



CENTRO PARA
LOS DEFENSORES
Y LA JUSTICIA

SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA

JANUARY 2026

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The Center for Human Rights Defenders and Justice (CDJ) recorded **64 attacks and security incidents during January 2026 in Venezuela.**

ATTACKS JANUARY 2026



64 ATTACKS

The criminalization of the defense, demand, and promotion of human rights has not ceased. Restrictive measures and regulations concerning Civic and Democratic Space, along with criminalization by state officials, continue to pose risks to the work of human rights defenders and organizations.

Attacks against civil society continue through threats, harassment, and intimidation. The right to freedom of association remains limited due to a restrictive legal framework that shows no signs of changing.

The intimidation and accusations documented during the first month of the year demonstrate that it is still necessary to advance in protection mechanisms for those who defend, demand and promote rights.

01

64 VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA DURING JANUARY 2026

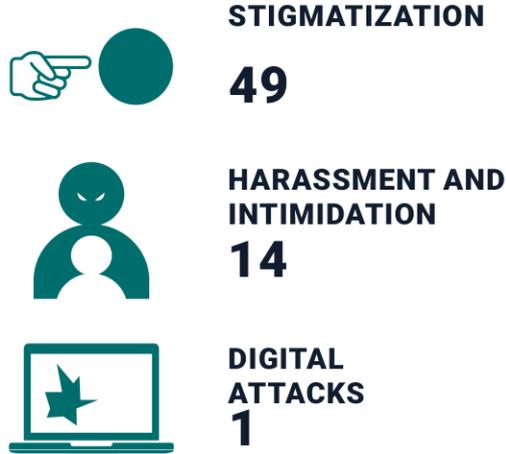
Despite the changes in the Venezuelan context after the events of January 3, the criminalization and attacks against people and human rights defenders have not ceased and they continue to carry out their activities in a repressive environment of criminalization and social control.

A further increase in attacks was documented in relation to the second half of 2025, when an average of 22 attacks per month were recorded, compared to 64 in the first month of 2026.

From different spaces and institutions of the State, the work of the organizations was criminalized and discredited by being labeled as “liars”, “commercializing justice”, being fronts to “fight with foreign funds”, they were publicly accused of alleged “extortion” and of making use of their work as a form of “political conspiracy to destabilize”.

The 64 incidents recorded during January were characterized by:

ATTACK CHARACTERIZATION:



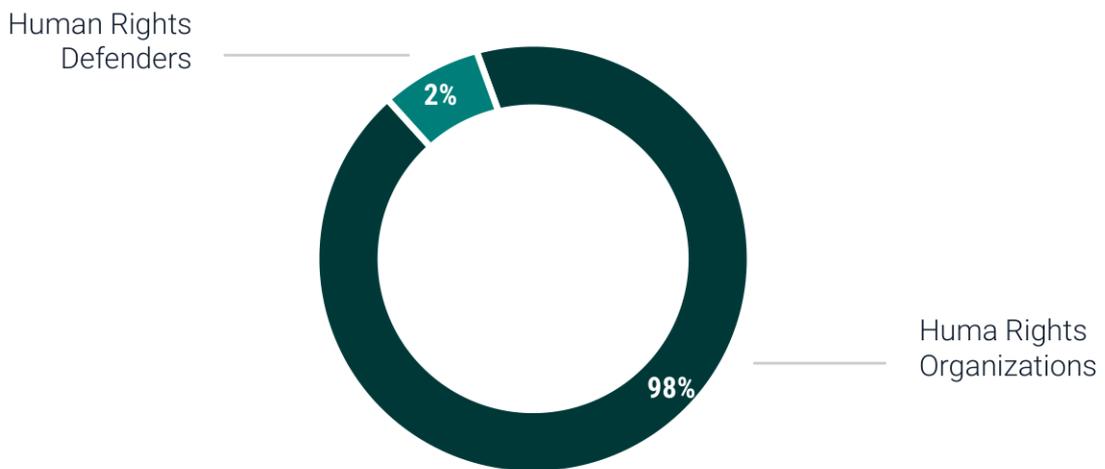
Stigmatization remains the main pattern of aggression implemented within the framework of the Policy of Criminalizing the defense and demand for human rights, accusing those who carry out activities within this framework of being destabilizing agents, terrorists, traitors, conspirators, among others.

There were reports of accusations and intimidation on digital platforms, criminalizing the defense of rights, international cooperation, and demands for justice and full release of people detained for political reasons, through systematic smear campaigns.

We remind everyone 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 January 2026, 63 were targeted against human rights organizations, equivalent to 98% of the total. While 1 was specifically targeted against a human rights defender, the remaining 2%.



