



CENTRO PARA
LOS DEFENSORES
Y LA JUSTICIA

SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA

2025

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01

455 VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS DURING 2025

The Center for Human Rights Defenders and Justice (CDJ) documented **455 attacks and security incidents during the year 2025**.

TOTAL ATTACKS 2025



Despite the decrease in the number of reported attacks during 2025, this does not reflect an improvement in the conditions for defending human rights in Venezuela. On the contrary, the reduction in documented cases is a response to the intensification of repression, the increasing restrictions on civic and democratic space, and the strengthening of a systematic policy of criminalization and social control.

The persistent identification of human rights defenders and their organizations as internal enemies of the state have solidified an environment of hostility and risk, where defending rights has become a high-cost activity. Faced with this scenario, many defenders have been forced to rethink their strategies, adopt measures of self-censorship, caution, and withdrawal, and limit their visibility to avoid reprisals.

This situation demonstrates how fear, surveillance, and the threat of reprisals operate as tools of inhibition and silencing, seriously affecting the exercise of the right to defend rights, in contravention of international human rights standards.

02

CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC SPACE IS STILL NOT GUARANTEED

During 2025, serious restrictions persisted on fundamental rights linked to the exercise of active citizenship: association, peaceful assembly, demonstration, freedom of expression, opinion and defense of human rights.

4

SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA

The approval of the Law on Oversight, Regulation, Action and Financing of Non-Governmental Organizations and Non-Profit Social Organizations, together with the entry into force of Resolution No. 010-2025 of the Superintendence of Institutions of the Banking Sector (SUDEBAN by its Spanish name), imposed new administrative, financial and legal obstacles that severely weakened the operation of civil society organizations.

In this context, state repression strategies such as the so-called "*Furia Bolivariana*" and "*Operation Tun Tun*" remained active, legitimizing harassment, surveillance, threats, arbitrary arrests and the use of the penal system as mechanisms of persecution and social control.

These actions not only violate internal law, but also transgress international commitments assumed by the Venezuelan State within the framework of the Inter-American System and the United Nations, directly affecting the right to defend rights.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ATTACKS PER MONTH

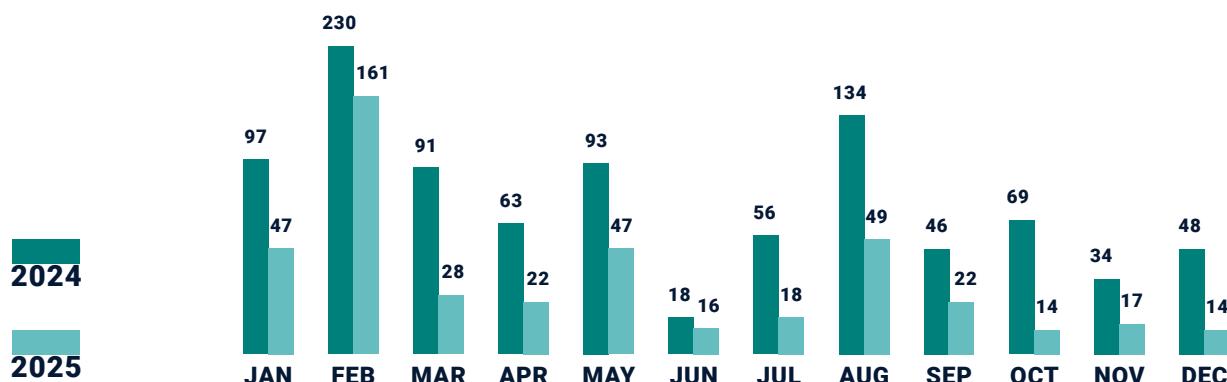


The year 2025 represented a period of profound challenges for the human rights movement in Venezuela, marked by the absence of guarantees for the free and safe exercise of activities linked to the promotion, protection and enforceability of rights.

In an adverse and hostile environment, the Venezuelan State persisted in failing to comply with its international obligations, intensifying the criminalization of legitimate actions of advocacy, cooperation and interaction with international human rights protection mechanisms, both of the Inter-American System and the United Nations System.

The combination of an adverse environment and the sustained reduction in international cooperation further weakened the operational capacities of advocacy organizations.

