



**CENTRO PARA  
LOS DEFENSORES  
Y LA JUSTICIA**

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# **SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA**

**APRIL 2022**

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The Center for Defenders and Justice (CDJ) registered **27 attacks and security incidents during April 2022 in Venezuela.**

In Venezuela, the context of restrictions on civic and democratic space remains, in which violations of the right to defend, promote and demand human rights are systematic.

The State attacks the organizations and individuals that are in the front line of action, responding to the humanitarian needs of the population, fighting against impunity, working for the protection of human dignity and ensuring the effective promotion and defense of human rights.

The risks for those who exercise the defense of human rights in Venezuela are increasing in light the deepening of the internal enemy thesis used by the State to criminalize and neutralize such work.

### ATTACKS APRIL 2022



# 27 ATTACKS

CDJ has registered 27 attacks and security incidents against human rights defenders and organizations so far this year in Venezuela.

The situations documented during the month of April demonstrate the systematic nature of the patterns of aggression that are part of the Criminalization Policy towards those who demand, promote and defend rights in the country.

During this period, a clear increase in stigmatization occurred, focused on the criminalization of activities for the defense and demand of human rights, accusations and the attempt to classify such activities as "illegitimate", with "destabilizing purposes" or other disqualifying expressions.

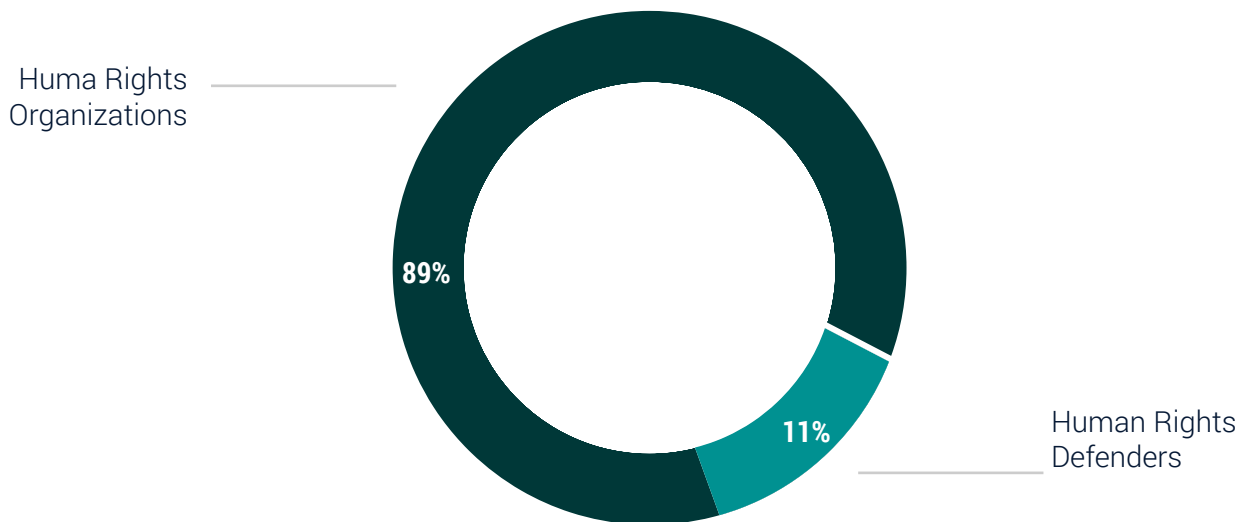
The 27 events documented during the month of April were characterized by:

### CHARACTERIZATION OF THE ATTACKS



In April, the documented accusations occur in a scenario of serious restrictions on civic and democratic space. The State intensifies its efforts to hinder and limit the work of human rights and humanitarian organizations, the stigmatization campaigns as the basis of the Criminalization Policy continue to be systematic and acts of violence increase as part of the repressive response of the State in the framework of the logic of the internal enemy, applied to those who defend and demand human rights.

