



CENTRO PARA  
LOS DEFENSORES  
Y LA JUSTICIA

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

**FEBRUARY 2026**

## CONTENT

01

26 VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS  
IN VENEZUELA DURING FEBRUARY 2026

PAG. 3

02

CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC SPACE REMAINS NOT GUARANTEED

PAG. 3

03

CRIMINALIZATION OF THE DEFENSE, DEMAND AND  
PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

PAG. 6

04

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE CRIMINALIZATION OF  
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VENEZUELA

PAG. 7

05

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PAG. 8

01

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

The Center for Human Rights Defenders and Justice (CDJ) documented **26 attacks and security incidents during February 2026 in Venezuela.**

### ATTACKS FEBRUARY 2026



**26 ATTACKS**

In February, new attacks against human rights defenders and organizations were documented. As long as the legal and practical measures restricting civic space continue, the risks for those who promote, defend, and demand rights will remain.

The policy of criminalizing international cooperation and the threats and intimidation of civil society persist within the framework of the law on the supervision, regulation, action and financing of non-governmental organizations and non-profit social organizations; with its validity, the rights to free association and defense of rights continue to be violated.

Acts of intimidation and threats under the oversight law are aimed at maintaining discretionary controls and neutralizing civil society organizations through fear, in order to limit their actions.

02

## CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC SPACE REMAINS NOT GUARANTEED

Not only do restrictive regulations and repressive mechanisms remain in place, but current authorities continue to threaten and intimidate organizations, demonstrating a continuity of the patterns of aggression and intimidation that shape the Policy of Criminalization, Repression and Social Control.

**3**

#HABLEMOSDDHH

It is necessary to move forward with the adoption of institutional measures aimed at building a conducive and safe environment for the defense, demand, and promotion of human rights in Venezuela. However, this environment remains restrictive and unfavorable, with no signs from the authorities of guaranteeing the free and safe work of the human rights movement.

The 26 incidents recorded during February were characterized by:

**ATTACK CHARACTERIZATION:**

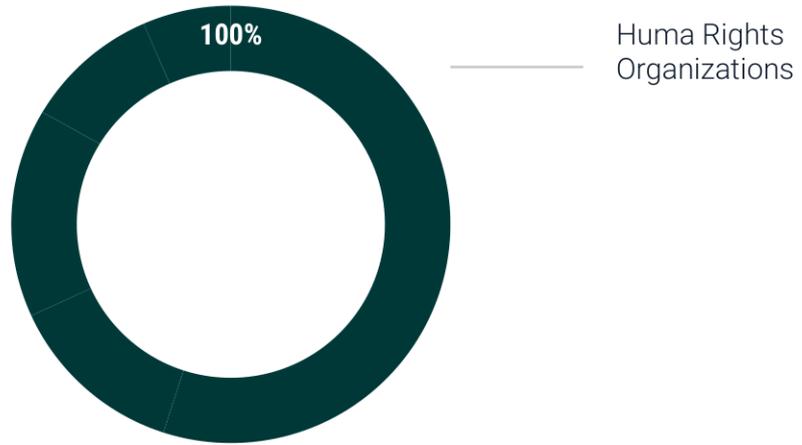


The stigmatization, intimidation, and harassment continue unabated. These campaigns aim to discredit the organizations, accusing them of being “instruments of war,” “covering up plans against the republic,” or labeling them “corrupt,” among other things, in order to undermine their actions and attempt to link the defense of human rights in Venezuela with illegal activities.

The State continues to use institutional channels to perpetrate institutional violence as a means of criminalizing the legitimate exercise of the right to defend human rights, employing actions to intimidate and harass civil society. These actions are intended to have an intimidating, deterrent, and controlling effect.

