



CENTRO PARA
LOS DEFENSORES
Y LA JUSTICIA

SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA

JANUARY 2025

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The Center for Human Rights Defenders and Justice (CDJ) recorded **47 attacks and security incidents during January 2025 in Venezuela.**

ATTACKS JANUARY 2025



The criminalization of the defense, demand and promotion of human rights persists. The continued closure of the Civic and Democratic Space puts at risk the work of people and organizations that defend, demand and promote rights.

Attacks against civil society continue with threats, harassment and intimidation. The right to freedom of association continues to be attacked as a restrictive regulatory framework for its exercise is strengthened.

The intimidation and attacks recorded during the first month of the year demonstrate that there is still a lack of protection for those who defend, demand and promote rights.

01

47 VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA DURING JANUARY 2025

Human rights defenders and organizations face a policy of repression, criminalization and social control that affects all actors in civil society. An increase in attacks has been documented, as they are labeled as “enemies,” “traitors,” “terrorists,” “destabilizing,” among others, and are alleged to be linked to partisan activities and alleged conspiracy.

The 47 incidents recorded during January were characterized by:

ATTACK CHARACTERIZATION:



STIGMATIZATION

26



HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION

15

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In January, we observed new threats, acts of intimidation, harassment and attacks by public officials, security agencies and other actors that add to the institutional violence against organizations.

We also warn about the announcement by the National Assembly that it will resume discussion of the draft law on international cooperation, which represents a new legislative threat to freedom of association.

Stigmatization remains the main pattern of aggression implemented within the framework of the Criminalization Policy for the defense and demand of human rights, accusing those who carry out activities within this framework of being destabilizing agents, terrorists, traitors, conspirators, among others.

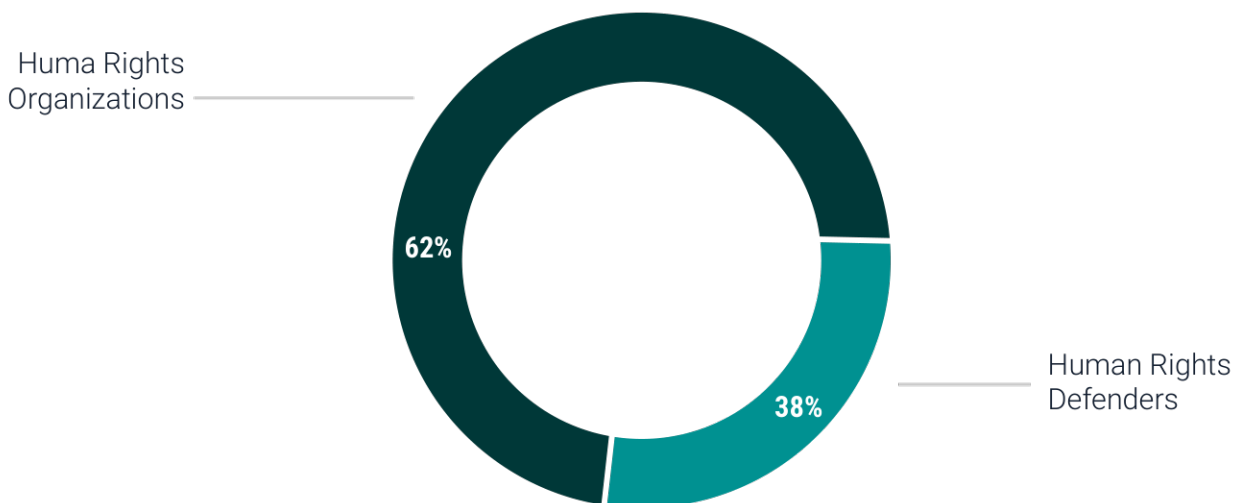
There were accusations and intimidation on digital platforms, criminalizing the defense of rights, freedom of association and international cooperation, through systematic smear campaigns.

An example of this reality can be seen in the arbitrary detention, prosecution and forced disappearance of human rights defender Carlos Correa, director of the NGO Espacio Público.

We remind that those who work to protect human rights have the right to do so without fear of reprisals and without arbitrary and discretionary controls on their actions.

VICTIMS OF THE ATTACKS

Of the total number of attacks documented during the month of January 2025, 29 were directed against human rights organizations, equivalent to 62% of the total. While 18 were identified as human rights defenders, the remaining 38%.