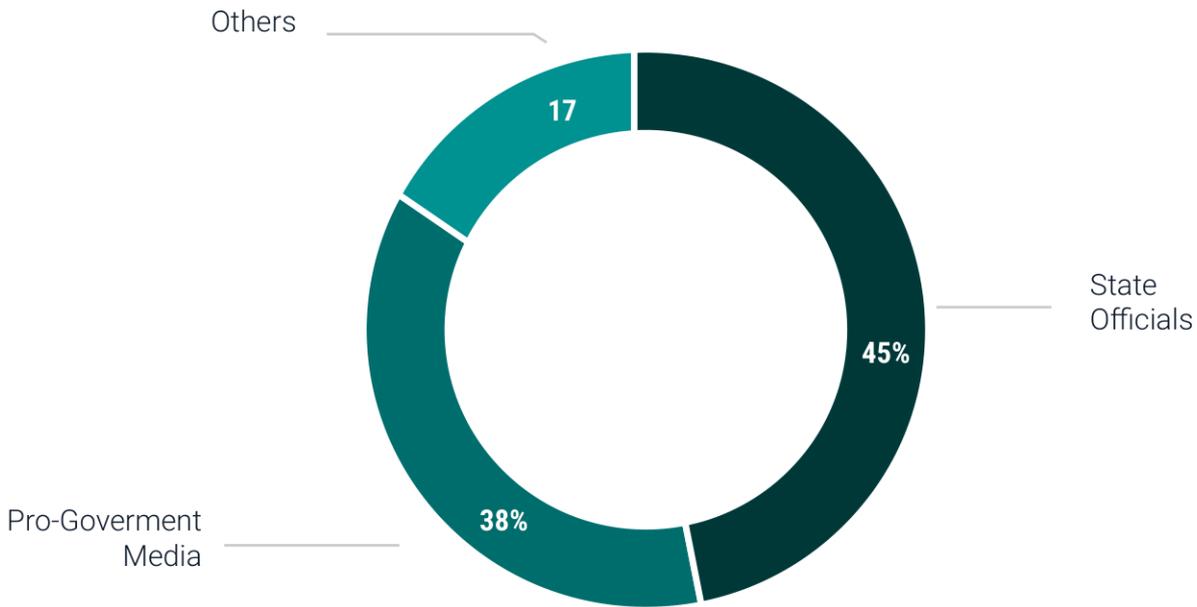
They highlight the accusations, stigmatization, and acts of intimidation and harassment against the organizations Venezuelan Program for Education-Action in Human Rights – PROVEA, Foro Penal, and Transparencia Venezuela. They also note the systematic stigmatization and discrediting of the work of non-governmental organizations.

Likewise, there is concern about the continued existence of regulations that restrict civic space, since without the repeal of the regulatory instruments aimed at restricting and controlling civil society, it will not be possible to advance towards guaranteeing a favorable and safe environment for the exercise of its activities.

PERPETRATORS

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

A total of 29 (45%) were carried out by public officials, who used their social media profiles, or statements in government media, and institutional spaces to stigmatize, harass and intimidate; another 24 attacks (38%) were carried out from the State’s traditional and digital media and its social media accounts; finally, 11 (17%) were perpetrated by people or groups affected by the State’s political interests.



The main perpetrators of the attacks committed 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 state-affiliated media, as well as messaging platforms, served as platforms for campaigns of stigmatization, defamation, and calls to violence. Notable examples include: Con el Mazo Dando, Venezuela News, Correo del Orinoco, and Venezolana de Televisión (VTV).

People associated with the ruling party, journalists identified with government agencies, and others are also part of this group identified among those responsible for the violations.

02

CRIMINALIZATION OF THE DEFENSE, DEMAND AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The beginning of 2026 saw a new surge in attacks against the human rights movement. By publicly discrediting and questioning the legitimacy of the activities of human rights organizations working on behalf of victims, the Venezuelan state sought to delegitimize the work of those who defend human rights in the country, as part of its ongoing policy of criminalizing the defense, demand, and promotion of rights.

Stigmatization was the most frequently reported form of attack during January, primarily in the context of questioning the purpose and reporting of human rights NGOs demanding the release of political prisoners and their full freedom. State officials and pro-government platforms affiliated with or associated with the current administration disseminated and amplified messages accusing these organizations of allegedly profiting from the families of political prisoners released during the month. Furthermore, the organizations' reports on human rights violations in the country were discredited, with accusations that they fabricated and invented documented facts. These statements were accompanied by intimidating messages against the human rights movement from actors who have repeatedly carried out attacks against human rights defenders¹.

The CDJ celebrates the release on January 8th of human rights defender Rocío San Miguel, president of Control Ciudadano, who had been arbitrarily detained for over two years². Similarly, on January 25th, defender Kennedy Tejada, a member of Foro Penal, was released³, and on January 30th, defender Eduardo Torres, a member of Provea, was also freed⁴, following announcements by state officials regarding the start of a release process. We reiterate that no human rights defender should be criminalized or prosecuted for carrying out their legitimate work.

