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Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Situation of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 57/36, the present report is focused on the latest developments relating to economic, social and cultural rights and the right to a healthy environment, the rule of law, accountability and civic space and the extent of the implementation of recommendations previously made to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.



I. Introduction and methodology

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 57/36, in which the Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to submit a comprehensive report on the situation of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela containing a detailed assessment of the implementation of the recommendations made in previous reports for consideration at its fifty-ninth session.
2. The report covers the period from 1 May 2024 to 30 April 2025. It is focused on the latest developments relating to economic, social and cultural rights and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, civic space and the rule of law. Those developments are considered from an intersectional perspective and through a gender lens. The report is based on information gathered by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), including through interviews with victims and witnesses and meetings with government officials and civil society organizations.
3. The findings in the present report are based on an analysis of information gathered and corroborated in compliance with OHCHR methodology. OHCHR exercised due diligence to assess the credibility and reliability of sources and cross-checked the information. It sought informed consent from interviewees and took appropriate measures to protect their identities and to ensure confidentiality. OHCHR also assessed the information as well as domestic legislation in the light of international human rights norms and standards.
4. OHCHR noted efforts made towards the implementation of previously issued recommendations. The gaps and priorities with regard to those recommendations are emphasized in the report.
5. Since February 2024, when the Government suspended its implementation of the letter of understanding signed with OHCHR and requested that OHCHR personnel leave the country, the Office has maintained a dialogue with the authorities with a view to re-establishing its presence in order to discharge its full mandate under the letter. In November 2024, the Government agreed to resume its cooperation with OHCHR under the letter of understanding with immediate effect. At the time of the drafting of the report, however, only one international staff member of the OHCHR country team remains in the country, with the remainder of the international team continuing its work remotely. Despite assurances from the authorities on several occasions that more staff would be allowed to return, and following a number of formal requests made by OHCHR, at the time of writing no additional visas have been granted for the full return of staff. OHCHR remains committed to continuing its cooperation with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the basis of a clear framework. Regrettably, cooperation by the Government remains at a standstill and a new framework for future operations in the country has yet to be agreed.

II. Economic, social and cultural rights

6. During the reporting period, people in the country continued to face significant challenges in access to health services, decent work and an adequate standard of living. The Government maintained its social programmes to overcome those challenges. A new phase of heightened inflation and looming sectoral sanctions and overcompliance contributed to impeding those efforts. The absence of public financial data on sanctions prevented a comprehensive assessment of their impact on the human rights of the Venezuelan population.
7. The restrictions under general licences No. 41A and No. 41B of the Department of the Treasury of the United States of America, announced in March 2025, combined with the reciprocal and secondary tariffs on Venezuelan exports, reduced even further the availability of public economic and financial resources¹ available to provide basic services to the population, disproportionately affecting those in the poorer sectors of society.

¹ See <https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/the-impact-of-the-new-us-oil-tariffs-on-venezuela>.

8. The suspension of humanitarian funding by some foreign donors exacerbated the challenges in access to healthcare, food and education, among other needs.

9. On 3 December 2024, the National Assembly approved a bill on the national budget for 2025. According to official declarations, 77.6 per cent of the allocated resources were apportioned to investment and social development, including infrastructure, education, healthcare, housing and security. OHCHR notes that the bill has not been disclosed and that the national budget has not been made public since 2017.

10. Power cuts and shortages in the potable water supply were recurrent across the country, with the States of Zulia, Mérida and Falcón reportedly the most affected. Between May 2024 and January 2025, the average number of hours per day without electricity was 14.15 and the average number of power failures was 47,812 per month.² The extent of the shortages and cuts have had an impact on daily life and economic activities, disproportionately affecting persons from lower-income backgrounds.

11. From September 2024 onward, schools resumed operations across the country, with close to 6 million students enrolled at different levels, according to figures from the Ministry of Education.³ The Venezuelan authorities announced the refurbishment of some 2,000 school facilities and efforts to ensure a return to a standardized teaching schedule. In 2024, student attendance remained a challenge, however, with irregular attendance at school estimated at 48 per cent as a result of, among other factors, the absence of teachers, the suspension of classes and a lack of economic resources for students and their families.⁴

12. Universities continued to face challenges to safeguarding their academic freedom, affecting the rights to education and to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications. Reportedly, universities received only 4 per cent of their requested budgets, affecting salary payments. Board elections, including at the University of the Andes and the University of Carabobo, remained suspended.⁵ Allegations of intimidation and harassment, including by State officials, against students and staff following the presidential elections were also reported.

A. Rights to work, to just and favourable conditions at work and to social security

13. On 1 May 2024, the integral minimum income (a monthly direct cash transfer) was raised from \$60 to \$90 per worker. Yet that amount, combined with the legal monthly minimum wage (currently 130 bolívares),⁶ which has not changed since March 2022, and the monthly food bonus (\$40 per worker) were deemed insufficient to cover the needs of the monthly food basket, the cost of which is estimated to exceed \$526 for a family of five.⁷ Demands for improved working conditions and dignified salaries continued to be a major source of protest in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, with 604 protests registered between May 2024 and January 2025.⁸

14. On 29 May 2024, the authorities announced the creation of the Ministry for Older Adults to facilitate the implementation of public policies and measures to guarantee a dignified life for older persons.

