



CENTRO PARA  
LOS DEFENSORES  
Y LA JUSTICIA

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

**FIRST QUARTER  
2025**

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01

## 236 VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2025

The Center for Defenders and Justice (CDJ) documented 236 attacks and security incidents during the first quarter of 2025. The Policy of Criminalization, Repression, and Social Control continues to be applied against those who promote, defend, and demand human rights in Venezuela.

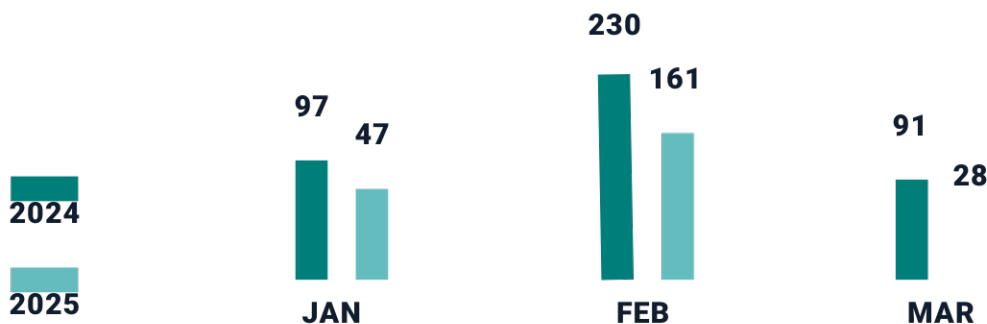
### ATTACKS FIRST QUARTER OF 2025



Between January and March 2025, the closure of the Civic and Democratic Space was further exacerbated by the entry into force and promulgation of regulations restricting the right to free association, affecting the activities of individuals and civil society organizations.

The 236 documented events represent a decrease of 44% in relation to the same period in the year 2024, when 418 situations were recorded.

### DISTRIBUTION OF ATTACKS PER MONTH



The Venezuelan State continues to implement a policy of criminalization, repression, and social control against those on the front lines of action, defending, demanding, and promoting human rights.

The new attacks and violence against human rights defenders and organizations demonstrate how the institutionalization of the internal enemy theory is becoming more prevalent.

In a context of accusations and the closure of the USAID agency by the United States government, Venezuelan authorities have deepened the criminalization of international cooperation with

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stigmatization, intimidation, and threats against civil society organizations, including human rights organizations and human rights defenders.

*Law on the Oversight, Regularization, Operation, and Financing of Non-Governmental and Related Organizations came into force . Likewise, new regulatory advances were generated tending to the restriction and control of civil liberties in the country with the publication of Resolution No. 01025 of the Superintendency of Banking Sector Institutions (SUDEBAN)<sup>1</sup>, which establishes Standards related to the administration and supervision of the Risks of Money Laundering, Financing of Terrorism, and Financing of the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (ML/FT/FPADM) , applicable to the banking sector, representing new threats to the work of civil society and increasing the level of risk for human rights organizations and defenders.*

### CHARACTERIZATION OF THE ATTACKS

The 236 documented attacks and security incidents reflect the following main patterns of aggression and intimidation:



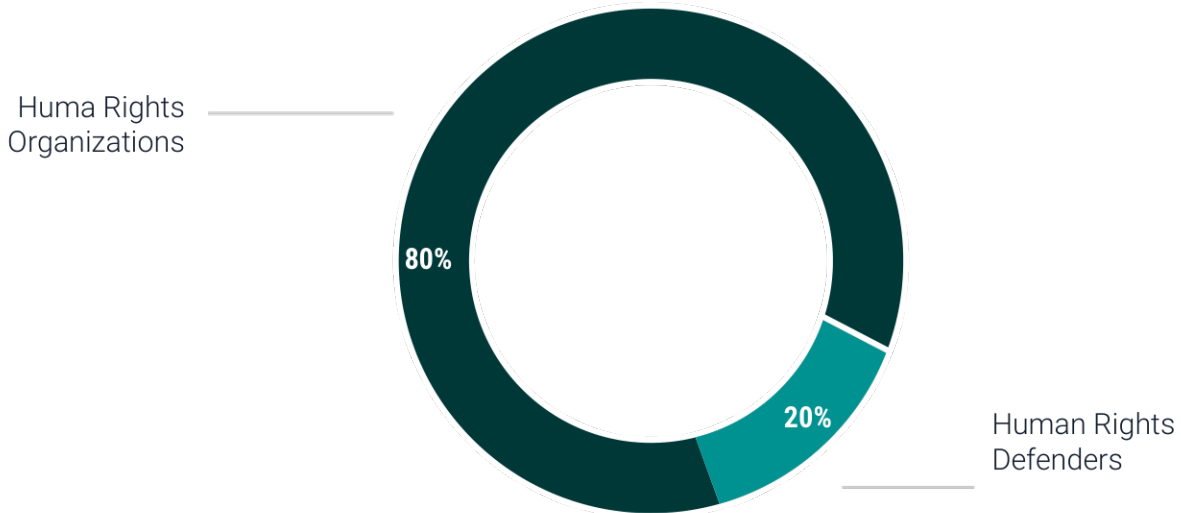
During the quarter, the CDJ primarily documented stigmatization speeches and campaigns, systematically accusing nongovernmental organizations of being destabilizing agents and attempting to link their activities to illegal actors and corruption-related acts, as a means of intimidation and harassment.