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#HABLEMOSDDHH

¹Venezuela News Agency. Delcy Rodríguez denounces the commercialization of justice by fake NGOs. 14.01.26. Available at: <https://venezuela-news.com/delcy-rodriguez-denuncia-mercantilizacion-justicia-falsas-ong/>

<https://mazo4f.com/cabello-ni-la-iglesia-ni-las-ong-tienen-que-ver-con-liberacion-de-detenido-por-hechos-de-violencia>

<https://venezuela-news.com/diosdado-cabello-informa-sobre-808-excarcelaciones-ejecutadas-por-el-gobierno-nacional-y-til-da-a-ong-de-extorsionadores/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q86G1vKeJVw>

19.1.2026. VTV press conference. Minutes: 7:03 - 7:47. Available at : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hhz6kQ2p2BY> LIVE | PSUV Press Conference, with Diosdado Cabello, January 26, 2026. Minutes 17:10-18:15 and 22:45-31:31. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0fJoUGb-xo>

²El País. Available at: <https://elpais.com/america/2026-01-10/la-familia-de-rocio-san-miguel-resalta-los-dialogos-y-la-diplomacia-que-han-propiciado-su-liberacion.html>

³Criminal Forum. #Jan25 With great joy we can confirm the release of our volunteer lawyer from

@ForoPenal KENNEDY TEJEDA JIMÉNEZ, who was arbitrarily detained since August 2, 2024. <https://x.com/HimiobSantome/status/2015456926788673924>

⁴Provea. Freedom! Our colleague Eduardo Torres is greeted by his wife and children after being released from prison Friday night. We are overjoyed by this news and it encourages us to continue demanding, along with dozens of families, the full and immediate freedom of all political prisoners in the country. https://x.com/_Provea/status/2017418990184743149

In light of the current changes taking place in the country, the CDJ expresses its concern regarding the continued attacks against human rights defenders. The human rights movement and human rights defenders must cease being categorized under the logic of the internal enemy⁵. We reiterate that any process of transition and reinstitutionalization must include the voices and qualified perspective of human rights, as the protection and guarantee of these rights must be a cross-cutting theme in the political, social, and economic changes that take place in the country.

03

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA

The criminalization of defending and demanding human rights in Venezuela continues to be a focus of concern for the international community.

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

Among the main actions and pronouncements recorded by international organizations in January are:

On January 13, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) issued a statement expressing concern about the events that occurred in Venezuela after January 3. The Commission and its Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE) urged the government to “*guarantee full conditions for the exercise of journalism, without censorship, threats, reprisals, or undue restrictions, and to protect human rights defenders*”; and they commented on the release of human rights defender Rocío San Miguel⁶.

For their part, international organizations such as Amnesty International, the Center for Justice and International Law CEJIL, spoke out against the release of human rights defenders, demanding full freedom for all⁷.

⁵ Center for Defenders and Justice. Situation of human rights defenders in Venezuela - Year 2025. Available at: <https://centrodefensores.org.ve/?p=746>

⁶ IACHR. January 13, 2026. Press Release https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/jsForm/?File=%2Fes%2Fcidh%2Fprensa%2Fcomunicados%2F2026%2F007.asp&utm_content=country-ven&utm_term=class-mon

⁷ https://x.com/OBS_defenders/status/2009578588845326580 , <https://x.com/cejil/status/2014419997792063556> , <https://x.com/AmnistiaOnline/status/2015587013831844319>

04

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Venezuelan state continues to fail to guarantee a safe civic and democratic space. The criminalization of the defense, demand, and promotion of human rights has not ceased.

The beginning of 2026 marks a significant and alarming deterioration in the environment for defending human rights in Venezuela. The attacks and incidents recorded show a drastic increase, almost tripling the monthly average of the second half of 2025.

Stigmatization is not an isolated event; on the contrary, it is a state tool used to delegitimize human rights defenders in the eyes of the public, even though in the current context it is more necessary to have processes of documentation, denunciation, accompaniment and accountability with a rights-based approach that promote and guarantee real institutional changes with a rights-based approach.

It is essential to protect human rights defenders and their organizations. The State is internationally obligated to guarantee their work without reprisals. In accordance with international law, the activities of those who defend, demand, and promote human rights must be protected and guaranteed safely.

Therefore, the Center for Defenders and Justice urges:

To the Venezuelan State:

- To immediately cease the campaigns of stigmatization and the use of institutional spaces or public discourses to single out and discredit human rights organizations.
- Immediately repeal restrictive laws that limit the right to free association and that are used as tools of social control.
- 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 Fact-Finding Mission, the International Criminal Court (ICC), the International Labor Organization (ILO), among others.

To the International Community:

- Maintain and strengthen active monitoring and support to ensure the effective protection of human rights defenders.
- Continue to support civil society, in particular human rights organizations and defenders, by providing the necessary support to protect and ensure the functioning of those working on the ground at risk.

- 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).

We must move towards building a conducive and safe environment for exercising the right to defend rights, in accordance with international standards, and ensure the recovery of civic space; only in this way can the defense and demand of rights be exercised fully, freely, and without fear of reprisals.

From the CDJ we reiterate that the work of defending, demanding and promoting rights is essential for respect for human dignity and the maintenance of democracy and the rule of law.

CENTRO PARA LOS DEFENSORES Y LA JUSTICIA

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