² Information gathered from the monthly reports of the Monitor de Servicios Básicos for the reporting period.

³ See <https://www.mppe.gob.ve/noticias/2024/11/27/contin%C3%BAa-en-crecimiento-matr%C3%ADcula-escolar-supervisi%C3%B3n-escolar> (in Spanish).

⁴ HumVenezuela, “Reporte final de los diagnósticos comunitarios, 2024”, pp. 10 and 11 (in Spanish).

⁵ A/HRC/56/63, para. 44.

⁶ Approximately \$1.50, according to the exchange rate as at 29 April 2025.

⁷ See <https://diarioelnacionalista.com/2025/04/21/el-coste-de-la-canasta-alimentaria-en-venezuela-se-ubico-en-52683-dolares> (in Spanish).

⁸ Estimates extracted from the Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social.

15. OHCHR received allegations of the suspension of teachers' salaries and dismissals of public workers without formal notification and, in most cases, with no compensation. OHCHR documented the cases of five teachers whose salaries were suspended and other allegations, including retaliation against individuals for protesting against working conditions and demanding a dignified living wage.

16. On 17 March 2025, the Governing Body of the International Labour Office urged the Government to accelerate the implementation of its commitments made in connection with the 2019 recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning the Minimum Wage-Fixing Machinery Convention, 1928 (No. 26), the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), of ILO. The Governing Body also called for immediate steps to facilitate the presence of the ILO Special Adviser on Social Dialogue in the country and invited the Government to convene the fifth Social Dialogue Forum at the earliest opportunity.⁹

B. Right to health

17. Persons across the country continued to report a lack of essential medication and equipment in public healthcare facilities. Sectoral sanctions and overcompliance, in conjunction with reductions in humanitarian funding from key international donors, exacerbated those challenges. Organ transplant patients reported a lack of vital immunosuppressant drugs in pharmacies of the Venezuelan Social Security Institute and their very high cost in commercial pharmacies. Patients with cystic fibrosis and their relatives reported that State support for access to part of the treatment ended in May 2024, despite the existence of the National Cystic Fibrosis Programme of the Ministry of Health. Pensioners and retirees continued to report obstacles in access to adequate healthcare because of small pensions and the high cost of essential items.

18. Certain hospitals and clinics across the country reported reduced availability of medical equipment. Between January and July 2024, 91 per cent of hospitals surveyed requested patients to bring their own supplies in order to be admitted for surgery.¹⁰ A lack of public information prevented a full assessment of the scale and severity of the shortage, including the impact on the mortality rate.

19. The Ministry of Health, with the support of the United Nations, continued efforts to strengthen education on sexual and reproductive healthcare. They included the publication of the first national guidelines for sexual and reproductive healthcare for persons with disabilities and steps to amplify the reach of the comprehensive sexuality education programme, including through consultations with Indigenous communities.

20. The realization of sexual and reproductive rights continued to face significant challenges. Estimates indicated that at least 40 per cent of women and adolescent girls of reproductive age did not use contraceptives. The contributing factors were many, including the cost of contraceptives, which oscillated between \$2 and \$23, making them unattainable for women and girls from low-income households, and a lack of knowledge and education on sexual and reproductive health. Fifty-three per cent of women and girls reportedly suffered from obstetric violence in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela when giving birth, disproportionately affecting those from low-income households.¹¹

21. Legislation on abortion continued to be restrictive. Abortion was criminalized even in the event of rape, incest or severe fetal impairment, despite the recommendations made by human rights mechanisms and OHCHR.¹² Safe abortion and post-abortion care was also

⁹ See document GB.353/INS/8(Rev.1)/Decision.

¹⁰ Encuesta Nacional de Hospitales, "Mid-year report 2024" (November 2024), p. 7.

¹¹ See <https://ipysvenezuela.org/tejiendo-redes/informe/informe-2024-el-alto-precio-de-la-desigualdad> (in Spanish).

¹² A/HRC/48/19, para. 67 (l); A/HRC/53/54, para. 73 (d); A/HRC/56/63, para. 80 (f); and CEDAW/C/VEN/CO/9, para. 38 (a).

limited, causing irreversible harm in some cases and putting women's and adolescent girls' lives at risk.

22. The authorities made efforts to support inclusive healthcare outreach, including by sustaining community-based programmes for diagnosis and treatment across Indigenous areas in Bolívar, Amazonas, Sucre and Delta Amacuro States. Despite those efforts, OHCHR received information indicating that health challenges persisted for Indigenous persons, particularly with regard to exposure to malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. The lack of medicine and medical supplies and of routes and transport further strained local capacity to respond effectively to outbreaks.

23. OHCHR received concerning reports on maternal morbidity and death in the Indigenous Ye'kwana and Sanemá territories. Allegedly, only three medical doctors were available for a population of 7,448 and the 20 community healthcare centres in the territory lacked medicine, basic materials and equipment, including diagnostic equipment. Patients reported difficult access to emergency services, which could often be hundreds of kilometres away, with no available transportation.

