



**CENTRO PARA
LOS DEFENSORES
Y LA JUSTICIA**

SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA

FEBRUARY 2025

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The Center for Human Rights Defenders and Justice (CDJ) documented **161 attacks and security incidents during February 2025 in Venezuela.**

ATTACKS FEBRUARY 2025



161 ATTACKS

In February, there was an increase in the number of documented attacks as a result of the Criminalization Policy of International Cooperation and the entry into force of the Law on the Supervision, Regularization, Action and Financing of Non-Governmental Organizations and Non-Profit Social Organizations.

The Venezuelan government has made progress in implementing measures that promote the closure of Civic and Democratic Space, hindering the rights to free association, assembly, and the defense of human rights. The acts of intimidation and threats under the oversight law are aimed at exercising greater discretionary controls and neutralizing civil society organizations under the logic of fear.

In the global context of international cooperation, stigmatization campaigns, threats, and intimidation related to the imposition of criminal sanctions have increased in Venezuela. These campaigns target organizations and individuals accused of being “destabilizing agents”, “interventionists”, “enemies”, “terrorists”, “thieves”, “corrupt”, among others, seeking to discredit the legitimacy of their work and link them to illegal activities.

01

161 VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA DURING FEBRUARY 2025

The environment for defending, demanding, and promoting rights in Venezuela is becoming increasingly restrictive and unfavorable, increasing the risk level for human rights organizations.

161 attacks and security incidents were documented during the month of February, demonstrating the continued patterns of aggression and intimidation that shape the Policy of Criminalization, Repression, and Social Control.

The events recorded during February were characterized by:

ATTACK CHARACTERIZATION:

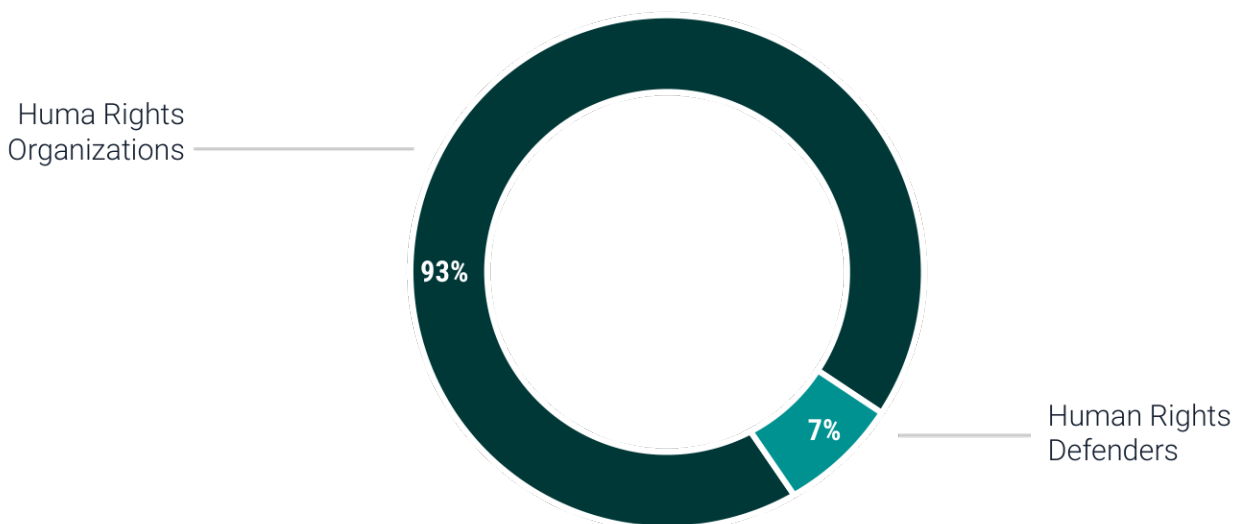


Stigmatization and acts of intimidation and harassment were the main patterns of aggression implemented during the month. The stigmatization campaigns aimed to discredit organizations, accusing them of being “destabilizing agents” or “corrupt”, among others, with the aim of discrediting their actions and attempting to link the defense of human rights in Venezuela with illegal activities.

The State continues to use institutional violence as a way to criminalize the legitimate exercise of the right to defend human rights, employing actions to intimidate and harass civil society. These actions are intended to intimidate, deter, and control the population.

VICTIMS OF THE ATTACKS

Of the total attacks documented during February 2025, 149 were directed against human rights organizations and organizations carrying out humanitarian actions, equivalent to 93% of the total. While 12 were targeted against human rights defenders, representing the remaining 7%.



SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA

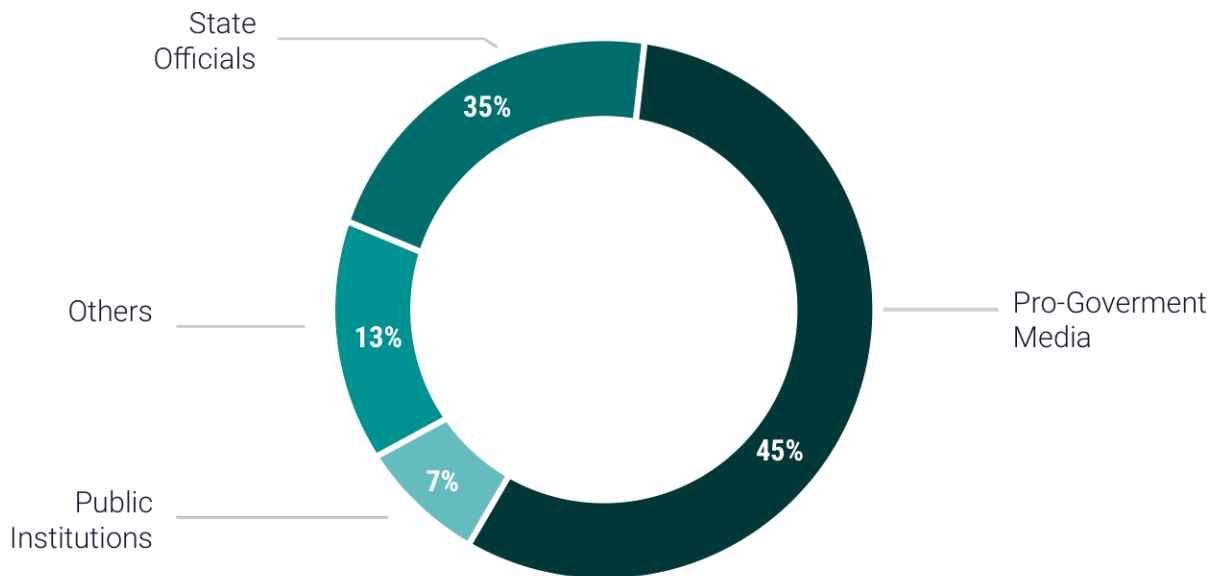
The human rights movement as a whole was affected by systematic stigmatization and criminalization campaigns, with notable accusations this month against *Programa Venezolano de Educación-Acción en Derechos Humanos – PROVEA*, *Foro Penal*, *Control Ciudadano*, *Transparencia Venezuela*, *Caritas*, *Instituto Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS)*, *Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social (OVCS)*.

Judicial harassment and violations of due process continue in the cases of FundaRedes members, including its director Javier Tarazona, and the human rights defender Rocío San Miguel.

Organizations reported intimidation and irregularities in the context of the implementation of the Law on the Oversight, Regularization, Operation, and Financing of Non-Governmental Organizations and Non-Profit Social Organizations.

PERPETRATORS

A total of 72 attacks (45%) were carried out by traditional and digital state media outlets and their social media accounts; 56 of the attacks were carried out by public officials, who used their social media profiles or made statements in the media to stigmatize and intimidate (35%); pro-government actors perpetrated 21 attacks (13%); and 12 were the responsibility of public institutions (7%).



The main perpetrators of the attacks against those who defend and demand human rights have been identified as members of the National Executive Branch, ministers, National Assembly (AN) deputies, and other individuals assigned to government entities. Institutions that are part of the Justice System are also presented as perps.

Television programs, along with digital platforms, members of the national public media system, and media associated with the State continue to be used as platforms for stigmatization campaigns and calls for violence.

Various actors are responsible for acts of stigmatization, intimidation, and harassment as part of the criminalization policy.

02

CRIMINALIZATION OF THE DEFENCE, DEMAND AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

In just two months, 2025 has brought with it new spikes in attacks against those who defend and demand human rights in the country. In February, new attacks with a high degree of violence against human rights defenders and organizations were documented. This further highlights the intensification of the policy of criminalization and the institutionalization of the internal enemy theory.

Stigmatization continues to be the main pattern of attack, with accusations seeking to link international cooperation with criminal activities or political proselytizing. The rhetoric against human rights remains the same and is reinforced by violent content. This is worrisome because the role of state officials as generators and replicators of this message can serve as an incentive for other actors to replicate or even carry out threats.

As a result of the Executive Order issued by the United States government regarding its international cooperation agency, USAID, the Venezuelan government, through various officials and its communications platform, stigmatized, intimidated, and threatened civil society organizations, including human rights organizations and human rights defenders. This is also reflected in the context of the implementation of the Oversight Law against non-governmental organizations and the increased criminalization of international cooperation.