**VICTIMS OF THE ATTACKS**

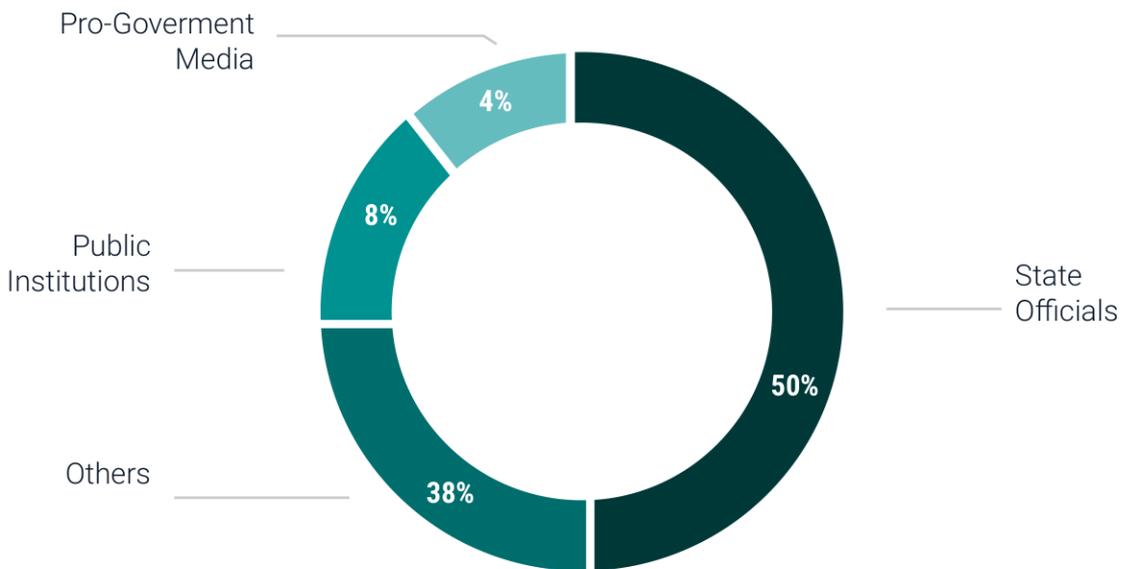
Of the total attacks documented during the month of February 2026, 26 were directed against human rights organizations and organizations carrying out humanitarian actions, equivalent to 100%.



The human rights movement as a whole was affected by systematic campaigns of stigmatization and harassment, being subjected to threats and calls to be monitored under accusations of allegedly using international cooperation as a foreign front to interfere in national affairs.

**PERPETRATORS**

A total of 13 attacks (50%) were carried out by public officials, who used their social media profiles or statements in the media to stigmatize, threaten and intimidate; actors affiliated with the government perpetrated 10 attacks (38%); 2 were the responsibility of Public Institutions (8%); and 1 by traditional and digital media of the State and its social media accounts (4%)



Those primarily responsible for the attacks committed during the month against those who defend and demand human rights include members of the National Executive, ministers, representatives of the National Assembly (AN), among other people attached to government entities.

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

Various actors bear responsibility for actions of stigmatization, intimidation, and harassment as part of the criminalization policy.

# 03

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

Regarding the recovery of Civic Space and the guarantee of the work of human rights organizations, 2026 has not brought significant changes to guarantee their work; on the contrary, the logic of the enemy and actions aimed at criminalizing and discrediting the work of demanding and documenting the rights of those who defend, demand and promote human rights in the country remain in force.

Stigmatization remains the primary pattern of attack, with accusations seeking to link international cooperation to criminal or illicit activities. The discourse against human rights persists and is reinforced with violent undertones. Of particular concern is the role of state officials as generators and disseminators of this message, potentially incentivizing other actors to replicate or even carry out threats.

In February, we continued to document attacks against human rights defenders and human rights organizations, especially in the context of demands made regarding the release of people detained for political reasons and for the Amnesty Law to be enacted under international human rights standards<sup>1</sup>, accusing them of allegedly charging victims and their families, and of responding to foreign interests with destabilizing purposes.