COMPARATIVE GRAPHIC 2024 -2025



03

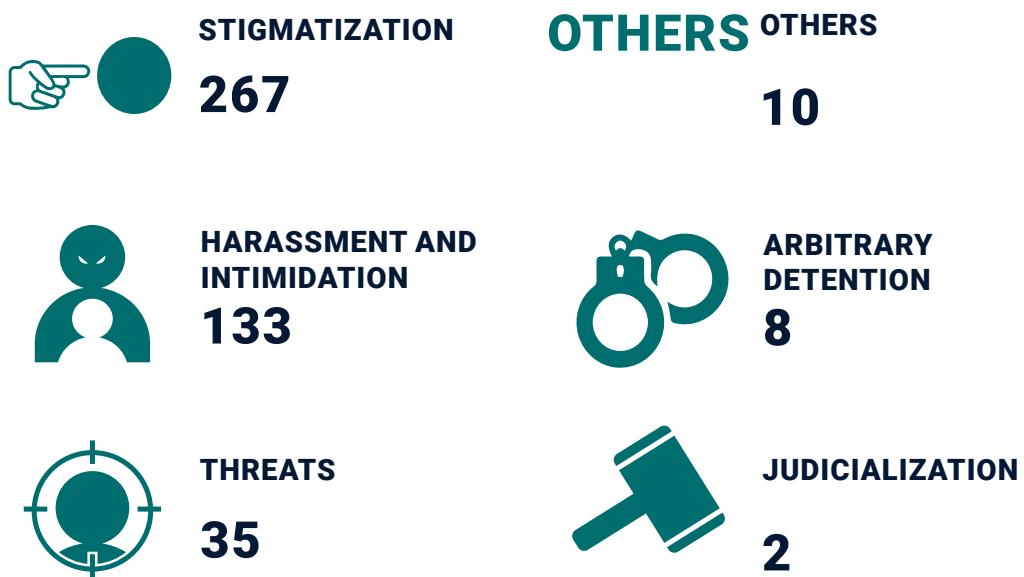
STIGMATIZATION, INTIMIDATION, HARASSMENT, AND THREATS REMAIN THE MAIN DOCUMENTED ATTACK PATTERNS

The closure of the Civic and Democratic Space facilitates the systematic nature of repressive and social control measures that limit and hinder the work of civil society.

The logic of terror and sophisticated and targeted repressive methods have contributed to the neutralization of the activities of those who promote, defend and demand rights.

The 455 attacks and security incidents documented during the period are mainly reflected in the following patterns of aggression:

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE ATTACKS



Stigmatization remains the primary form of attack.

Under the guise of the Internal Enemy thesis, smear campaigns, disparaging rhetoric, accusations, and calls to violence are launched and disseminated. These statements are often accompanied by threats and are intended to intimidate civil society and discourage further action.

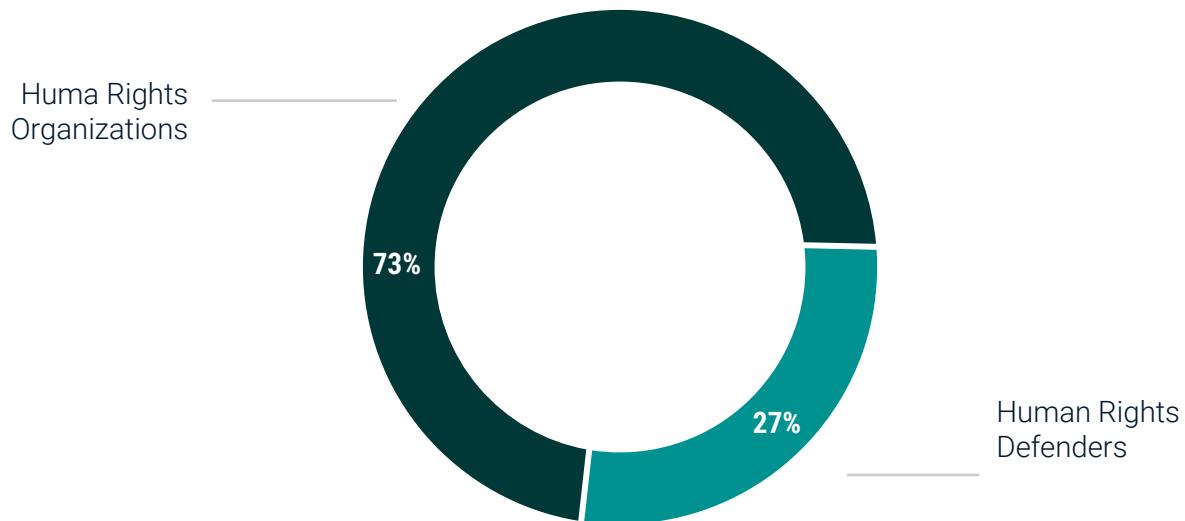
Organizations and individuals were victims of intimidation and harassment, detention and other infringements on freedom and personal integrity for documenting, denouncing and making visible human rights violations and demanding investigation and accountability.

Likewise, the use of crimes defined in laws against terrorism and organized crime and other normative instruments of a penal nature persists to intimidate, prosecute, harass and criminalize actions of documentation, denunciation, advocacy, cooperation and strategic litigation in human rights.