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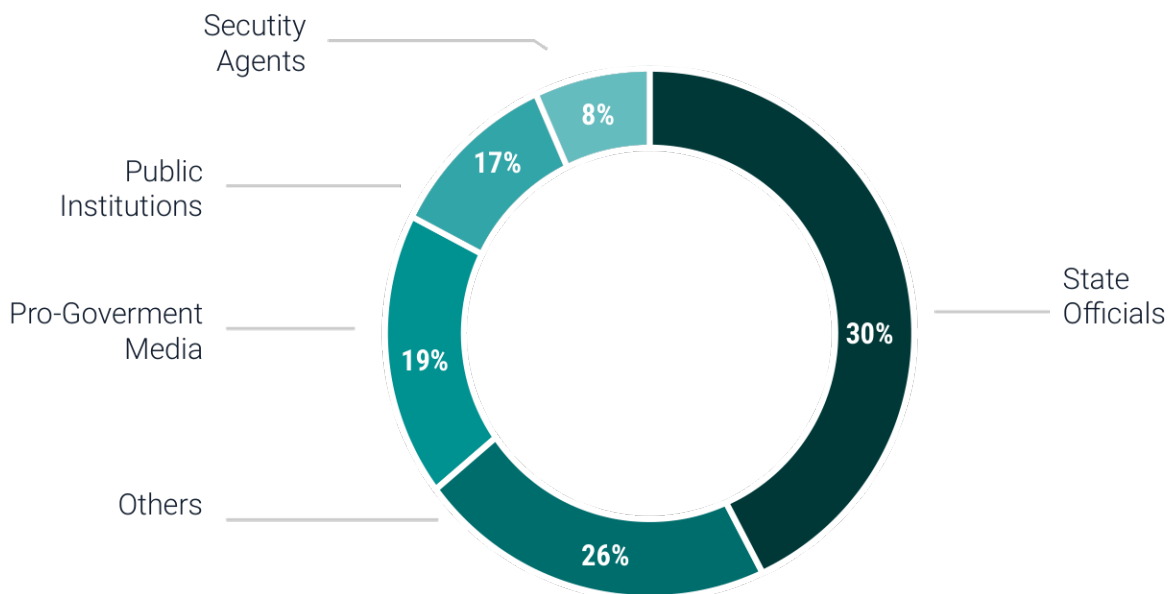
The following stand out: accusations, stigmatization, threats and acts of intimidation against the organization Espacio Público, accusations against the Venezuelan Program for Education-Action in Human Rights – PROVEA and members of its coordinating team. As well as the systematic stigmatization and disqualification of the work of non-governmental organizations. Judicial harassment against Javier Tarazona and the members of FundaRedes continues.

There is also concern about the threats to the closure of civic space with the advancement of new regulatory instruments aimed at restricting and controlling civil society.

PERPETRATORS

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

Executive branch, who made use of their social media profiles, or statements in government media, and institutional spaces to stigmatize, threaten and intimidate; another 12 attacks (26%) were perpetrated by persons or groups affected by the political interests of the State; 9 (19%) were carried out from the State's traditional and digital media and its social media accounts; 8 (17%) were the responsibility of public institutions; and finally 4 (4%) of the events were the responsibility of State security agencies.



The main perpetrators of the attacks against those who defend and demand identified human rights were state officials, including members of the National Executive, ministers, deputies of the National Assembly (AN), among other members of public entities or institutions.

Radio and television programs, along with digital media, members of the national public media system and media associated with the State, as well as messaging platforms served as a platform for stigmatization, discrediting and calls for violence campaigns. Notable among them: Con el Mazo Dando, Venezuela News, Zurda Kondukta, Correo del Orinoco and Venezolana de Televisión (VTV).

People associated with the government, journalists associated with government agencies and others are also part of this group identified among those responsible for the violations. State security agencies, such as the intelligence service, were responsible for committing attacks.

02

CRIMINALIZATION OF THE DEFENCE, DEMAND AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The year 2025 begins with new threats and challenges for the defense of human rights in Venezuela. Violence and intimidation as a strategy to neutralize, control and punish continue to be the strategy used by the State as part of a systematic policy of criminalization and repression. Stigmatization remains the starting point for the materialization of other patterns of attack.

The discourse that criminalizes and seeks to antagonize the human rights movement has been institutionalized in the Public Powers and government entities, which, from their areas of competence, widely disseminate disqualifying discourses and accusations against those who defend, demand and promote rights.

In January, on the occasion of the swearing-in for a new presidential term, there were constant accusations and questions about the legitimacy of the organizations, attempting to link them with political proselytism, foreign interference, destabilization and conspiracy activities. As has been observed in previous years, international cooperation has been one of the central elements of the state discourse, since attempts have been made to distort its use to link the organizations with foreign governments, alleging alleged aspirations to have influence within the country. Public officials spread these types of messages in their speeches or on social networks, while news platforms serve as a platform for the dissemination and make viral the stigmatization¹.

New threats were recorded regarding limitations on freedom of association that compromise the operations of non-governmental and humanitarian organizations in the country through messages calling for investigation and prosecution of human rights defenders.