Furthermore, new accusations were made regarding international cooperation, with calls to enforce oversight laws. Officials alleged that many organizations are *“nothing more than fronts for laundering imperialist money and financing the small groups that want to set the country ablaze”*. Along the same lines, officials asserted that *“those who have nothing to hide have nothing to fear. But here in Venezuela, the time is over when any foreign agent could come under the guise of humanitarian aid to interfere in the country’s internal affairs. Mandatory registration*

<sup>1</sup> VTV. 2.02.2026. VTV Press Conference. Minutes: 9:39 - 9:54. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opx43fgAJTY>; February 4, 2026. VTV press conference. Minutes: 18:17 - 18:35. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogdkzB0jXUA>; February 9, 2026. VTV press conference. Minutes: 5:21 - 6:00. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15rPkLxgeD0>; With the Sledgehammer | Diosdado Cabello | Program 561. 2:35:30 - 2:35:58. In: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7LT9GKgU3I>  
<sup>2</sup>3.02.2026. Radio Program (Zurda Conducta). Minutes: 18:45 - 19:17. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qX4zY7R9pW1>

and accountability—that’s what they must do if they want to continue operating here”<sup>3</sup>. These statements were sometimes accompanied by threats or intimidation regarding the possible initiation of investigations against them.

Thus, it continues to be evident how the policy of criminalization is maintained, and the institutionalization of the internal enemy thesis, and consequently, that the risks for human rights defenders remain high.

Intimidation and harassment remain among the most frequently used tactics by the state to instill fear and attempt to neutralize the human rights movement. Accusations by public officials related to the commission of crimes demonstrate that documenting and demanding accountability in order to advance justice processes continue to be criminalized.

The CDJ celebrates the release on February 1st of Javier Tarazona, Director of FundaRedes, after more than four years of arbitrary detention<sup>4</sup>. We reiterate that no human rights defender should be criminalized or prosecuted for carrying out their legitimate work.

We insist that, to advance the process of reinstitutionalization, it is urgent to cease the policy of criminalization, repression, and control, and to repeal all restrictive measures regarding civic space. To guarantee the restoration of the rule of law, those who defend, promote, and demand rights must be able to fully, freely, and safely carry out their activities.

# 04

## INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS 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 bodies, diplomatic actors and international organizations continue to speak out against the attacks committed and demand that the State fulfill its duty to promote and protect the work of human rights defenders.

Some of the actions and pronouncements recorded during February include:

On February 3, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) rejected “the statements made by the Minister of the Interior against organizations that defend people detained for political reasons,” indicating that “the defense of human rights is indispensable for a democratic transition”<sup>5</sup>.

Regarding the pronouncements of international organizations:

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, comprised of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), issued a statement regarding the release of several human rights defenders arbitrarily detained in Venezuela. It stated that “these individuals should never have been deprived of their liberty for carrying out their legitimate work of defending human rights. Their release does not yet constitute full freedom; therefore, we urge the immediate and unconditional guarantee of their full release, along with the dismissal of all pending criminal charges and the expungement of their police and judicial records”<sup>6</sup>.

# 04 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The environment for defending human rights in Venezuela remains under a systematic policy of criminalization and control. The persistence of attacks demonstrates that the State uses legal mechanisms and intimidation tactics to neutralize civil society. Stigmatization, the primary form of aggression, seeks to delegitimize human rights work, while the lack of institutional guarantees confirms that civic space remains restricted and hostile for those who promote fundamental rights.

We reiterate that the criminalization of international cooperation must cease. The activities of human rights defenders and organizations are legitimate and, in a context like Venezuela’s, are vital for establishing and strengthening a democratic and participatory society.

To guarantee a free and safe environment where human rights defenders are protected, we request:

- The repeal of restrictive regulations and the cessation of the application of laws that, under the pretext of oversight, limit the right to free association and criminalize international cooperation.
- Stop the public stigmatization. Authorities must refrain from issuing hate speech or statements that criminalize organizations. Defending, promoting, and demanding rights are activities protected and permitted under international law, and the State has the obligation to protect and guarantee them.
- Implement real and safe institutional measures that allow human rights organizations and defenders to carry out their work without fear of reprisals.

- Maintain monitoring and denunciation actions by the international community, demanding compliance with the human rights treaties signed by the country and the effective protection of human rights defenders.

It is necessary to guarantee a free and safe civic and democratic space for the strengthening of democracy and the consolidation of the rule of law, where freedom of association, expression, assembly and the defense of human rights can be carried out fully and without arbitrary controls.

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