III. Right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

24. The reporting period was marked by significant challenges regarding the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, including the loss of the country's last glacier, La Corona, despite sustained efforts to preserve it. In 2024, the Ministry for Ecosocialism developed a national reforestation plan and a national biodiversity conservation strategy aimed at halting environmental degradation.

25. Civil society organizations have denounced the opacity of governmental conservation policies and actions and the threats and harassment against environmental rights defenders by both State and non-State actors. OHCHR urges the authorities to take steps to ensure access to information and meaningful participation in environmental decision-making and to adopt effective measures to protect environmental defenders, including through the ratification of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement) in accordance with the recommendation made previously.¹³

26. In September 2024, the creation of a technical working group under the Ministry for Ecosocialism and the State-owned oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela S.A.*, was announced. The group would evaluate actions to control and address oil spills. While that was an important step and in line with the previous recommendations of OHCHR, oil spills continued throughout the reporting period, including in Lake Maracaibo, where OHCHR corroborated, through satellite imagery, oil traces covering more than 2,198 km².

27. Fishing communities in Falcón State reported the contamination of water and the local marine ecosystem from oil spills allegedly stemming from a nearby damaged pipeline. That affected food security and the overall livelihoods of those communities. OHCHR was also able to corroborate traces of oil in Golfo Triste covering 195 km².

IV. Rights of Indigenous Peoples

28. In August 2024, during its review of the combined twenty-second to twenty-fourth periodic reports of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination highlighted the lack of updated population census data since 2011, an issue that was also raised by OHCHR. In its concluding observations, the Committee noted that the absence of disaggregated data and socioeconomic indicators prevented an assessment of the realization and enjoyment by Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent and other

¹³ [A/HRC/48/19](#), para. 67 (k).

ethnic groups of the rights set out in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.¹⁴

29. OHCHR continued to note the lack of progress on the process of demarcating the territories of Indigenous Peoples, despite its previous recommendations.¹⁵ Indigenous Pemón authorities reported that no title had been issued for the majority of Pemón territory since their request to the National Commission for the Demarcation of the Habitat and Lands of Indigenous Peoples and Communities in 2011. Similarly, Indigenous Ye'kwana and Sanemá of the Caura River Basin reported that the request for a collective land title that they had submitted in 2002 had remained at a standstill since 2006.

30. OHCHR observed that the lack of demarcation of Indigenous Peoples' territories contributed to their exposure to illegal mining activities and to non-State armed groups and criminal organizations. Allegations of the forced displacement of Indigenous communities continued to be made and clashes between Indigenous Peoples and persons settling in areas with mines were reported, as were environmental degradation and water contamination.

31. OHCHR received allegations that illegal mining activities continued in Indigenous territories in Amazonas State, including in Yapacana National Park, despite its having been declared "free of mining" in 2023 following military operations. Illegal gold mining in Ye'kwana territories in Amazonas State allegedly led to violent clashes between the Indigenous communities and individuals connected to the mines. On 4 September 2024, a Ye'kwana territorial guardian and environmental defender died of injuries sustained in an attack by unidentified individuals. OHCHR is concerned about the delay in the investigations into previously reported killings and other violations against Indigenous Peoples.¹⁶

32. OHCHR noted efforts by the judicial authorities in certain territories to address challenges regarding coordination between the ordinary and the Indigenous justice systems and the differences between their respective competencies. That was an important step, in alignment with recommendations formulated by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,¹⁷ to guarantee Indigenous Peoples access to justice and their right to self-determination. Challenges persisted, however, including regarding the allocation of funds for the Indigenous tribunals, preventing the full implementation of those efforts and the realization of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

V. Civic and democratic space

33. During the reporting period, OHCHR noted increased restrictions on civic space, including the criminalization and arbitrary detention of people expressing dissent, such as protesters and bystanders at protests, and 58 members of the political opposition. Enrique Márquez, a presidential candidate who challenged the decision by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice confirming the results of the presidential election of 28 July 2024, was arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared in January 2025. OHCHR documented the arbitrary detention of 10 journalists, 8 human rights defenders and 6 humanitarian workers and limitations on freedom of expression and opinion. In August 2024, the authorities reactivated raids and arrests under the so-called Operación Tun Tun to detain presumed protesters and dissenters.

34. In view of the contested results of the presidential election, the Secretary-General called for electoral disputes to be settled peacefully, with complete transparency, and encouraged the timely publication of the election results and a breakdown by polling station.¹⁸

35. Since 29 July 2024, at least 75 men and 41 women, including human rights defenders, journalists, trade union members and leaders, poll watchers and politicians belonging to

¹⁴ CERD/C/VEN/CO/22-24, paras. 8 and 9.

¹⁵ A/HRC/44/54, para. 71 (s); A/HRC/48/19, para. 66 (i); and A/HRC/53/54, para. 73 (a).