The message and narrative against human rights individuals and organizations was based on accusations that they allegedly engaged in “illegal activities aimed at destabilizing the country”, that they were conspiring, that they were thieves, or that they were corrupt, and that they were threatened on several occasions with investigations.

Intimidation and harassment continue to be one of the most common forms of attack used by the State to generate fear and attempt to neutralize the independent human rights movement. The publication of images and videos, the mention of organizations and names along with accusations associated with the commission of crimes, are the types of actions that frequently seek to intimidate not only their direct victims but also serve as exemplary messages for those carrying out similar work.

The threats against organizations and human rights defenders were related to the implementation and enforcement of the first deadline for registering non-governmental organizations under the Oversight and Regularization Law. Organizations reported irregularities, intimidation, and hostile treatment when they approached the Autonomous Service of Services and Notaries (SAREN by its Spanish name) while attempting to register.

On the other hand, the judiciary continues to be instrumentalized to investigate human rights defenders, as is the case with Javier Tarazona and Rocío San Miguel, who to this day remain deprived of their liberty and subject to criminal proceedings that violated procedural guarantees

and without a final sentence. FundaRedes defenders Javier Tarazona, Rafael Tarazona, and Omar de Dios Garcia continued to be subjected to judicial harassment in the context of their proceedings; during the month of February, their hearing was postponed unjustifiably¹. This not only jeopardizes the full freedom of each of them, but also means that Javier Tarazona remains deprived of his liberty, serving a de facto sentence. In the case of defender San Miguel, a further postponement occurred².

The policy of criminalization, repression, and control is intensifying, and the environment for defending, demanding, and promoting human rights is becoming increasingly complex and risky for those who practice it.

03

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENSE IN VENEZUELA

The criminalization of human rights defenders and the closure of civic and democratic space in Venezuela remain a focus of concern for the international community.

Human rights protection agencies, diplomatic actors, and international organizations continue to speak out against the attacks and demand that the State fulfill its duty to promote and protect the work of human rights defenders.

Among the main actions and pronouncements recorded during February are:

Members of the United Nations Group of Experts on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) issued a joint statement expressing concern over the practice of enforced disappearances in Venezuela, including that of human rights defenders. They warned that this “*seeks to generate a deterrent effect throughout society and is fueled by widespread impunity and selective justice*”; they urged “*providing information on the fate and whereabouts of persons currently forcibly disappeared by the State, and preventing, prosecuting, and eradicating this crime as a serious violation of human rights under international law*”³.

Regarding the statements of international organizations:

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, made up of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), spoke out on the case of defender Rocío San Miguel, who spent a year in prison, demanding “*her immediate release and an end to the persecution of those who defend human rights in the country*”⁴.

¹X @jrafaeltarazona, 06.02.2025. Available at: <https://x.com/jrafaeltarazona>

X @jrafaeltarazona, 18.02.2025. Available at: <https://x.com/jrafaeltarazona/status/1891983610191683620>

²Efecto Cocuyo. February 11, 2025. Rocío San Miguel's trial postponed again.

The trial will now be on March 31, but lawyers hope the humanitarian measure will be successful sooner. At: <https://efecto-cocuyo.com/la-humanidad/difieren-nuevamente-juicio-contra-rocio-san-miguel/>

³Experts urge Venezuela to comply with international law to prevent irreparable harm to victims of enforced disappearance. February 28, 2025. Geneva/Washington, DC. At: https://www.oas.org/es/CIDH/jsForm/?File=/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2025/045.asp&utm_content=country-ven&utm_term=class-dc

⁴https://x.com/OBS_defenders/status/1888989839984382153

04

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The repressive patterns that constitute the Policy of Criminalization of the Defense, Demand, and Promotion of Human Rights must cease. The State must comply with its international and constitutional obligations to guarantee the exercise and defense of rights without retaliation.

It is necessary to guarantee a free and safe civic and democratic space for strengthening democracy and consolidating the rule of law, where freedom of association, expression, assembly, and the defense of human rights can be fully realized and free from arbitrary controls.

The criminalization of international cooperation must end. The activities of individuals and organizations defending human rights are legitimate and, in a context like Venezuela's, are vitally important for establishing and strengthening a democratic and participatory society.

Given the various circumstantial, structural, and legal violations identified that affect the work of human rights defenders and organizations in Venezuela, a timely response from the international community is essential and urgent to ensure the effective protection of those who defend human rights in the country.

From the CDJ We reaffirm our commitment to human rights defenders by building a safe and enabling environment that allows them to carry out their activities freely, fully, and safely.

CENTRO PARA LOS DEFENSORES Y LA JUSTICIA

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