These types of attacks aim to neutralize human rights organizations and individuals by identifying them, according to the government's narrative, as enemies of the homeland and exposing them to potential criminal investigations and sanctions. Stigmatization also manifests itself as an element that drives other types of attacks, such as threats, acts of harassment, intimidation, and arbitrary detentions.

Human rights work is being affected as various branches of government attempt to link them to criminal activities, destabilization, and threats to the peace of the country. Restrictive laws and criminal law continue to be used to prosecute, persecute, control, and criminalize.

### VICTIMS OF THE ATTACKS

Of the total attacks documented during the first quarter of 2025, 188 were directed against human rights organizations, equivalent to 80% of the total. While 48 were identified as human rights defenders, the remaining 20%.



The events include accusations, stigmatization, threats, and acts of intimidation against the organization *Espacio Público*, and the arbitrary detention of its director, *Carlos Correa*. *Programa Venezolano de Educación-Acción en Derechos Humanos (PROVEA)* and members of its coordinating team, *Foro Penal*, *Control Ciudadano*, *Transparencia Venezuela*, *Caritas*, *Instituto Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS)*, *Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social (OVCS)* were also stigmatized.

Judicial harassment and violations of due process continue in the cases of *FundaRedes* members, including its director *Javier Tarazona*, and defense attorney *Rocío San Miguel*.

During the 58th session of the Human Rights Council, representatives of Venezuelan human rights organizations present at the session were subjected to acts of intimidation, harassment, and threats.

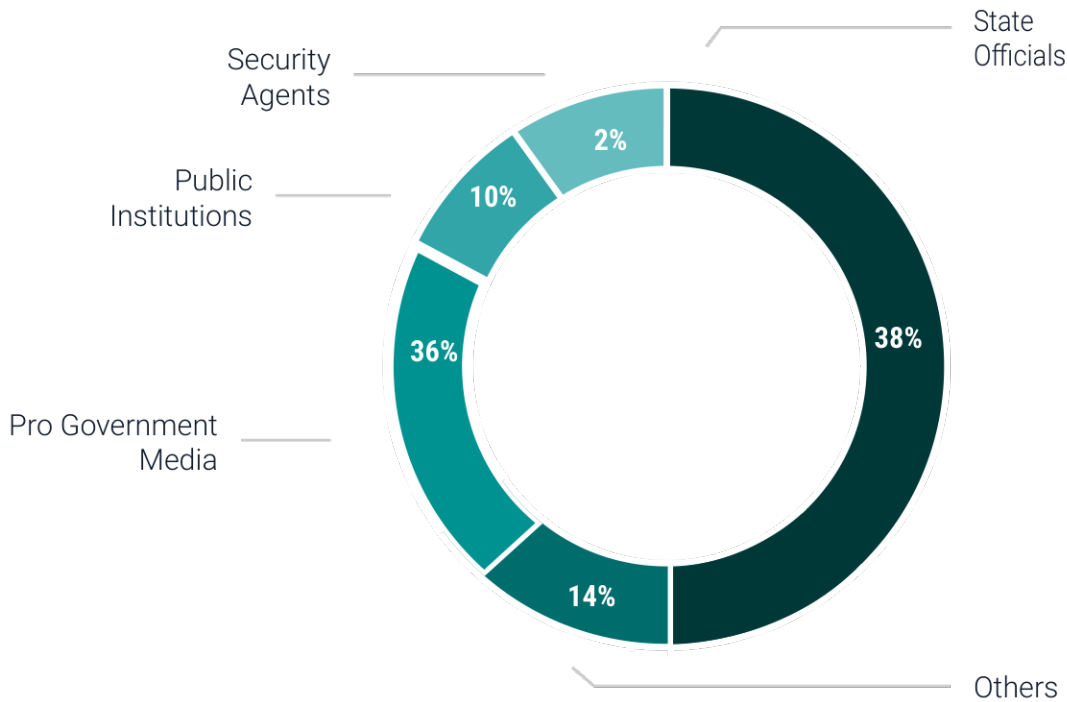
Likewise, there is concern about the threat of closure of civic space with the advance of new regulatory instruments aimed at restricting and controlling civil society. Organizations reported intimidation and irregularities in the context of the entry into force of the Law on the Oversight, Regularization, Operation, and Financing of Non-Governmental Organizations and Non-Profit Social Organizations.