VICTIMS OF THE ATTACKS

During 2025, human rights organizations in the country were the most affected, with 330 attacks and threats against them recorded. They faced various acts by the State aimed at obstructing or preventing their work; this represents 73% of the total documented incidents. Meanwhile, 125 of the recorded incidents were committed against individual human rights defenders, representing the remaining 27%.

SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA



Of those affected, at least **7 were women defenders**, who repeatedly faced stigmatization campaigns, intimidation, threats and situations of violence related to their human rights defense work.

VICTMS PER MONTH

JAN 29 NGO 18 HRD	FEB 149 NGO 12 HRD	MAR 10 NGO 18 HRD	APR 11 NGO 11 HRD	MAY 27 NGO 20 HRD	JUN 7 NGO 9 HRD
JUL 12 NGO 6 HRD	AUG 36 NGO 13 HRD	SEP 17 NGO 5 HRD	OCT 10 NGO 4 HRD	NOV 8 NGO 9 HRD	DEC 14 NGO 0 HRD

RELEVANT EVENTS THAT OCCURRED DURING THE YEAR:

Among the most emblematic cases are the arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and criminal proceedings against human rights defender Carlos Correa, director of the organization Espacio Público, who was released on January 16, as well as the detention and prosecution of Eduardo Torres, a member of the *Programa Venezolano de Educación-Acción en Derechos Humanos (Provea)*, who remains in custody at the time of this report. Both cases constitute direct violations of due process guarantees and the right to defend human rights, and have been reported to international bodies.

SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA

The continuation of judicial harassment against the members of the FundaRedes organization Rafael Tarazona, Omar de Dios García and Javier Tarazona; the latter, in addition to the date of presentation of this report, has completed more than 1600 days deprived of liberty and has been victim of damages to his personal integrity and his health has been seriously deteriorated while in custody.

There were also repeated acts of intimidation, threats, and stigmatization directed against recognized human rights organizations and defenders, including:

- *Provea*, especially against its coordinators.
- *Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social (OVCS)* received attacks from government officials in the media and on social networks, criminalizing international cooperation.
- *Espacio Público (EP)* and *IPYS Venezuela*, targets of stigmatization campaigns in state media and social networks.

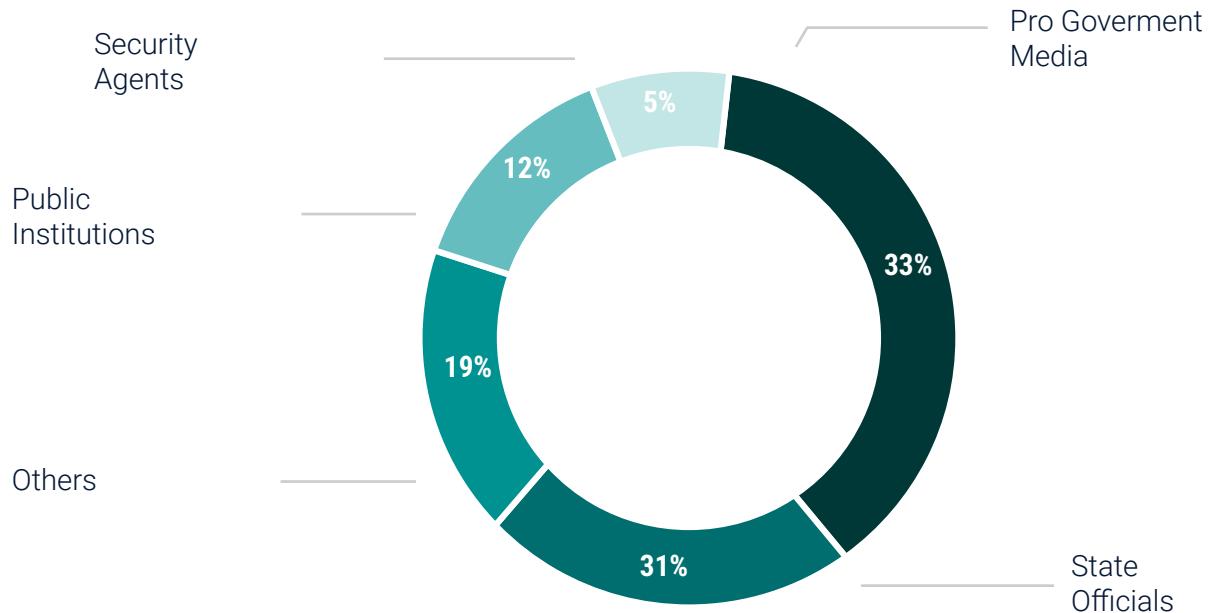
These events demonstrate the continuity of a state policy aimed at criminalizing, silencing, and demobilizing those who exercise their legitimate right to promote, protect, and defend human rights in Venezuela.

