

institution of the family and national customs.”

The authorities also warned of the danger of “homosexual propaganda” and insisted that sexual orientation and gender identity could not be included as protected characteristics in anti-discrimination legislation because they contradicted “the values of the institution of the family”.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Uzbekistan remained vulnerable to the consequences of climate change, overuse of water for agricultural purposes, desertification and air pollution.

The capital city, Tashkent, ranked among the 10 most polluted cities in the world. A World Bank study found that 83% of its inhabitants were exposed to levels of air pollution six times greater than the WHO’s recommended levels, accounting for around 3,000 premature deaths annually. Dust from construction sites and roads contributed to more than half of airborne pollutants.

In a bid to slow encroaching desertification, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev initiated a programme to sow drought-resistant seeds over arid areas, including Karakalpakstan which had been particularly affected by the drying out of the Aral Sea.

VENEZUELA

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Protests following the announcement of the results of the presidential election in July were violently repressed with excessive use of force and possible extrajudicial executions. Thousands of arbitrary arrests were carried out against political opponents, human rights defenders and journalists; hundreds of children were among those detained. Detainees including women and children were allegedly tortured. Detention conditions continued to deteriorate. Impunity prevailed for human rights violations. The ICC authorized the resumption of the investigation into alleged

crimes against humanity. Journalists remained at risk of arbitrary detention and harassment and the government continued its attempts to obstruct independent media. Human rights NGOs were threatened with closure and human rights defenders remained at significant risk. By the end of the year more than 7.89 million Venezuelans had fled the country. Oil spills at El Palito refinery in Carabobo state severely impacted marine fauna. High levels of poverty persisted and people lacked access to adequate food, water and healthcare. Violence against women persisted and abortion remained criminalized. There was no progress in ensuring the rights of LGBTI people. Illegal mining and violence threatened Indigenous Peoples’ rights in the Orinoco Mining Arc area. OHCHR staff were expelled from the country. The mandate of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela was renewed.

BACKGROUND

The presidential election in July was fraught with controversy. Opposition parties to the government of Nicolás Maduro faced numerous obstacles to participating in the election, including obstructed registration, arbitrary detention of their members and torture.

Despite international pressure on the electoral authorities to publish detailed electoral results, including from the EU and other states in the region, such as Brazil and Colombia, the government rejected any form of inquiry and continued persecuting political opponents.

The Supreme Tribunal of Justice validated the appointment of Nicolás Maduro for a new term as president. Presidential candidate Edmundo González Urrutia, who had contested the results, fled the country in September and was granted asylum in Spain.

In February, staff of the , the UN human rights office, OHCHR were expelled from the country after reporting on Rocio San Miguel’s disappearance. By the end of the year, a small team of OHCHR staff had been readmitted into Venezuela.

The mandate of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela was renewed for two years by the UN Human Rights Council, although the authorities had not granted access to the country by the end of the year. In October the mission published a report denouncing the continuation of a repression-state policy and crimes against humanity, with emphasis on the electoral and post-electoral crisis.

RIGHT TO LIFE

Between 28 July and 1 August, immediately after the presidential election, at least 24 people died as a result of the government's repression of protests against the appointment of Nicolás Maduro. Most of these killings could amount to extrajudicial executions. Two of the victims were children and one police officer was reportedly killed. All but one of the deaths resulted from gunshot wounds. Human rights organizations pointed at the Bolivarian National Guard, Bolivarian National Police, army and pro-government civilian armed groups known as "*colectivos*" as the perpetrators of these killings.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS

Since the announcement of the presidential election results, the authorities intensified their policy of repression, including widespread arbitrary detentions on political grounds, enforced disappearances and torture. According to official figures, more than 2,000 people were detained after 28 July. By October, the NGO Foro Penal confirmed more than 1,900 of the detentions, of which 129 were of children. By the end of the year, the government had freed 1,369 people and detained 15 others. However, hundreds of people remained arbitrarily deprived of their liberty, including three children.

These mass arrests were carried out without either warrants or those detained being caught committing an illegal act. Many detainees were subjected to enforced disappearance for several days. They were forced to have court-appointed lawyers who lacked independence. Families of the

detainees were denied information about their whereabouts for several days, including in cases where children were detained. The detainees were charged with generic terrorism-related offences and the hearings were conducted by counterterrorism courts, which lacked impartiality and independence. As of December, 221 women were still in detention.