### PERPETRATORS

The main perpetrators of documented security attacks and incidents during the first quarter of 2025 were distributed as follows:

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A total of 90 of the attacks were carried out by public officials, who used their social media profiles or media statements to stigmatize and intimidate (38%); 84 of the attacks (36%) were carried out by traditional and digital state media outlets and their social media accounts; pro-government actors perpetrated 33 attacks (14%); 25 were the responsibility of public institutions (10%); and finally, four (2%) of the attacks were the responsibility of state security agencies.



The main perpetrators of the attacks against those who defend and demand human rights have been identified, including members of the National Executive Branch, ministers, and deputies of the National Assembly (AN), among others. Likewise, institutions that are part of the Justice System are presented as part of the aggressors.

Radio and television programs, along with digital media outlets belonging to the national public media system and state-affiliated media, continue to be used as platforms for stigmatization campaigns and calls for violence.

Other actors bear responsibility for acts of stigmatization, intimidation, and harassment as part of criminalization.

## 02 CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC SPACE IN VENEZUELA REMAINS UNDER THREAT.

The environment for defending, demanding, and promoting rights remains adverse and hostile. The implementation of restrictive legal and factual measures that are contrary to the current civic and democratic space increases the risks for individuals and organizations defending human rights.

The first quarter was marked by new threats resulting from the entry into force of new regulations limiting the right to freedom of association.

The Law on the Oversight, Regularization, Operation, and Financing of Non-Governmental and Related Organizations came into force in February. In this context, threats and intimidation were reported against organizations and human rights defenders related to the implementation and entry into force of the first deadline for registering non-governmental organizations in accordance with the Law. Irregularities, intimidation, and hostile treatment were reported when attempting to register at the Autonomous Service of Services and Notaries (SAREN).

the Superintendency of Banking Sector Institutions (SUDEBAN)<sup>2</sup> published Resolution No. 01025: Regulations on the Administration and Supervision of Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing, and Financing of the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (ML/FT/FPADM) Risks, applicable to the banking sector. This regulation presents new risks for human rights organizations, which have been singled out and stigmatized for their activities related to international cooperation, both technical and financial. Under this new resolution, greater controls and restrictions may be imposed at their discretion, and it also opens the door to even greater monitoring, surveillance, and even digital monitoring of civil society organizations.

We also recall that in January, the Foreign Policy Committee announced that it would resume discussion and preparation of the International Cooperation Law. There is concern that this proposal could also be used to impose greater controls and repression against civil society actors, under the guise of protecting national sovereignty.

We warn that the regulatory framework in Venezuela focuses many of its regulations on the need to protect the nation and its sovereignty against “interventionist, destabilizing and terrorist aggressions,” based on the thesis of the internal enemy, increasing the level of risk for human rights organizations when carrying out their activities, also causing an inhibitory effect due to the fear of being subject to criminalization or prosecution under these norms in a discretionary or arbitrary manner.

As a result of the closure of the Civic Space, the organizations’ ability to operate within the law and independently is threatened, and the potential for further attacks and incidents increases. Particularly notable during the quarter was the persistence of stigmatization, increased intimidation, harassment, and threats related to international cooperation.

# 03 CRIMINALIZATION OF THE DEFENSE, DEMAND, AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

During the first quarter of 2025, the policy of criminalization, repression, and control against those who carry out actions to defend, demand, and promote human rights continued to be applied. The documented attacks continue to be justified by the logic of the internal enemy, and human rights defenders and organizations are singled out as actors acting against the interests of the nation.

The main attacks recorded center on the pattern of intimidation under the systematic stigmatization campaigns. During this period, various state sectors consistently used violent and accusatory rhetoric against the independent human rights movement. The smear campaigns and accusations of treason, interference, terrorism, and destabilization have served as a basis to support and justify actions contrary to freedom and personal integrity, as well as to establish greater arbitrary and discretionary restrictions on the defense, demand, and promotion of human rights, especially through the criminalization of international cooperation.