PERPETRATORS

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

A total of 160 (33%) of the incidents were carried out from the State's traditional and digital media and its social media accounts; 149 (31%) of the attacks were carried out by public officials, including members of the Executive, deputies, ministers, among others, who used their social media profiles, or statements in government media to stigmatize, threaten and intimidate; 63 (19%) were perpetrated 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 by its Spanish acronym); 57 were the responsibility of Public Institutions or government entities (12%); and 26 incidents were carried out by State security agencies (5%).

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The main perpetrators of the attacks committed against those who defend and demand human rights were primarily State Officials who work in the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches, responsible for committing systematic acts of stigmatization, and promoting violence against defenders through threats, incitement and acts of intimidation and harassment.

Television programs, radio stations, and digital platforms, all part of the national public media system, served as platforms for stigmatization campaigns and calls to violence. Likewise, other digital media outlets and social networks operating under state guidelines were used to discredit and attack organizations. Among the most prominent were *Con el Mazo Dando*, *Misión Verdad*, *La Hojilla*, *Zurda Konducta*, *Correo del Orinoco*, and *Venezuela News*.

Public institutions committed actions contrary to the rights of human rights defenders and organizations and also omitted their duties to act and investigate the attacks committed against them; they also joined in and widely disseminated discourse or statements that stigmatize human rights individuals or organizations.

For their part, security agencies such as the Bolivarian National Police, the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN), and state police perpetrated arbitrary arrests, mistreatment, and other acts of intimidation and harassment.

04

CRIMINALIZATION OF THE DEFENSE, DEMAND AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

At the close of 2025, the defense, demand, and promotion of human rights continued to be affected by the actions employed by the State to restrict civic and democratic space in the country, due to the increase in limitations and restrictions within the post-electoral context and the increase in state violence and terror.

Despite repeated demands for a safe civic space and an end to attacks against those who defend, demand and promote human rights, in 2025 incidents of aggression, intimidation and institutional violence against human rights defenders and organizations continued to be recorded in the country.

The risks remained, framed within the same patterns of aggression that the CDJ has documented for years and were expressed in actions such as: unfounded accusations, arbitrary detentions, acts of intimidation, harassment at airports, threats surrounding cooperation and the approval of regulatory instruments that increased the arbitrary control of civil society organizations; all this in a generalized context of impunity that prevents access to justice.

Stigmatization, as in previous years, emerged as the primary documented form of attack. The accusations were characterized by a discourse aimed at antagonizing the independent human rights movement and perpetuating its perception as an internal enemy. Insults, accusations, smear campaigns, and questioning of the use of international cooperation were repeated acts¹, perpetrated by officials from key public institutions².

Furthermore, media outlets and platforms aligned with or linked to the government generated and disseminated content related to this discourse, including Venezuela Agency News, *La Hojilla*, *Con el Mazo Dando*, *Diario Misión Verdad*, *La Iguana TV*, and *Correo del Orinoco*³. These stigmatizing statements were a fundamental element of the state apparatus aimed at neutralizing the independent human rights movement, as they have triggered attacks such as the initiation of legal proceedings, acts of intimidation and harassment, and threats.

Acts of intimidation and harassment were repeatedly recorded throughout the year. These included actions such as the presence of individuals at the headquarters of human rights organizations; the dissemination of human rights defenders' faces alongside messages against them; and statements intended to generate fear and a sense of surveillance, all presented as tools to deter human rights work. These events occurred in an environment where the human rights movement is constantly labeled as "enemies" that must be neutralized, which increased the risk of a potential attack and led to self-censorship, increased vigilance, and a shift in how human rights organizations and defenders on the ground publicize their work.

¹Center for Defenders and Justice. Reports on the situation of human rights defenders in Venezuela, 2025. Available at: https://centrodefensores.org.ve/?page_id=24

²Center for Defenders and Justice. Situation of human rights defenders in Venezuela. First half of 2025. Available at: <https://centrodefensores.org.ve/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/CDJ-ReportePrimerTrimestre2025.pdf>

³Ibid

The threats were repeated. Through public statements and the enactment and entry into force of regulatory instruments that restricted civic and democratic space⁴, instruments that facilitated the imposition of greater control and monitoring on the use and receipt of foreign funds for the development of the work of civil society organizations, pre-qualifying them as being linked to alleged illicit activities and subjecting them to new regularization processes with extraordinary or difficult-to-meet requirements, seriously affecting their operational capacities.

The justice system continued to fail to fulfill its obligations and acted in some cases as the enforcement arm of the criminalization of human rights defense.