It was also publicly reported that the process for the approval of a Law on International Cooperation has been resumed², which would be added to instruments such as the Law on Supervision, Regularization, Action and Financing of Non-Governmental Organizations and Non-Profit Social Organizations; the Law against Fascism, Neo-Fascism and Similar Expressions; and the Organic Law Liberator Simón Bolívar against the Imperialist Blockade and in Defense of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, among others, increasing the risk levels for those who defend, demand and promote rights.

¹ Statements by Ricardo González during the broadcast of the Zurda Konducta program. Min. 1:08:50 – 1:09:26. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkN4udg4cdg>; Post in X. 13.10.2025. Available at: <https://x.com/jrafaeltarazona/status/1878999379224547617>; The big lie that this NGO set up about Maria Corina's motorcycle. La Iguana Tv. 01/13/2025. Available at: <https://www.laiguana.tv/articulos/1315955-gran-mentira-ong-motorizado-maria-corina/>; Publication by Jorge Areaza in Bluesky. 01/18/2025. Available at: <https://bsky.app/profile/jorgearreaza.bsky.social/post/3lfzvgvg6k2m>; Post on Social Network X. Available at: https://x.com/ALBATCP/status/1880678167406620867?t=V3DvkApve_MZ6Zq0H3FW-bA&s=19; https://x.com/SonPolemicas/status/1882214153018134632?t=W-PMVVT0Du_aYeyJfuhwgg&s=19; https://x.com/SonPolemicas/status/1882214153018134632?t=W-PMVVT0Du_aYeyJfuhwgg&s=19; <https://x.com/VanessaOrtiz/status/1883977706540597306?t=NJ8D8Qf2XPDT8A7kSFa07g&s=19>

²VTV. AN Foreign Policy Commission approved the appointment of 25 ambassadors in 2024. January 3, 2025. Available at: <https://www.vtv.gob.ve/comision-politica-exterior-an-aprobo-designacion/>

The judiciary is being used for criminalization, including that of human rights defenders who face prosecution and judicial harassment. Irregularities persist in the criminal proceedings against defenders Javier Tarazona, José Rafael Tarazona and Omar de Dios García, members of FundaRedes, with hearings being postponed³.

On January 7, the arbitrary detention of Carlos Correa, director of the organization Espacio Público, was recorded. He was the victim of a forced disappearance and remained deprived of his liberty without access to family members or trusted lawyers for nine days. During his detention, family members reported that the defender had been presented on January 9 before the fourth court with jurisdiction over terrorism and that a public defender had been appointed for him, without being given details about the charge or information about his whereabouts⁴. Correa was released on January 16 in the early hours of the morning with precautionary measures.

03

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE CRIMINALISATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENCE IN VENEZUELA

The criminalization of the defense and demand for human rights in Venezuela continues to be a source of concern for the international community.

International organizations, human rights protection bodies and diplomatic actors expressed their concern, demanding that the State fulfill its duty to promote and protect the work of human rights defenders and rejecting the arrest of defender Carlos Correa.

Among the main actions and statements made by international organizations in January are:

On January 7, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) published a special report on Venezuela entitled, "Serious Violations of Human Rights in the Electoral Context," which highlights different patterns of human rights violations and includes arrests and other forms of repression against human rights defenders⁵.

Following the arrest of human rights defender Carlos Correa, organizations such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and its Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the IACHR, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Association, and the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders have repeatedly condemned his detention and demanded protection of his integrity and full release⁶. Other

7

#HABLEMOSDDHH

³ Post in X. 10/13/2025. Available in: <https://x.com/jrafaeltarazona/status/1878999379224547617> Post on X. 01/27/2025. Available at: <https://x.com/jrafaeltarazona/status/1884013449631654374>

⁴ Public Space. Public Space Alert. Available at: <https://espaciopublico.org/se-desconoce-el-paradero-de-carlos-correa-director-de-ep/>; <https://x.com/espaciopublico/status/1877015993924419642?s=12>; Mabel Calderín (@ongespaciopublico) January 15, 2025. Mabel Calderín, wife of our director Carlos Correa, reports that today, Wednesday, January 15, she was received by the 52nd National Prosecutor for Economic Crimes, Alirio Mendoza (...). Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DE3FA19BHLA/> Thank you, we continue! Available at: <https://espaciopublico.org/comunicados/>

⁵ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Special Report: Venezuela: Serious violations of human rights in the electoral context, available at: <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/2025/venezuela-serious-violations-of-human-rights-in-the-electoral-context.pdf>

⁶ See details of the statements: <https://x.com/PVacaV/status/1877049882227192242>; <https://x.com/PVacaV/status/1879187967597768869>; <https://x.com/Ginitastar/status/1876810847369986360>; <https://x.com/CIDH/status/1877048782472253897>; <https://x.com/MaryLawlorhrds/status/1877068738500981222>; <https://x.com/Ginitastar/status/1877415368643190966>

former rapporteurs on freedom of expression from both the United Nations and the Organization of American States demanded “immediate release” and expressed their concern at the seriousness of the State’s failure to recognize the detention and to provide information on the defender’s whereabouts⁷. Due to the situation, on January 10, the IACHR issued precautionary measures on behalf of the defender, considering that he was “*in a serious and urgent situation, as his whereabouts, conditions of detention, and state of health are unknown to date, and high-ranking authorities have stigmatized him without providing information on his situation or whereabouts*”⁸.