Between January and March, the defamatory rhetoric focused on accusations related to the use of international funding, linking it to “political and interventionist purposes.” The work of organizations that cooperate with international human rights protection mechanisms was discredited. Following the oral updates from the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, accusations were made, and attempts were made to undermine the documentation and contributions of the human rights movement by questioning its legitimacy as a source<sup>3</sup>.

Likewise, the narrative questioning the legitimate work of human rights organizations and accusing them of carrying out activities outside the law was widely replicated in government media and communication platforms, as well as on various social media platforms, thus extending their reach and reinforcing a message that opposes and criminalizes the actions of human rights individuals and organizations.

Under an increasingly restrictive regulatory framework, arbitrary messages and calls for investigations against non-governmental organizations have intensified. Threats, acts of intimidation, and harassment against human rights defenders have also been reported, actions that directly compromised their integrity and safety. These actions, although directed at specific individuals, also have a widespread impact, serving as exemplary messages and warnings to other civil society actors.

In this regard, we recall that public authorities and various government entities are responsible, by action and omission, for the materialization of attacks and the execution of the patterns that constitute the criminalization policy. The legal framework, stigmatizing discourse, and widespread impunity are factors that foster violence against the human rights movement.

<sup>3</sup> Center for Defenders and Justice. Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Venezuela - January and February. Available at: <https://centrodefensores.org.ve/?p=682> // <https://centrodefensores.org.ve/?p=678> Venezuela rejects UN mission report reiterating far-right falsehoods. <https://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/venezuela-rechaza-informe-de-la-mision-de-la-onu-que-reitera-falsedades-de-la-ultraderecha/> The MPPRE rejected the UN Mission's report on Venezuela. In: <https://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/yvan-gil-rechazo-el-informe-de-la-mision-de-la-onu-sobre-venezuela/>



On the other hand, the justice system continues to be used as an enforcer of criminalization. Defender Rocío San Miguel and defenders Rafael Tarazona, Javier Tarazona, and Omar de Dios García remain under arbitrary judicial process. We remind you that both San Miguel and Javier Tarazona remain deprived of their liberty, without due process guarantees<sup>4</sup>.

The Venezuelan state continues to curtail civic space and, consequently, violate the rights of civil society as the country approaches new elections. We at the CDJ insist that the work carried out to protect rights in a context like Venezuela's is vital to the recovery of democratic institutions and the achievement of justice, truth, and reparation for the violations committed.

# 04 THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY REMAINS ALERT AND CONDEMNS 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 between January and March 2025 are:

On January 7, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) published a special report on Venezuela entitled, "Serious Human Rights Violations in the Electoral Context," which highlights different patterns of human rights violations and includes arrests and other forms of repression against human rights defenders<sup>5</sup>.

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, repeatedly spoke out condemning his detention and demanding protection of his integrity and full release<sup>6</sup>. Other former rapporteurs for freedom of expression from both the United Nations and the Organization of American States demanded his "immediate release" and expressed concern about the seriousness of the State's failure to recognize his detention and

<sup>4</sup> Center for Defenders and Justice. Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Venezuela - January and February. Available at: <https://centrodefensores.org.ve/?p=682> // <https://centrodefensores.org.ve/?p=678> ; <https://cronica.uno/diferencia-apertura-de-juicio-de-rocio-san-miguel-por-cuarta-vez/> ; Post in X. 20.03.2025. Available at: <https://x.com/jrafaeltarazona/status/1902897185387323413>

<sup>5</sup> Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Special Report: Venezuela: Serious Human Rights Violations in the Electoral Context, available at: <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/2025/informe-venezuela-graves-violacionesddhh-contexto-electoral.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> See details of the pronouncements: <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>

denying information on his whereabouts<sup>7</sup>. Due to the situation, on January 10, the IACHR issued precautionary measures for the defender, considering that he was “ in a situation of gravity and urgency as his whereabouts, conditions of detention, and state of health are unknown to date, and that high-ranking authorities have stigmatized him without providing information on his situation or whereabouts <sup>8</sup>.”

United Nations agencies 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 against 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 release<sup>9</sup>.

Likewise, during the 58th session of the Human Rights Council, within the framework of the oral updates by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, concerns were expressed about the situation of human rights defenders<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, in the interactive dialogue following the Mission’s intervention, delegations from various States expressed their concern about the closure of the Civic Space and the situation of human rights defenders<sup>11</sup>.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association published a letter sent to the Venezuelan State regarding the cancellation of the passports of human rights defenders and the arbitrary detention of one of them while trying to leave the country in the post-electoral context<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup>.”

Likewise, international human rights organizations have spoken out regarding the situation of human rights defenders and the closure of Civic Space in the country.