During the year, human rights defenders such as Carlos Correa, Director of *Espacio Público*, and Eduardo Torres, a member of *Provea*, were subjected to enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention⁵. Other activists were also detained throughout the year. Furthermore, defenders such as Javier Tarazona and Kennedy Tejada remain imprisoned, and like José Rafael Tarazona and Omar de Dios García, they continue to be subjected to judicial harassment, arbitrary criminal proceedings that disregard due process and lack the judicial guarantees established by national and international law to ensure respect for their rights.

2025 was a year of challenges and obstacles; the human rights movement saw its work affected and, in some cases, impeded due to the risks involved in being on the ground, associated with criminalization, the reduction of its material capacities to continue working, and the closure of civic and democratic space.

From the CDJ we call for guaranteeing the recovery of inclusive and safe spaces for those who defend human rights, that any action aimed at reinstitutionalization has a human rights approach that includes as a priority the reversal of restrictive measures on civic space and the cessation of patterns of violence that have fostered and allowed persecution, and that policies are promoted that ensure the exercise, defense and demand of rights in a full, free and safe manner.

05 **INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA**

Given the continued criminalization policy and restrictions on civic and democratic space in Venezuela, international human rights protection bodies, international organizations with mandates to protect human rights defenders, and representatives of the international community maintained their monitoring and support of civil society in the country, demanding an end to the criminalization, persecution, repression, stigmatization, and harassment perpetrated by the State.

During the year, we recorded a series of pronouncements made regarding the protection of people and the need to safeguard civic space in the country, including:

SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA

On January 26, in a press release, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE)⁶, in light of the recent progress toward approving a law that seeks to control organizations, called on the State of Venezuela to “*refrain from approving a bill that would limit the right of association, citizen participation in matters of public interest, and the defense of human rights.*” They expressed their concern about a bill that restricts the activities of non-profit organizations and grants state authorities the power to unilaterally dissolve those that participate in political activities or that threaten national stability and the institutions of the Republic. This bill is part of a series of government actions that seek to control and limit the work of civil society organizations and restrict civic space. The IACHR and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression (RELE) expressed their concern regarding the stigmatizing statements made by pro-government members of parliament against NGOs, labeling them as “enemies,” “destabilizing,” “traitors to the nation,” and “fronts for political parties.” These statements demonstrate a climate of hostility toward individuals and organizations that defend human rights or practice journalism in Venezuela. The Commission continues to urge the Venezuelan State to refrain from approving legislation that arbitrarily limits the right to freedom of association, freedom of expression, and participation in matters of public interest. Furthermore, they emphasize the importance of the work of human rights defenders in building a strong and lasting democratic society.

On February 12, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) issued a statement on the case of human rights defender Rocío San Miguel, denouncing its “*condemnation of the forced disappearance of the defender, a beneficiary of precautionary measures*”, and urged the State to report on her whereabouts and ensure respect for her judicial guarantees and presumption of innocence⁷.

On February 13, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (FFM) issued a statement expressing its deep concern over the detention of human rights defender Rocío San Miguel. It also urged the government to halt the escalating wave of repression in the country. Regarding the case, the Mission stated that “*these are not isolated incidents, but rather a series of events that appear to be part of a coordinated plan to silence critics and those perceived as opponents*”. Furthermore, it indicated that “*the government must refrain from using repressive measures that violate its obligations under international human rights law and international criminal law*”. Finally, the experts noted that “*in Venezuela, the measures of repression and intimidation aimed at reducing civic space - now at greater risk with the upcoming approval of the law regulating non-governmental organizations and affecting their independence - continue to be combined with other very serious measures of repression*”⁸.

On February 13, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement regarding the case of human rights defender Rocío San Miguel, saying, “*We continue to follow with deep concern the detention of human rights defender Rocío San Miguel. Her whereabouts remain unknown, which could qualify her detention as enforced disappearance. We urge her immediate release and respect for her right to legal defense*”⁹.

On March 13, the European Parliament discussed a proposed resolution on the situation of political prisoners in Venezuela. The case of human rights defender Rocío San Miguel was highlighted during the debate. Her release and the restoration of her rights were demanded¹⁰.