### VICTIMS OF THE ATTACKS

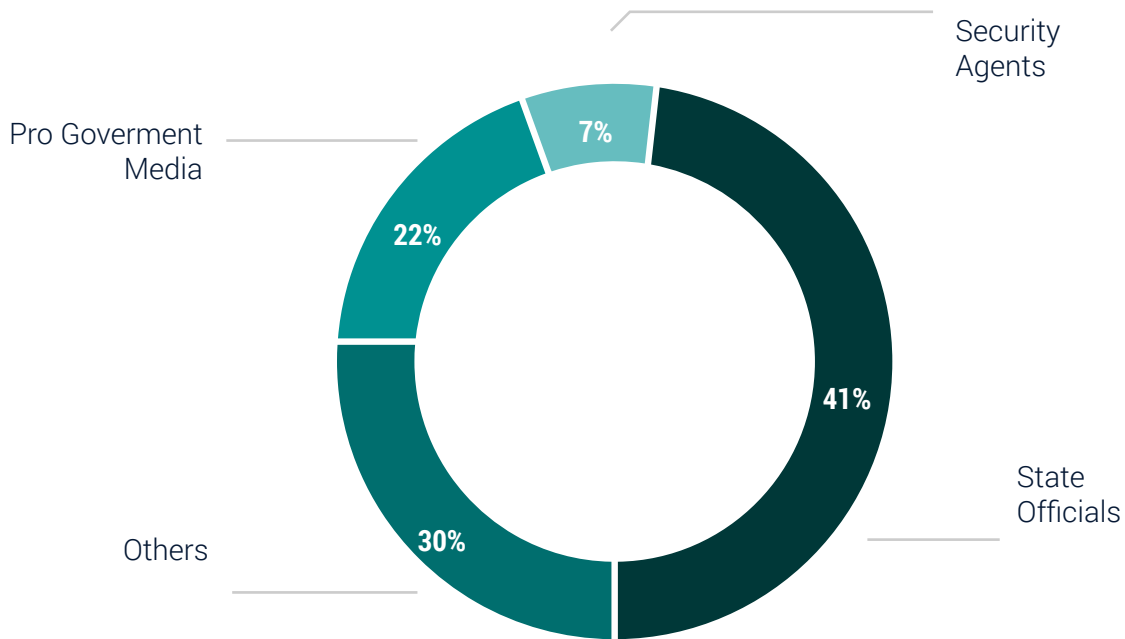


Among some of the cases we highlight the systematic nature of the stigmatization campaigns against the organizations Programa Venezolano de Educación-Acción en Derechos Humanos–PROVEA, its general coordinator Rafael Uzcátegui; Foro Penal, Instituto Prensa y Sociedad Venezuela (IPYS Venezuela), Espacio Público (EP) and its director Carlos Correa; as well as the general disqualification against the work of human rights organizations in the country.

**PERPETRATORS**

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

A total of 11 of the attacks were carried out by public officials, who made use of their profiles on social networks, or statements in government media to stigmatize and intimidate (41%); 8 (30%) were carried out by other actors related to the government or associated with the structures of the Popular Protection System for Peace (Sp3); 6 of the events were perpetrated from the traditional and digital media of the State and its accounts on social networks (22%); and 2 were the responsibility of Public Institutions (7%).



# 01 INTERNAL ENEMIES - THE STIGMATIZATION OF THE DEFENSE, DEMAND AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Despite the continuous demands from civil society and the repeated calls by international organizations and organizations specialized in protection of defenders, to stop the systematic attack against the defense of human rights, the State continues to implement different ways to strengthen the Policy of Criminalization based on the logic of the internal enemy.

For the month of April, stigmatization continued to be the main modality of attack against the defense of human rights, through which it was not only sought to generate a matrix of opinion that antagonizes the defense of human rights, but also it is situated in a general context of social control, through which members of the structures that make up the Popular System of Protection for Peace, are motivated to carry out social intelligence, monitoring and attacks to the detriment of the integrity and operability of the human rights organizations and their members, due to the constant accusations made by State officials and public institutions.