United Nations bodies such as the Secretary-General, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela also expressed concern over reports of new arbitrary arrests and persecution of members of the opposition, their families and human rights defenders in the country, condemning these events and demanding information on the whereabouts of those detained, their protection and shelter before the law and calling for their immediate release⁹.

Likewise, international organizations for the defense of Human Rights have spoken out regarding the situation of defenders and the closure of the Civic Space in the country.

Amnesty International has spoken out against the arrest of human rights defender Carlos Correa and has called for “*the release of Carlos Correa, director of the NGO Espacio Público, former Coordinator of Provea and permanent member of the Provea Assembly*”¹⁰. This call was continued in the following days¹¹, and they issued a global urgent action demanding the immediate and unconditional release of Carlos Correa, as well as requesting the release of all detained human rights defenders, such as Javier Tarazona, Rocío San Miguel, and Kennedy Tejada¹².

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint program of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), issued an urgent alert regarding the enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention of Carlos Correa. In its call, the Observatory also “*recalls that, in the midst of the post-electoral escalation of repression, the Venezuelan authorities have intensified attacks and acts of persecution against human rights defenders and social and political leaders*”, and finally requests the release and protection of the rights to freedom and integrity of the defender, an investigation into the events and “*an immediate end to all acts of threats, intimidation and harassment against all people and organizations defending human rights in Venezuela*”¹³.

Other organizations such as the Center for International Law and Justice (CEJIL), Civicus International, Human Rights Human Rights Watch, IFEX, the Inter-American Press Association, the Regional Alliance for Freedom of Expression, Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, Reporters Without Borders, among others, also spoke out and expressed concern about the arrest of Human Rights Defender Carlos Correa¹⁴.

⁷ See details of the statement: <https://x.com/EdisonLanza/status/1877491407092339166>

⁸ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Precautionary Measures. Available at: https://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsp/Form/?File=/en/iachr/press/releases/2025/010.asp&utm_content=country-ven&utm_term=class-mc

⁹ See the details of the statements: <https://x.com/NoticiasONU/status/1877083433018548639>; <https://www.ohchr.org/es/press-releases/2025/01/venezuela-fact-finding-mission-condemns-recent-arrests-ahead-presidential>; <https://x.com/UNHumanRights/status/1877333926236053592>

¹⁰ See: <https://x.com/amnesty/status/1876827557946863680>

¹¹ See: <https://x.com/amnistia/status/1877010069499355592>, <https://x.com/ErikaGuevaraR/status/1876867639659602099>

¹² See: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr53/8909/2025/en/>

¹³ See: <https://www.fidh.org/en/topics/human-rights-defenders/venezuela-forced-disappearance-and-arbitrary-detention-of-carlos->

¹⁴ See the details of the statements: <https://x.com/cejil/status/1876810495690227784>; <https://x.com/CIVICUSespanol/status/1876975139021087160>; <https://x.com/JuanitaGoe/status/1876819021879800210>; <https://x.com/IFEX/status/1876813917155934515>; https://x.com/sip_oficial/status/1876831850103964136; <https://x.com/AlianzaRegional/status/1876821361361924371>; <https://x.com/RFKHumanRights/status/1876810038397792694>; https://x.com/RSF_esp/status/1876987847913152756

04

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Venezuelan State continues to move towards closing the civic and democratic space and criminalizing the defense, demand and promotion of human rights, in an electoral context where the protection of fundamental freedoms is essential.

The criminalization of the defense of human rights persists and is deepened by new measures and the improvement of strategies of neutralization and punishment under a logic of fear of civil society for demanding respect for human rights in the country.

We reiterate the importance of protecting human rights defenders and organizations. The State is internationally obliged to guarantee their work without any reprisals. In accordance with international law, the activities of those who defend, demand and promote human rights must be protected and guaranteed in a safe manner.

We call on you to refrain from obstructing and imposing arbitrary and discretionary measures aimed at controlling the actions of documentation, reporting, advocacy, visibility and assistance to victims.

We urge the State to guarantee and respect civic space, only in this way can the defense and demand of rights be exercised fully, freely and without fear of reprisals.

CENTRO PARA LOS DEFENSORES Y LA JUSTICIA

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