⁶<https://www.oas.org/es/CIDH/jsForm/?File=/es/CIDH/prensa/comunicados/2024/022.asp>

⁷<https://twitter.com/CIDH/status/1757157849153589756>

⁸<https://waps.ohchr.org/es/press-releases/2024/02/venezuela-fact-finding-mission-expresses-profound-concern-over-detention>

⁹<https://twitter.com/UNHumanRights/status/1757307231614202368>

¹⁰https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2024-0179_ES.html

On March 19, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights presented a new oral update to the Human Rights Council. Among its concerns, the Office stated that “*as Venezuela enters an electoral cycle, with presidential elections scheduled for July 28 of this year, I am deeply concerned about measures to unduly restrict civic and democratic space, including cases of detention, intimidation, and stigmatization*”. It also addressed the criminalization of human rights defenders, denouncing that “*Human rights defenders continue to face repression, arbitrary detention, and threats, including Javier Tarazona and Rocío San Miguel*”. Finally, the Office called on the authorities to refrain from adopting the Draft Law on the Oversight, Regulation, Operation, and Financing of Non-Governmental and Related Organizations in Venezuela, as it “*could impede the delivery of vital humanitarian aid and assistance*”¹¹.

On March 20, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela presented a new oral update to the Human Rights Council. The case of human rights defender Rocío San Miguel was among its main concerns, with the Mission stating that the actions against San Miguel and her family “follow a pattern already reported in previous Mission reports.” The Mission also addressed the proposed Law on the Oversight, Regulation, Operation, and Financing of Non-Governmental and Related Organizations, recalling that it had been questioned by the Mission in 2023 and that “*it is an attempt to further restrict the capacity of civil society actors to operate freely and independently in the country*”¹².

During the Human Rights Council session, in the interactive dialogues that followed the oral updates from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela, various delegations from Council countries, including member states of the European Union, the United Kingdom, Argentina, Paraguay, Chile, and Canada, among others, spoke out against the closure of the Civic and Democratic space and the criminalization of human rights defenders and organizations¹³.

On April 25, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) published its annual report, in which Chapter IV.B highlights the situation in Venezuela. The report explains that the country is included in its analysis “*due to the complete erosion of the democratic system and the grave human rights situation. Over the years, the progressive concentration of power in the hands of the Executive Branch and the absence of the rule of law have been documented*”. The analysis emphasizes the situation of human rights defenders and the IACHR’s continued concern, as acts of persecution against them continued to be documented. The report indicates that during 2023, “*an adverse environment persisted for human rights defenders and those who hold union leadership positions. This was characterized by public smear campaigns promoted by high-ranking state officials, stigmatization, acts of harassment, and criminalization processes as retaliation for their work*”¹⁴. The report refers to cases and situations that occurred during 2023 and reiterated that “*human rights defenders and union leaders face an active public policy of persecution, discrediting, and criminalization by the State. It is important to remember that human rights defenders, as well as civil society organizations, are fundamental pillars in any democratic society. Therefore, it is crucial that Venezuela urgently refrain from taking any actions or measures that could represent a disproportionate restriction on the right to freedom of association and that could negatively impact the free exercise of human rights defense*”¹⁵. Finally, the Commission reiterated that: “*In light of the aforementioned events, the IACHR reiterates that human rights defenders play a fundamental role in consolidating both a democratic society and the rule of law, and therefore the State has the obligation to guarantee an environment conducive to the exercise of their work. It also recalls that freedom of association is a fundamental tool for the full and complete exercise of the work of human rights defenders*”¹⁶.

¹¹<https://www.ohchr.org/es/statements-and-speeches/2024/03/deputy-high-commissioner-updates-human-rights-council-venezuela>

¹²<https://www.ohchr.org/es/statements-and-speeches/2024/03/statement-marta-valinas-chair-independent-international-fact>

¹³<https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1i/k1ijtwz8c6> and <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k19/k19r5giq82>

¹⁴https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/docs/anual/2023/capitulos/IA2023_Cap_4B_Venezuela_SPA.PDF Paragraph 28

¹⁵Ibid. Paragraph 36

¹⁶Ibid. Page 75

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On April 30, the IACHR announced the extension of the Precautionary Measures for the Venezuelan Program for Education-Action in Human Rights (PROVEA). In its resolution, the Commission stated that the extension was based on an analysis of the ongoing risk to PROVEA's coordinators and concluded that this risk extends to other members of the organization, within a context of persecution against human rights defenders and those who express disagreement with the government. The IACHR expressed particular concern that the alleged threats have been attributed to state agents in Venezuela. Despite actions taken to elicit a response from the State, no recent information has been received indicating that protective measures are being implemented for the beneficiaries. On the contrary, available information indicates that state agents, including high-ranking officials, are taking actions against them, which has intensified the risk. Consequently, the Commission decided to require Venezuela to adopt the necessary measures to guarantee the life and personal integrity of the identified persons, so that the beneficiaries can carry out their activities as human rights defenders without being subjected to acts of violence, threats and harassment, to agree on the measures to be adopted with the beneficiaries and their representatives, and to report on the actions implemented to investigate the alleged events and prevent their repetition¹⁷.