Stigmatization has been systematic and carried out through different media, including the social networks of State officials or institutions, television channels, communication and research platforms associated with the government administration or the National Public Media System. Thus, the main platforms responsible for the dissemination of hate speech and discreditable content against the organizations were *Con el Mazo Dando*, *La Hojilla*, *Zurda Konducta*, *Lechuguinos*, *Venezuela Agency News*, *La Iguana TV*, as well as personal and institutional social networks of powers and state officials.

CDJ registered unfounded accusations in relation alleged execution of organizations' activities based on foreign interests, and teases of the denunces made by organizations; Various disqualifications such as "liars", "nefarious", "**guarimberos**, murderers and Fascists", accusations of being "organizations financed by foreign entities under the excuse of defending human rights", among others. Likewise, the accusations regarding international cooperation persist, it is constantly mentioned that the organizations are "financed by the United States government, to promote false narratives and to overshadow the achievements of the Bolivarian Government"<sup>1</sup>.

## 6

## #HABLEMOSDDHH

<sup>1</sup>Con el Mazo Dando. 06.04.22. Minutos 1:15:40 – 1:16:07. Disponible en: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUNIDtgvP7w>  
 Foro Penal desmiente instalación de oficina de CPI en Caracas. Venezuela News. 09.04.22. Disponible en: <https://venezuela-news.com/foro-penal-desmiente-instalacion-de-oficina-de-cpi-en-caracas/>  
 Tweet de Pedro Carvajalino. 10.04.22. Disponible en: <https://twitter.com/PedroKonductaz/status/1512823195291766798>  
 Retweet de Jorge Arreaza. 10.04.22. Disponible en: <https://twitter.com/milkomanrique/status/1513171166688681996?t=8q0cmML7nGCKdasid3nyw&amp;s=19>  
 Tweet de Pedro Carvajalino. 10.04.22. Disponible en: <https://twitter.com/PedroKonductaz/status/1513237405154910215>  
 ¡INDIGNANTE! Provea intentó endiosar a los guarimberos y tuiteros les recordaron que son unos asesinos. Lechuguinos. 11.04.22. Disponible en: <https://www.lechuguinos.com/provea-intento-endiosar-a-los-guarimberos-y-tuiteros-ecordaron-son-unos-asesinos/>  
 Venezuela rechaza informe de DDHH del Departamento de Estado de EEUU (+Comunicado). La Iguana TV. 14.04.11. Disponible en: <https://www.laiguana.tv/articulos/1036525-venezuela-rechaza-informe-ddhh-eeuu/>  
 Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Relaciones Exteriores. Comunicado. 14.04.22. Disponible en: <https://mppre.gob.ve/comunicado/venezuela-rechaza-informe-derechos-humanos-departamento-estado-eeuu/>  
 9 Con el Mazo Dando. Venezuela rechaza informe de Derechos Humanos del Departamento de Estado de EEUU. 14.04.22. Disponible en: <https://mazo4f.com/venezuela-rechaza-informe-de-derechos-humanos-del-departamento-de-estado-de-eeuu>  
 10 Twitter. Tweet de la Cancillería. 14.04.22. Disponible en: [https://twitter.com/CancilleriaVE/status/1514723691812339730?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1514723691812339730%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.telesurtv.net%2Fnews%2Fcanceleria-venezuela-rechaza-informe-departamento-estado-eeuu-20220415-0013.html](https://twitter.com/CancilleriaVE/status/1514723691812339730?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1514723691812339730%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.telesurtv.net%2Fnews%2Fcanceleria-venezuela-rechaza-informe-departamento-estado-eeuu-20220415-0013.html)  
 Venezuela rechaza informe del Gobierno de EEUU sobre derechos humanos. Correo del Orinoco. 15.04.22. Disponible en: <http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/venezuela-rechaza-informe-gobierno-eeuu-sobre-derechos-humanos/>  
 Tweet de Katu Arkonada. 18.04.22. Disponible en: <https://twitter.com/KatuArkonada/status/1516091801182081027>  
 Retweet de Pedro Carvajalino. 18.04.22. Disponible en: <https://twitter.com/KatuArkonada/status/1516091801182081027>  
 Retweet Pablo Fernandez. 19.04.22. Disponible en: <https://twitter.com/pabloefb/status/1516586234117861381?t=PUoHJQPzEwTXwi5IAax9Jw&amp;s=19>  
 Twitter. Tweet de William Castillo. 20.04.22. Disponible en: <https://twitter.com/planwac/status/1516830167674630150>  
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 Tweet de Pedro Carvajalino. 23.04.22. Disponible en: [https://twitter.com/Lenin\\_VN/status/1518019701938569217](https://twitter.com/Lenin_VN/status/1518019701938569217)  
 La Nacion. 26.04.22. Minutos: 10:45 – 11:04 Disponible en: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCHucr-8B1s>  
 Con el Mazo Dando. 27.04.22. Minutos 1:20:17 – 1:20:33. Disponible en: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cT\\_8wkP5uqQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cT_8wkP5uqQ)