¹⁶ A/HRC/50/59, para. 9; A/HRC/53/54, para. 29; and A/HRC/56/63, paras. 31 and 75.

¹⁷ CERD/VEN/CO/22-24, paras. 36 and 37.

¹⁸ United Nations, "Venezuela: Guterres calls for 'complete transparency' following disputed presidential election", 29 July 2024.

opposition parties, have felt compelled to leave the country or go into hiding for fear of persecution. Those individuals reported reprisals, including intimidation by various authorities of their family members in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

36. From May to July 2024, in the lead-up to the presidential election, OHCHR received allegations of reprisals against persons who had direct or indirect links with the election campaigns of opposition parties, including 99 allegations of harassment and intimidation, 64 of surveillance and threats, including death threats, and 30 of unlawful closures of businesses or confiscation of property. In the same period, OHCHR verified 27 cases of the arbitrary detention of opposition members, supporters and service providers to opposition party campaigns on charges of terrorism, association to commit crimes, incitement to hatred or conspiracy.

37. Both ahead of and on election day, OHCHR received reports of limited availability and adequacy of information and materials in inclusive languages for persons with visual or hearing impairments or in Indigenous languages. OHCHR recalls that States are obligated to take all measures necessary to ensure that every citizen has the effective right to participate equally in public affairs, and to eliminate laws, regulations and practices that directly or indirectly discriminate against citizens with respect to that right.

38. Sexist and anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric in public media by State officials, including high-ranking officials, was reportedly used to discredit supporters and members of opposition parties. Hate speech targeting women, LGBTQI+ persons and other groups contributed to eroding the right to participate in public affairs without discrimination.

39. After parliamentary and regional elections were announced for May 2025, OHCHR observed that the National Electoral Council had yet to disclose the electoral and campaign calendar and voting districts. OHCHR also noted that no guarantees had been established to ensure parity in the nomination and selection processes for decision-making positions at the parliamentary and regional levels.¹⁹

40. Protests broke out across the country on 29 and 30 July 2024, immediately following the presidential election. Most of the protests were peaceful, although instances of violence were reported in certain parts of the country. One civil society organization reported 915 citizen protests nationwide on those dates, 138 of which were repressed by State security in coordination with *colectivos* (armed civilian groups supporting the ruling party).²⁰ In the context of the post-electoral protests, OHCHR received reports of the unnecessary and disproportionate use of force by law enforcement officials along with violence by *colectivos*. Official data listed 28 deaths in the context of the protests, mostly of protestors as well as two members of the Bolivarian National Guard. Reports indicated the use of tear gas and warning shots by State security forces, both police and the military. OHCHR recalls its previous recommendation to prevent the disproportionate use of force during protests.²¹

41. Following the presidential elections, public officials, including from the security forces, disseminated, via social networks, videos, photos and the personal data of those detained, including adolescents, exacerbating fears among the general population. The authorities promoted the use of a mobile application to facilitate the denunciation of persons deemed “fascists” or “terrorists” for their presumed involvement in the protests. Agents of the security forces carried out stop-and-search operations, arbitrarily inspecting phones for any evidence of links with the opposition or perceived participation in protests. That activity allegedly led to detentions and extortion under the threat of detention.

42. On 15 August 2024, the authorities announced the detention of over 2,400 people on terrorism charges and for attempting to destabilize the country in the post-electoral protests. Those detained included women, Indigenous persons, adolescents and persons with disabilities. Despite the phased conditional release of some detainees starting in September

¹⁹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 40 (2024), para. 26 (e).

²⁰ See <https://www.observatoriodedeconflictos.org.ve/comunicados-2/comunicado-915-protestas-postelectorales-138-reprimidas-durante-29-y-30-de-julio> (in Spanish).

²¹ A/HRC/41/18, para. 81 (h).

2024, the arrests had an overall chilling effect, contributing to restricting the rights to freedom of assembly and expression.

43. OHCHR is concerned that, despite recommendations not to adopt it in its current form, the Act on the Control, Regularization, Operations and Financing of Non-Governmental and Related Organizations (known as the NGO Act) came into force in November 2024.²² The expedited approval on 28 November 2024 of the Organic Law of the Liberator Simón Bolívar against the Imperialist Blockade and in Defence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the repeat tabling on the 2025 legislative agenda of the Bill on International Cooperation also compounded concerns about the risk of arbitrary application as a result of the broad and vague definitions contained within the legislation.

44. Under the NGO Act, non-governmental organizations operating in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela are required to register with the National Registry of Non-Governmental Organizations, adding to other bureaucratic processes previously imposed on civil society organizations. Many organizations have denounced the lack of clarity regarding the procedures and expressed concern about the perceived arbitrary application of the law, including fee requests and other requirements not stipulated within it.

45. On 30 March 2025, measures adopted by the Superintendency of Banking Sector Institutions were published in the *Official Gazette* regarding the oversight of non-governmental organizations, imposing onerous administrative requirements on civil society organizations that expanded control over the funding and spending of non-governmental organizations. The measures could be impossible to comply with for some organizations, resulting in the closure of their bank accounts. Such administrative measures contravene recommendations formulated by the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force in its review of the country.²³

46. Some Venezuelan non-governmental organizations have reportedly ceased operations amid allegations of surveillance, persecution and acts of reprisal, including targeted arrests. The closure or suspension of those organizations contributed to a further deterioration of the civic and democratic space and of the protection of marginalized populations.