Jesús Armas and Luis Tarbay, activists from the opposition political party Vente Venezuela, were arbitrarily arrested by unidentified individuals in Caracas on 11 and 24 December respectively. By the end of the year around 160 members of Vente Venezuela and 34 members of Primero Justicia, another opposition political party, were in detention or forcibly disappeared.

Between April and the end of the year, six members of Vente Venezuela requested asylum in the Argentinian embassy in the capital, Caracas. In August, after the government ceased diplomatic relations with Argentina, the Brazilian government took over the protection of the premises. By the end of the year, Venezuela had not granted safe conduct to the individuals to leave the country.

The government launched a new function in its mobile application VenApp to enable users to report government critics in the aftermath of the July presidential election. Denunciations via VenApp were supposedly responsible for many of the detentions after the election-related protests.¹

The Attorney General announced the arrest of a prosecutor on charges of "intentional delay or omission of functions" for refusing to prosecute detainees for terrorism crimes following post-election protests.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

The UN Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela reported allegations of torture of people detained before and after the presidential election.

Human rights organizations denounced torture and other ill-treatment in detention centres, including beatings, suffocation,

electric shocks and threats, and sexual violence against women.

Children arbitrarily detained after the election were tortured to force them to incriminate themselves by stating on video that they had participated in the protests, according to relatives. In many cases children were detained with adults.

Searches at a women's prison, the National Institute for Women's Guidance, were reported. Videos shared on social media in August, recorded from outside the detention centre, captured the sound of women screaming that they were being tortured. Human rights organizations reported allegations of ill-treatment in La Crisálida detention centre, where women were detained after the post-election protests.

INHUMANE DETENTION CONDITIONS

Prison conditions continued to deteriorate. The Venezuelan Prisons Observatory reported that inmates in Tocarón prison received only two glasses of water per day. Police cells continued to be used as prisons and, by September, overall prison overcrowding had exceeded 184% of capacity.

Protests continued to take place in pretrial detention centres due to procedural delays, overcrowding and lack of healthcare, according to NGOs.

IMPUNITY

Impunity for human rights violations and crimes under international law remained widespread. A report from the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela expressed deep concerns about the state's lack of willingness to prosecute those suspected of criminal responsibility.

According to the civil society organization Venezuelan Programme for Education Action on Human Rights, six officers of the Bolivarian National Police Special Actions Force were sentenced in June for participating in an extrajudicial execution five years previously. There were still no convictions for 95% of killings during peaceful demonstrations between 2014 and 2024.

Venezuela was ranked lowest globally (142nd) in the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2024.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

The Appeals Chamber of the ICC rejected the Venezuelan authorities' appeal and confirmed the "decision authorizing the resumption of the investigation" into alleged crimes against humanity committed since at least 2014.

Despite the lack of progress, the ICC Office of the Prosecutor inaugurated a new in-country office in Caracas "focused on complementarity activities and engagement with the national authorities".

In September, a federal appeals court in Argentina ordered the arrest of President Nicolás Maduro and minister of interior Diosdado Cabello, among others, for alleged crimes against humanity committed since 2014.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Throughout the year protests demanding economic and social rights occurred across the country. According to the Venezuelan Observatory on Social Conflict, between 29 and 30 July, 915 protests were registered, of which 138 were violently repressed. The presence of *colectivos* attacking and threatening protesters was recorded.

In the weeks before and after the presidential election, the authorities increasingly criticized demonstrations to generate fear and crush dissent.

At least 12 journalists were arbitrarily detained and attacks continued against independent media. The NGO Public Space registered 507 violations of the right to freedom of expression from January to September. The government continued shutting down radio stations and hindering access to social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter). The authorities reportedly continued hacking and phishing the Instagram accounts of journalists and citizens.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders remained seriously at risk. Parliament passed legislation allowing the government to control, monitor, and ultimately close down human rights NGOs. The law entered into force in December imposing deadlines on NGOs to register and fulfil the requirements of the law in order to be able to work in the country legally.

Human rights defender Javier Tarazona remained in detention. In February, human rights defender Rocío San Miguel was forcibly disappeared for three days alongside members of her family. She was later charged with terrorism, denied access to legal representation, and remained in detention at the end of the year. Activist, human rights defender and journalist Carlos Julio Rojas was detained in April and remained in detention at year's end.

Three human rights defenders – Kennedy Tejada, Edward Ocariz and Henry Gómez – were detained after the election. Kennedy Tejada remained in detention at the end of the year.

The NGO Centre for Defenders and Justice recorded 979 attacks and security incidents against human rights defenders during 2024, an increase compared with 524 such events in 2023.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

More than 7.89 million people had fled the country by the end of the year.