# 10

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

<sup>8</sup> Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Precautionary Measures. Available at: [https://www.oas.org/es/CIDH/jsForm/?File=/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2025/010.asp&utm\\_content=country-ven&utm\\_term=class-mc](https://www.oas.org/es/CIDH/jsForm/?File=/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2025/010.asp&utm_content=country-ven&utm_term=class-mc)

<sup>9</sup> See 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>

<sup>10</sup> See: Venezuela Fact-Finding Mission says harsh repression and crimes against humanity continue. <https://www.ohchr.org/es/press-releases/2025/03/venezuela-harsh-repression-and-crimes-against-humanity-ongoing-fact-finding>, and Deputy High Commissioner updates Human Rights Council on Venezuela. <https://www.ohchr.org/es/statements-and-speeches/2025/03/oral-update-human-rights-situation-venezuela>

<sup>11</sup> UN WebTV: ID with Fact-finding mission on Venezuela. At: <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1g/k1gfvlerpy>

<sup>12</sup> See: Venezuela: Cancellation of the passports of several human rights defenders and arbitrary detention of one of them (joint communication). At: <https://srdefenders.org/venezuela-anulacion-de-los-pasaportes-de-varias-personas-defensoras-de-los-derechos-humanos-y-detencion-arbitraria-de-una-de-ellas-comunicacion-conjunta/>; Ref.: AL VEN 12/2024 <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29559>

<sup>13</sup> Experts 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](https://www.oas.org/es/CIDH/jsForm/?File=/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2025/045.asp&utm_content=country-ven&utm_term=class-dc)

## SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA

Amnesty International spoke out against the arrest of human rights defender Carlos Correa and called for “ *the release of Carlos Correa, director of the NGO Espacio Público, former Coordinator of Provea and permanent member of the Provea Assembly* . ”<sup>14</sup> This call continued in the following days<sup>15</sup>, 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 Tejada<sup>16</sup>.

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 forced disappearance and arbitrary detention of Carlos Correa<sup>17</sup> and spoke out on the case of defender Rocío San Miguel, who has spent a year in prison, demanding “ *her immediate release and an end to the persecution of those who defend human rights in the country* ”<sup>18</sup>.

Other organizations such as the Center for International Law and Justice (CEJIL), Civicus International, Human Rights Watch, IFEX, the Inter-American Press Association, the Regional Alliance for Freedom of Expression, the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, Reporters Without Borders, among others, also spoke out and expressed concern about the detention of Defender Carlos Correa<sup>19</sup>.

During the 58th session of the Human Rights Council, within the framework of the oral updates of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela, international organizations such as the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Amnesty International, and Civicus intervened, expressing concern about the situation of human rights defenders.

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://x.com/amnistia/status/1876827557946863680>

<sup>15</sup> See: <https://x.com/amnistia/status/1877010069499355592> , <https://x.com/ErikaGuevaraR/status/1876867639659602099>

<sup>16</sup> See: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr53/8909/2025/en/>

<sup>17</sup> See: <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/venezuela-forced-disappearance-and-arbitrary-detention-of-carlos>

<sup>18</sup> [https://x.com/OBS\\_defenders/status/1888989839984382153](https://x.com/OBS_defenders/status/1888989839984382153)

<sup>19</sup> See details of the pronouncements: <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/sip_oficial/status/1876831850103964136) , <https://x.com/AlianzaRegional/status/1876821361361924371> , <https://x.com/RFKHumanRights/status/1876810038397792694> , [https://x.com/RSF\\_esp/status/1876987847913152756](https://x.com/RSF_esp/status/1876987847913152756) ,

# 05 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The State continues to fail to guarantee a safe and conducive environment for the exercise and defense of human rights. Restrictive measures continue to be adopted, resulting in increased risks for civil society.

We reiterate that activities to defend, demand, and promote human rights are not a crime, and the necessary measures must be taken to ensure their safe exercise without fear of reprisals.

The current restrictive measures on civic and democratic space must be repealed. Human rights defenders and organizations in Venezuela must no longer be exposed to various types of attacks and reprisals for carrying out their work.

From the CDJ, we insist that the work of those who document, report, and disseminate information related to human rights violations, and of those who provide assistance in response to social needs, is essential for respecting human dignity, and it must be guaranteed that these tasks can be carried out freely and safely.

The Venezuelan State must comply with the recommendations of the international community and its obligations to protect, guarantee, and respect rights, immediately cease the criminalization of human rights defenders, and halt legislative advances that seek to control, restrict, and criminalize civil society in Venezuela.

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## CENTRO PARA LOS DEFENSORES Y LA JUSTICIA

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