47. On 13 August 2024, the authorities announced the creation of a national and international commission against fascism, hatred and violence, while reinitiating discussions on the proposed bill against fascism, neofascism and similar expressions. Despite the postponement of the discussion of the bill, OHCHR is concerned that it has contributed to restricting civic space, exacerbating concerns as to its potential arbitrary application to limit freedom of expression and opinion, particularly of perceived opposition or dissenting voices.

48. On 4 October 2024, despite calls for their full release, the appeals court confirmed the 16-year sentence, under alternative measures to detention, against six trade unionists, who had been conditionally released in December 2023 after having been detained in July 2022 under the Organic Law against Organized Crime and the Financing of Terrorism on charges of conspiracy and criminal association.²⁴

49. Both before and during the presidential elections, OHCHR observed undue restrictions on the right to freedom of expression and other human rights violations. They included further closures of radio stations, the detention and enforced disappearance of journalists and media workers and the restriction of access to websites. One civil society organization reported the blocking of over 60 websites during the second half of 2024. Social media applications, including X and Signal, and virtual private networks were also reportedly blocked during that period, without judicial orders.

50. The authorities, civil society organizations and Internet users reported incidents of website hacking, apparently aimed at stirring political tensions during and after the presidential election. Social media and other online platforms were used to intimidate,

²² A/HRC/53/54, para. 69.

²³ Ibid. and A/HRC/56/63, para. 49.

²⁴ A/HRC/53/54, para. 15; and A/HRC/56/63, para. 35.

stigmatize and enable the detention of presumed dissenting persons, including through phishing, spreading fear among users.

51. On 6 August 2024, the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela stated that the National Commission for Telecommunications would launch an investigation into the circulation of “hate” messages on WhatsApp targeting the presidency and its party. The announcement of the investigation exacerbated fears and self-censorship. OHCHR reiterates the concerns expressed by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination that the country’s legislation regarding hatred and peaceful coexistence lacked precision in its definition of what constituted incitement to hatred and should not be used to limit freedom of expression.²⁵

52. Since 29 July 2024, OHCHR has confirmed the arbitrary cancellation of the passports of 19 human rights defenders, 8 political figures from the opposition, 4 journalists and 1 humanitarian worker. Sixteen of those cases involved women. One human rights defender, Yendri Velásquez, was arbitrarily detained while travelling to participate in the consideration of the periodic report of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. OHCHR joins that Committee’s call for measures to ensure that human rights defenders and civil society leaders are not subjected to arbitrary restrictions that would prevent them from attending and participating in meetings and activities organized by international human rights mechanisms,²⁶ recalling that States have an obligation to prevent and end reprisals against individuals who cooperate with the United Nations and its human rights mechanisms.

VI. Rule of law and accountability

53. On 15 December 2024, 28,374 communal judges were elected following a reform to the Organic Law of the Special Jurisdiction of Communal Justice, which replaces the administration of the justice system at the community level across 4,840 circuits, including those administering the justice system in 353 Indigenous communities.

54. Following the presidential elections, OHCHR observed an increase in the number of violations of the rights to life and personal integrity, liberty and security and the right to a fair trial and due process. Monitoring indicated challenges for victims seeking justice and reparation, coupled with a fear of reprisals, which contributed to the underreporting of such cases.

A. Administration of justice and the right to due process

55. The nomination process for the representatives of the bodies constituting the country’s civil branch of government, namely the Attorney General, the Ombudsperson and the General Comptroller, took place on 31 October 2024. A prosecutor who had submitted her candidacy for the position of Attorney General faced disciplinary proceedings, resulting in her removal from office on grounds that included her participation in the nomination process. OHCHR is concerned that that may constitute an act of retaliation against the prosecutor and an example of a lack of impartiality within the disciplinary process.

56. Persons whose detention was linked to the electoral context were charged with crimes of terrorism and other related charges. OHCHR notes with concern the increased application of the country’s counter-terrorism legislation, which contains offences that do not comply with the principles of legality and legal certainty, and the widespread use of special courts against terrorism, including for adolescents.

57. Most people detained under terrorism-related offences were subjected to virtual hearings that did not comply with international standards on the right to a fair trial, and to faulty communications systems that negatively affected their right to defence.²⁷ Following

²⁵ CERD/C/VEN/CO/22-24, para. 13.

²⁶ Ibid., para. 7 (b).

²⁷ A/79/296, para. 42.

the presidential elections, OHCHR received information about 278 cases prosecuted in special counter-terrorism courts, in which the accused persons were not allowed to appoint counsel of their choice but, rather, were assigned public defenders. The latter provided scarce information to the accused persons and their relatives. OHCHR had previously raised concerns about the incompatibility of the proceedings carried out by such courts with the rights to a fair trial and defence.²⁸

B. Detention and the right to liberty and security of person

58. The authorities announced the conditional and sequenced release of 2,006 persons following their detention after the presidential election. Civil society organizations corroborated 1,500 of those releases, including of 191 women and 173 adolescents. Those released and their relatives were reportedly forced to sign a pledge to maintain secrecy regarding their cases and were requested to report to court in Caracas, despite living in other states, implying further strain on their financial resources to travel.

