are prevailing to ensure the protection of the population and their right to live with dignity.

We insist that the Criminalization Policy must cease immediately and the State must refrain from implementing the logic of the Internal Enemy. Acts of violence, repression and social control by the State must be investigated and those responsible punished.

We call on state actors, international organizations and the international community to continue working 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.

In order to advance in solving the social, political and human rights crisis existing in the country, From the Centro para los Defensores y la Justicia, we reiterate that it is essential to build conducive and safe environments for the promotion, defense and demand of Rights. For these reasons, we insist on the need to incorporate the human rights perspective in the processes of dialogue and negotiation between political sectors, which are currently underway.

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.

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## CENTRO PARA LOS DEFENSORES Y LA JUSTICIA