In the context of stigmatization, the CDJ is concerned that the official speech of the State regarding the defense of human rights continues to be hateful and with violent content. Unfounded accusations against the human rights movement and the organizations that integrate it in relation to international cooperation activities and supposed interests of interference are increasingly repeated.

From the CDJ we warn that stigmatization is the starting point that characterizes the systematic nature of the Criminalization Policy for the defense of human rights, and therefore, if stigmatization continues against those who defend, demand and promote human rights, the risks for organizations and defenders will remain and will continue to increase.

## 02 **CRIMINALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

As of the date of publication of this report, it has circulated a draft of the International Cooperation Law Project, proposed by the Foreign Policy Commission of the National Assembly of 2020. Its articles reflect provisions that criminalize and seek to generate greater controls on activities related to the international cooperation carried out by the organizations, in the financial and technical sphere, thus presenting new obstacles to the work of civil society organizations, and strengthening the Criminalization Policy against the defense, promotion and demand of human rights.

From the CDJ we warn that the normative proposal, if approved, represents a serious threat to the organizations that operate in the field carrying out work of documentation, denunciation and accompaniment to victims of human rights violations, as it arises within the framework of a Policy of Criminalization against this work, where international cooperation is also criminalized by attempting to link it with interventionist, destabilizing purposes or contrary to the interests of the nation.

The Venezuelan State must cease and reverse any action that hinders, restricts and criminalizes the defense of human rights, and must comply with its international obligations to guarantee favorable and safe environments for those who defend human rights in the country.

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

In the light of the advances in the Criminalization Policy for the defense and demand for human rights in Venezuela, international and bodies and organizations specialized in the protection of human rights continue to speak out against the attacks committed and demand that the State comply with its obligation to promote and protect the work of human rights defenders.

Among the main actions and calls by international organizations registered during the month of April are:

On April 27, a letter was published with the signature by 22 Venezuelan and 5 international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), the Due Process Foundation (DPLF), Human Rights Watch and the Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA); addressed to the Argentine President, Mr. Alberto Fernández, in order to make the situation of human rights defender Javier Tarazona visible and call for his release; in addition to pointing out that the human rights problems in Venezuela have not dissipated<sup>2</sup>.

## 04 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Human rights defenders and organizations continue to face a hostile and restrictive context for the exercise of their work under the protection of the *National Security Doctrine*. The promotion, defense and demand for rights continues to be threatened by constant accusations and attempts to discredit through stigmatization.

A limited and restricted civic and democratic space represents a serious obstacle to the work of civil society, and serves for the implementation of greater social control exercised by the State within the framework of a Systematic Criminalization Policy.

The actions carried out by the organizations and defenders are constantly disqualified by the State, arguing that they constitute destabilizing, interfering, criminal or terrorist acts, thus increasing the risks for the human rights movement.

It is essential that the State advances in the fulfillment of its international obligations to respect, protect and guarantee rights, including the defense of human rights, and refrain from classifying the people who work within the framework of these as enemies.



We urge the Venezuelan State to cease the Criminalization Policy. Defending, demanding, and promoting rights is not a crime. We reiterate the need to generate effective mechanisms that seek and promote the protection of all people and organizations that are providing response and support to the victims of the Complex Humanitarian Emergency, crimes and serious human rights violations in the country.

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