59. OHCHR received information about the detention and enforced disappearance of 28 foreign nationals of at least 13 countries, including one woman, three of whom have been released. To date, none have been allowed to communicate with or granted access to their consular authorities.²⁹

60. The management of the two State maximum security detention facilities in Caracas, known as Helicoide and Boleita, was reportedly transferred from the Ministry of Penitentiary Services to the Bolivarian National Service for Intelligence and the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence, respectively, despite a 2021 decree providing for the transfer of the custody of persons deprived of liberty to the Ministry for Penitentiary Services.³⁰ Reports also indicated that the Rodeo 1 detention centre would be under the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence. The shift in detention centre management to the civilian and military intelligence services reflects a setback in the implementation of the previous OHCHR recommendation to transfer all persons detained in the premises of intelligence services to official detention centres under civilian authority.³¹

61. The scale of transfers between detention centres and across different states reportedly increased following the presidential election, including to the Tocarón and Tocuyito detention centres in Aragua and Carabobo States, respectively. Relatives of detainees and their lawyers were reportedly not notified of the transfers and OHCHR received allegations of ill-treatment and torture in the new centres or during the transfers and of the denial of communication with and visits from the inmates' relatives and lawyers.³²

62. OHCHR also received reports indicating that prisoners were denied access to medical care and medication and lacked access to food and to water, for both consumption and hygiene needs, including for women, persons with disabilities, older persons and persons with medical conditions. Those circumstances appeared to be worse for people detained under terrorism-related charges.

63. In different detention centres across the country, including in pretrial detention centres, inmates protested against the conditions, including through hunger strikes. Their demands concerned food, water and hygiene and procedural challenges, such as those linked to visits by and communication with relatives. One nationwide strike took place in June 2024, in both penitentiary and pretrial detention centres, which ended following commitments made by the newly appointed Ministry for Penitentiary Services. OHCHR recalls its previous recommendations to ensure that conditions of detention comply with international standards.³³

²⁸ [A/HRC/44/54](#), para. 14; and [A/HRC/56/63](#), para. 64.

²⁹ Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 35 (2014), para. 58. See also the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, ratified by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in 1965.

³⁰ Decree No. 4.610 of 12 May 2021.

³¹ [A/HRC/44/20](#), para. 86 (g).

³² [A/HRC/56/63](#), para. 55.

³³ *Ibid.*, para. 80 (l).

64. OHCHR has closely monitored the cases of 75 persons deprived of liberty suffering from health conditions, including persons with disabilities. OHCHR documented the deaths of three detainees, following the deterioration of their health, reportedly due to a lack of timely and adequate healthcare and assistance. Investigations into those deaths should be conducted by an independent and impartial body and should be thorough, effective and transparent, in line with the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death.

65. OHCHR has monitored the cases of eight individuals who continue to be arbitrarily detained in the absence of the issuance of release orders at the completion of their sentences. In at least four additional cases, including one from 2021, the individuals about to be released or who had already been released faced new charges based on the same facts on which they had been convicted, thus violating the principle of double jeopardy.

66. At least 81 people in pretrial detention eligible for alternative measures to detention under article 230 of the Organic Criminal Code remained in detention, including 66 already highlighted in the previous reporting period.³⁴

C. Detention and gender-based violence

67. OHCHR monitored the cases of 32 women and 4 girls detained during the reporting period, including 2 pregnant women. OHCHR is concerned about reports regarding the lack of access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and services in some detention centres. In one detention centre, female inmates were denied menstrual hygiene kits, allegedly as retaliation against their relatives' complaints about the conditions of detention.

68. On 29 August 2024, the Immediate Response and Custody Group of the Ministry for Penitentiary Services, along with security forces from the Bolivarian National Guard and the Bolivarian National Police Force, conducted a raid at the National Female Orientation Institute, the women's detention centre in Miranda State. Civil society organizations and relatives of detainees have reported the use of tear gas inside the detention centre. Likewise, allegations have emerged of ill-treatment, including physical assaults and degrading treatment during body searches by security officers.

69. OHCHR received further reports of discrimination and violence against LGBTIQI+ inmates, including adolescents. Incidents included being forced to carry out chores for other inmates. OHCHR is also concerned about reports that transgender persons were assigned to detention centres according to their sex at birth, exposing them further to protection risks while in custody.

70. Persons detained in the context of electoral developments were allowed visits only from female relatives. Such measures place a differentiated burden on women family members, who often must travel far to take medicine and food to their relatives, and increases the risk of isolating detainees without female relatives.