The CERD Committee denounced the administrative detention of refugees and migrants in Venezuela pending deportation without access to legal assistance or a procedure to access international protection. Refugees and migrants in the country also faced administrative, economic and geographical barriers to access their personal documentation.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Despite requests from civil society organizations, Venezuela again failed to sign its accession to the Escazú Agreement, which aims to guarantee the rights to information, public participation and justice in environmental matters.

Frequent oil spills at El Palito refinery in Carabobo state severely impacted marine fauna. The lack of environmental public policies to address the spills and the opacity of information from the authorities was highlighted by activists and affected groups.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Venezuela's humanitarian crisis continued and economic, social and cultural rights were systematically violated. Poverty levels increased and the situation was aggravated by high fuel costs and scarcity of electricity and drinking water.

Electricity supply failure persisted. According to press reports, a blackout in August left 80% of the country without electricity; some areas were without power for 10 hours. There was no official technical report on the reasons for the blackout.

The CERD Committee reported high pupil dropout rates and a lack of qualified schoolteachers in its review on Venezuela in August.

Right to health

The CERD Committee denounced the limited access to high-quality healthcare, mainly in rural areas or areas with a predominantly Indigenous population.

Treatment and access to health services for those suffering chronic diseases remained extremely precarious. The National Hospitals Survey, carried out in July by the civil society organization Doctors for Health, recorded that 57% of the monitored health centres lacked a regular water supply in critical areas such as emergency, intensive care and operating rooms. Scarcity of medical equipment and supplies was also reported in hospitals, with shortages of approximately 35%. People living with HIV continued to face scarcity of the resources necessary for their treatment, including diagnostic and infection control tests and breast milk substitutes for HIV-exposed infants.

Health-sector NGOs warned of the need to expand the coverage of vaccinations under the Expanded Plan of Immunization, and to guarantee and strengthen the Global Plan of Action published by the Pan American

Health Organization, to prevent the reappearance of preventable diseases.

Right to food

By December a basic food basket for a household of five cost the equivalent of USD 498.47, while the monthly minimum wage was only USD 2.36, leaving the majority of the population facing severe food insecurity.

In February, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food visited Venezuela. He reported that nearly 82% of the population were living in poverty and 53% were exposed to extreme poverty with insufficient income to purchase a basic food basket. He reported that people were having to reduce portion sizes, skip meals and buy less nutritious food items as a result of poverty. He also stated that women were disproportionately affected by food poverty since they were often the caregivers for their families and communities while working for a wage. Some women resorted to exchanging sex for food. Pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls were particularly at risk of undernourishment.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

No progress was made in improving sexual and reproductive rights, and abortion remained criminalized. The humanitarian emergency in Venezuela continued to obstruct women's and girls' access to sexual and reproductive rights. According to figures from the NGO Network of Women Peacebuilders, 40% of women of reproductive age did not use contraceptive methods due to the high cost and lack of access.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

LGBTI rights continued to be neglected. The Venezuelan Observatory of LGBTIQ+ Violence reported that 68 LGBTIQ+ women had been victims of discrimination or violence.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

During the first half of the year, the Centre for Justice and Peace documented 58 femicides and 27 attempted femicides. The Network of Women Peacebuilders reported that 71% of

women had suffered psychological violence and 41% physical violence in 2024.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights expressed concern about the ongoing impacts of illegal mining on the life, health and survival of the Yanomami People, specifically in the Orinoco Mining Arc. The commission warned that Indigenous Peoples were facing an acute health crisis due to water contamination by mercury in the Amazon region. This impacted hunting and fishing and as a consequence increased malnutrition.

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1. "Venezuela: Tech companies set dangerous precedent with app for reporting anti-government protesters", 7 August †

VIET NAM

Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Human rights defenders, journalists and people detained for political reasons faced torture and inhumane prison conditions. The government used counterterrorism laws against activists and Montagnards from the Dak Lak region, resulting in arbitrary arrests and detentions. New laws were introduced to police social media and further silence dissent. High levels of pollution persisted. Death sentences continued to be imposed and there was heightened concern over an intensifying crackdown on civil society space.

BACKGROUND

Four different presidents during the year reflected the internal tumult within the Communist Party. A concurrent anti-corruption drive targeted high-profile political as well as business figures. Viet Nam's human rights record was examined by the UN. A deadly attack on two police posts in Dak Lak region in June 2023 elicited a furious response from the government in March. The Montagnard Indigenous Peoples