On April 30, the experts of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, Ms. Aua Baldé (Chair), Ms. Gabriella Citroni (Vice-Chair), Ms. Angkhana Neelapaijit, Ms. Grażyna Baranowska, and Ms. Ana Lorena Delgadillo Pérez, issued a statement regarding Venezuela. They expressed concern that "since December 2023, there has been a worrying increase in enforced disappearances in Venezuela affecting citizens exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, and participation in matters of public interest," and addressed the potential impact of such practices in an electoral context¹⁸.

On May 16, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued a press release stating that the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE) of the IACHR has expressed its concern about the increased repression against journalists and members of civil society in Venezuela, as well as the deterioration of civic space in the country. The RELE urges the State to respect and guarantee freedom of expression and of the press, which are fundamental for the restoration of a democratic culture that respects human rights in Venezuela. "There have been cases of judicial harassment, arbitrary detentions, restrictions on access to information, closure of media outlets, and stigmatizing remarks by high-ranking government officials against those who investigate and actively participate in matters of public and political interest. According to public information, between January and April 2024, approximately 128 attacks against journalists, activists, human rights defenders, media outlets, and civil society organizations were recorded. In addition, at least 18 people were detained for exercising their freedom of expression"¹⁹.

Furthermore, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a country report on June 28 regarding the human rights situation in Venezuela. This report includes a detailed assessment of the implementation of previous recommendations and will be presented during the 56th session of the Human Rights Council. The report covers the period from May 1, 2023, to April 30, 2024, and addresses various issues of concern, including impacts on civic space and the rule of law. Specific cases are presented, including those of the defenders Javier Tarazona and Rocío San Miguel²⁰.

¹⁷<https://www.oas.org/es/CIDH/jsForm/?File=/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2024/083.asp>

¹⁸<https://www.ohchr.org/es/press-releases/2024/04/alarming-rise-enforced-disappearances-ahead-venezuelas-presidential-poll-un>

¹⁹<https://www.oas.org/es/CIDH/jsForm/?File=/es/cidh/expresion/prensa/comunicados/2024/106.asp>

²⁰<https://www.ohchr.org/es/documents/country-reports/ahrc5663-situation-human-rights-bolivarian-republic-venezuela-report>

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On July 2, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), along with its Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE), issued a statement on the anniversary of the 2024 elections in Venezuela. The international body denounced the arbitrary detentions of journalists and human rights defenders, warning that people continue to be detained for exercising their profession by *"denouncing repression and demanding democratic guarantees"*. Finally, they insisted that freedom of expression should not be criminalized²¹.

On September 8, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela presented a new report to the United Nations Human Rights Council at its 60th session. In addition to the report itself, an interactive dialogue was held²². Both the written report and the oral presentation reiterated the experts' concerns regarding the restrictions imposed on civic space and the criminalization and prosecution of human rights defenders in Venezuela.

During this presentation, various countries spoke out in the session about the closure of civic and democratic space in Venezuela, and in particular about the importance of respecting the work of human rights organizations and defenders and ceasing attacks against them²³.

On September 30th, The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders made public the communication submitted to the Venezuelan government, prepared under her mandate together with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, in which they speak out against the *"enforced disappearance for eight days and the arbitrary detention of the human rights defender and lawyer, Mr. Eduardo José Torres Muñoz"*²⁴.

On December 16, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Volker Türk, delivered an oral update on Venezuela to the Human Rights Council, in which he warned that *"the repression of civic space has intensified, stifling people's freedoms"*, and alerted to the growing militarization of public life and the risk of increased violence in a context already marked by high levels of crime. He also stated that journalists, human rights defenders, humanitarian workers, and others *"continue to face threats, harassment, and arbitrary detentions"*. He alleged that many have been forced to leave the country²⁵.

Regarding the pronouncements of international organizations:

Throughout the year, organizations such as the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) (within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders), and the Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF), Peace and Reconciliation Foundation, Amnesty International, Front Line Defenders, Civicus Alliance, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), and DeJusticia issued various statements throughout the year advocating for the protection of human rights defenders in Venezuela and demanding their protection and guarantees for their work. They also raised their voices in specific cases of human rights defenders at risk or who were direct victims of attacks and aggression²⁶.