71. The degrading treatment of inmates' female relatives, including a child, during visits was reported as part of frisking exercises and strip searches. OHCHR recalls that strip and body-cavity searches should be conducted only if absolutely necessary, in a manner that respects the dignity and privacy of the individual, and be conducted by trained staff of the same gender, in a private setting.³⁵

D. Right to life and personal integrity

72. OHCHR documented 84 cases of enforced disappearance (62 men, 15 women and 7 adolescents) for periods ranging from 1 to 159 days. OHCHR is concerned that the whereabouts of another 36 persons, including 3 women, remain unknown. Forty-one of the

³⁴ A/HRC/56/63, para. 58. See also A/HRC/50/59, paras. 22 and 48; and A/HRC/53/54, paras. 38 and 73 (i).

³⁵ United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), rules 50 and 52.

documented cases of enforced disappearance appeared to have been committed by members of the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service, 41 by members of the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence, 21 by other police or military actors and 17 by unidentified perpetrators. In addition, OHCHR was informed of up to 18 people who, despite their whereabouts being known, remained incommunicado with regard to their families and legal representatives.

73. OHCHR documented 32 individuals subjected to torture and ill-treatment during the reporting period, including 4 women, 1 of whom was pregnant, 15 adolescents (1 girl) and 3 persons with disabilities. In 20 cases, the torture and ill-treatment appeared to have been committed by members of the military or military and civilian intelligence agencies, and in 8 cases, by police officers; in 5 cases, responsibility remained unidentified. All of the victims had been detained in the period following the presidential election.

74. Different forms of ill-treatment, including incommunicado detention, reportedly also occurred in reprisal for denouncing conditions of detention. The Rodeo I detention centre authorities prohibited family visits and communication for some inmates for a period of 12 weeks, following their participation in a hunger strike on 12 December 2024. In the Fuerte Guaicaipuro detention centre, in Miranda State, five inmates were reportedly subjected to physical ill-treatment and incommunicado detention for several weeks following their transfer from the Yare III detention centre in January 2025, after they had denounced its conditions.

75. OHCHR noted ongoing security operations in different parts of the country, in which cruel and inhuman treatment and the use of force resulting in arbitrary deprivation of life were allegedly committed by State officials. OHCHR is concerned that an overall climate of fear among the general population has led to the underreporting of human rights violations linked to those operations. OHCHR confirmed two deaths in security operations, at the hands of agents of the Scientific, Criminal and Forensic Investigation Unit, of young men from low-income backgrounds, pointing to a similar victim profile as in previously documented cases. Low-income residential areas, including on the outskirts of Caracas, were reportedly frequently subjected to security operations, particularly in the months following the presidential elections.

76. According to the Office of the Attorney General, 540 men were sentenced for the crime of femicide in the past seven years. OHCHR received reports indicating that at least 187 gender-based killings had occurred between January and December 2024.³⁶ While OHCHR welcomes the sanctioning of those crimes, there has been no progress towards the establishment of a national observatory on gender-based violence and killings, despite previous recommendations. OHCHR encourages the authorities to resume efforts towards the creation of a protocol for investigations of the crime of femicide and for its implementation, aligned with the Latin American Model Protocol for the Investigation of Gender-related Killings of Women.

E. Access to justice

77. Investigations into and prosecutions of violations of the right to life continued to face delays and standstills, including in cases of deaths in protests dating back to 2014, 2017 and 2019, and of deaths in security operations. OHCHR was informed that, on 21 November 2024, Tribunal 15 of the Metropolitan Area of Caracas absolved three Bolivarian National Police Force agents, previously members of the now dissolved Special Action Forces, accused of a 2017 death in a security operation. The sentence has not been published yet, thereby limiting the possibility of appeal and imposing further obstacles to justice and reparation for the victims. In accordance with previous recommendations, OHCHR urges the authorities to ensure that the families of victims have access to justice and reparation and to

³⁶ See Aimee Zambrano, “Diciembre de 2024: son 14 casos para un total de 187 femicidios en Venezuela”, Utopix, 11 February 2025, available at <https://utopix.cc/pix/diciembre-de-2024-son-13-casos-para-un-total-de-185-femicidios-en-venezuela> (in Spanish).

also ensure the accountability of both the direct perpetrators and those within the chain of responsibility for the crimes committed.³⁷

78. Further obstacles were reported in the process of denouncing human rights violations to the justice system. Allegedly, claims brought before the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the Ombudsperson were either rejected or left without response by those institutions. In most of the cases reported to OHCHR, the courts rejected the admission of habeas corpus petitions submitted by the relatives and legal representatives of detainees and disappeared persons, without providing their reasoning.