²¹See @CIDH: https://x.com/RELE_CIDH/status/1949842030974190008

²²20th Meeting – 60th Regular Session of Human Rights Council. 8th September 2025. <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1q/k1qjqszmhl>

²³Ibidem

²⁴AL VEN 2/2025 <https://sppcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownLoadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30047>

²⁵<https://news.un.org/es/story/2025/12/1540922>

²⁶See, for example: <https://twitter.com/cejil/status/1745935746987405667>; <https://dplf.org/en/news/international-organizations-express-concern-over-legislation-aiming-criminalize-and-obstruct>; <https://twitter.com/parescolombia/status/1748089453107642641/>; <https://photo/1>; <https://www.amnesty.org/es/documents/amr53/7602/2024/es/>; <https://www.amnesty.org/es/latest/news/2024/02/venezuela>

06

CONCLUSIONS Y RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2025, the exercise of the right to defend, promote, and demand human rights in Venezuela remained deeply threatened. Regulatory restrictions, operational obstacles, systematic attacks, and the deterioration of social conditions and basic services severely limited the work of human rights defenders and organizations, affecting both their safety and their capacity to act.

Far from correcting these practices, the Venezuelan State persisted in implementing repressive de facto and legal measures, without demonstrating political will to reverse the patterns of criminalization and address the structural causes that foster repression.

The lack of guarantees and the systematic non-compliance with international obligations reflect the authoritarian nature of the State, deepening the political, institutional, and human rights crisis facing the country. This situation directly violates commitments made within the framework of the Inter-American Human Rights System (IACHR) and the United Nations System, and exposes the State to international responsibility.

Looking ahead to 2026, in the context of the beginning of a process of transition and socio-political changes, it is essential to remember that the documentation, denunciation, dissemination and support of victims are legitimate actions, protected by international law and essential for the construction of peace, justice and democracy.

From the Center for Human Rights Defenders and Justice (CDJ), we urge:

1. To the Venezuelan State:

- To immediately cease all forms of criminalization, harassment and repression against human rights defenders and organizations.
- To guarantee a favorable and safe environment for the exercise of the right to defend rights, in accordance with international standards.
- To welcome and implement the recommendations formulated by mechanisms of the United Nations (UN) and the Inter-American Human Rights System (IAHRS).
- To repeal restrictive regulations that limit civic space and hinder the work of organizations.
- To guarantee and promote the presence and visit to the country of international mechanisms such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Independent International

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zuela-la-escalada-de-represion-del-gobierno-e-intentos-de-evadir-el-escrutinio-enfrentan-el-contundente-rechazo-de-sociedad-civil-internacional/ ; https://twitter.com/fidh_es/status/1757149420708135179 , <https://twitter.com/cejil/status/1757147930014720206> ; <https://www.fidh.org/es/temas/defensores-de-derechos-humanos/venezuela-desaparicion-forzada-y-detencion-arbitraria> ; <https://www.fidh.org/es/temas/defensores-de-derechos-humanos/venezuela-desaparicion-forzada-y-detencion-arbitraria> ; <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/es/case/incommunicado-detention-woman-human-rights-defender-rocc%ADo-san-miguel> ; <https://monitor.civicus.org/watchlist-march-2024/> ; <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k11/k11jtwz8c6> and <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k19/k19r5giq82> ; Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint program of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT): <https://www.fidh.org/es/temas/defensores-de-derechos-humanos/venezuela-desaparicion-forzada-detencion-arbitraria-y-posterior> ; Amnesty International: <https://www.amnesty.org/es/documents/amr53/0196/2025/es/>; Front Line Defenders: <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/es/case/venezuela-arbitrary-detention-woman-human-rights-defender-martha-lia-grajales> ; Amnesty International Americas: <https://x.com/AmnistiaOnline/status/1967738111342895237>

Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint program of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). Venezuela: Enforced disappearance of human rights defender Pedro Hernández, his father, and his wife. <https://www.fidh.org/es/temas/defensores-de-derechos-humanos/venezuela-desaparicion-forzada-del-defensor-pedro-hernandez-su-padre>

Fact-Finding Mission, the International Criminal Court (ICC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), among others.

2. To the international community:

- To maintain and strengthen the visibility and denunciation of human rights violations in Venezuela, especially those related to the criminalization of the defense of rights and the closure of civic space.
- To strengthen channels of international technical and financial cooperation, with special emphasis on ensuring sustained, flexible and accessible support for human rights organizations operating in high-risk contexts.
- To actively monitor the Venezuelan State's compliance with its international obligations, using all available mechanisms of the Inter-American System and the United Nations, as well as in multilateral and bilateral forums.
- To incorporate the situation of human rights defenders as a priority issue in diplomatic agendas, cooperation and in processes of evaluation of international commitments assumed by Venezuela, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

From the CDJ, we insist that the work of defending, demanding, and promoting rights is essential for respecting human dignity and maintaining democracy and the rule of law. By criminalizing and attacking those who carry out these actions, the State violates its international obligations and incurs international responsibility. Therefore, it is essential to move forward in building enabling and safe environments that allow the right to defend human rights to be exercised without fear of becoming a victim of aggression or reprisals.

CENTRO PARA LOS DEFENSORES Y LA JUSTICIA

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