79. On 22 January 2025, the Supreme Court of Justice confirmed the decision of the provisional judge of Trial Court No. 5 of the Criminal Judicial Circuit of Mérida sentencing Naibelys Noel, a victim of gender-based violence, to 30 years' imprisonment for the "commission by omission in the execution of the crime of intentional homicide qualified with treachery and for ignoble motives, with the aggravating circumstance of perpetration against a child", following the killing of her son by her former partner.³⁸ OHCHR regrets that decision, which overlooked the gender stereotyping at the root of the original judgement and Ms. Noel's status as a victim of gender-based violence by her ex-partner.³⁹

80. Reportedly, since 2008, over 138 killings of transgender persons have remained uninvestigated. No progress was reported in the development and adoption of a specific investigation protocol for crimes motivated by the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity.⁴⁰

VII. Conclusion and recommendations

81. **The human rights situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela deteriorated during the reporting period as a result of numerous factors. The enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights continued to face significant challenges in the context of heightened inflation, which was exacerbated by sectoral sanctions and the suspension of humanitarian funding by some foreign donors. Increased restrictions on civic space were observed, including the criminalization, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance of persons deemed to be dissenting. Access to justice and full reparation for human rights violations continued to face obstacles.**

82. **In November 2024, the Government agreed to resume its cooperation with OHCHR with immediate effect, under the letter of understanding. OHCHR regrets the very limited access that it has been granted in the country since then (only one international staff member of the OHCHR country team has been allowed to return), affecting its ability to fully discharge its mandate, including monitoring and reporting and the provision of technical assistance.**

83. **OHCHR reiterates its commitment to support efforts to advance human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela through a full team in the country. The authorities are also encouraged to strengthen their cooperation with international human rights mechanisms.**

84. **OHCHR further encourages the authorities to pursue its efforts to uphold the international human rights obligations of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, including regarding civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to a clean, safe and sustainable environment. Those obligations include, but are not limited to, protecting and promoting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and taking steps towards gender equality.**

85. **OHCHR calls for the Government to restore trust and inclusive dialogue by guaranteeing civic space and the right to participate in public affairs and protecting**

³⁷ A/HRC/41/18, para. 81 (c); A/HRC/44/20, para. 86 (f); A/HRC/44/54, para. 71 (e); A/HRC/50/59, para. 65 (c); and A/HRC/53/54, para. 73 (h).

³⁸ Information from an organization representing Ms. Noel.

³⁹ A/HRC/56/63, para. 28.

⁴⁰ Ibid., para. 80 (h).

civil society actors and organizations. All people arbitrarily detained must be immediately and fully released and the authorities must end, investigate and sanction all forms of enforced disappearance. OHCHR urges the authorities to guarantee the independence of the judiciary, ensuring first and foremost that victims have effective access to justice, their due process rights are protected and they are granted full reparation.

86. In addition to reiterating its previous recommendations, OHCHR calls upon the Government:

(a) To ensure that the conduct of security operations in detention centres, including the use of force, prison raids and search exercises, inclusive of strip and frisk searches, comply with international human rights law and standards;

(b) To ensure that all detentions comply fully with international human rights law, including those overseen by the intelligence services for crimes of terrorism, and that legislation on terrorism-related crimes is repealed or amended to bring it into line with international law, including the principle of legality;

(c) To restrict the application of counter-terrorism legislation to comply strictly with international standards, avoiding its use to silence perceived dissenting voices, and to ensure that proceedings at special courts against terrorism comply fully with fair trial and due process standards;

(d) To guarantee the rights to a fair trial and legal defence in court, including by ensuring the appointment of a lawyer of the defendant's choice and the participation of the defendant in the trial, and to ensure that virtual hearings are held in accordance with due process and international standards;

(e) To carry out prompt and thorough investigations into allegations and cases of violations of the right to life and of the right to personal integrity, including previously reported cases, and to bring perpetrators to justice, while ensuring that relatives can safely and freely participate in the proceedings;

(f) To urgently repeal or amend laws and regulations that limit the freedoms of assembly, association and expression beyond the limitations permitted in international law, including the Act on the Control, Regularization, Operations and Financing of Non-Governmental and Related Organizations;

(g) To publish comprehensive disaggregated health and epidemiological data, paying particular attention to sexual and reproductive health and the needs of women and girls and Indigenous Peoples, thus facilitating a full understanding of the scope and scale of health needs and enabling informed decision-making and effective resource allocation;

(h) To engage in an inclusive, genuine, transparent and effective dialogue with trade unions, including within the education sector, on working conditions and remuneration with a view to negotiating a new collective contract and to take measures to ensure that all labour rights are fulfilled and protected, including in relation to salaries;

(i) To take all measures necessary to ensure that the production, use, release, storage and disposal of hazardous substances and waste, particularly those emanating from the oil, gas and mining sectors, do not pose a threat to the rights of the Venezuelan people, with a view to protecting human health and the environment;

(j) To ensure adequate funding allocations to support Indigenous Peoples' access to justice, including towards establishing coordination mechanisms between the ordinary justice system and Indigenous justice systems;

(k) To adopt measures to safeguard the digital space, including to prevent the use of Internet technology and social media to intimidate, stigmatize and persecute perceived dissenting voices, while guaranteeing the right to freedom of expression and access to information.

87. The High Commissioner reiterates his call to the States Members of the United Nations and the international community to review and lift sectoral sanctions that exacerbate pre-existing challenges and negatively affect the enjoyment of human rights. Member States are also encouraged to contribute to efforts aimed at alleviating the human suffering in the Bolivian Republic of Venezuela, including by providing humanitarian funding.
