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Venezuela Fact-Finding Mission urges end to State use of isolation against detained opponents and warns about lack of effective judicial protection

14 May 2025

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GENEVA – Venezuela's Government must immediately cease holding its opponents or those perceived as such in conditions of isolation and incommunicado detention, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela said today. The Mission expressed deep concern over a practice it said often amounts to enforced disappearances, and the widespread lack of effective judicial protection.

Targeted detentions are part of a deliberate plan by the State's repressive apparatus to silence opposition figures or those perceived as such, including human rights defenders, and to instill fear among the population.

"The holding of opponents in conditions of isolation and incomunicado detention is an illegal and perverse practice that can constitute an international crime," said Marta Valiñas, Chair of the Fact-Finding Mission.

State security forces in collusion with the Public Prosecutor's Office are responsible for carrying out this practice, including the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN), the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB), the Bolivarian National Police (PNB) and the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM). Moreover, criminal courts and the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice are complicit by ensuring the impunity of these crimes and gross human rights violations.

Within the framework of this politically orchestrated practice directed from the highest levels of authority, the lack of effective legal protection mechanisms is alarming and reflects the absence of a true rule of law. This lack of protection is exemplified by the inefficacy of the *habeas corpus* mechanism — a fundamental safeguard against arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and the risk of torture.

In recent months, the Fact-Finding Mission has investigated and found reasonable grounds to believe that in at least 20 cases, *habeas corpus* petitions were either not accepted, rejected, or left unanswered. Of the 13 cases in which the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights granted precautionary measures in 2025, nine explicitly report the ineffectiveness of *habeas corpus*.

“The indifference, resistance, or refusal of the judicial system to receive and process *habeas corpus* petitions is a serious breach of duty by its officials and constitutes an act of complicity,” said Patricia Tappatá, an expert of the Fact-Finding Mission. “*Habeas corpus* has saved lives and contributed to the investigation of the behavior of governments and government-aligned groups that operate illegally and in secrecy.”

The recent case of Eduardo Torres, a lawyer, human rights defender and member of the Education-Action Program on Human Rights (PROVEA), who has been missing since Friday, 9 May at 16:00 hours, illustrates the lack of legal protection. Family members and attorneys waited for hours outside the Palace of Justice, unable to submit a *habeas corpus* petition due to the presiding judge's refusal. The Constitutional Chamber eventually agreed to receive the petition on 12 May, but as of the date of this statement, no decision has been reported.

The Fact-Finding Mission recalls that imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental international legal norms, torture, and enforced disappearance are considered crimes against humanity when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.

“As the Fact-Finding Mission has repeatedly stated, these acts are being committed in Venezuela as part of the crime against humanity of political persecution,” said Francisco Cox, an expert of the Fact-Finding Mission. “They are part of a series of actions carried out under a coordinated plan to silence, discourage, and suppress the opposition.”

The Mission also urges the Human Rights Council and its Member States to maintain their observation and oversight in light of the severity of the human rights situation in Venezuela.

ENDS

Background: In September 2019, the United Nations Human Rights Council established the [Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela](#) for one year to assess alleged human rights violations committed since 2014. The Fact-Finding Mission presented its latest annual report during an interactive dialogue at the Council in September 2024, accompanied by a conference room paper with its detailed findings. In its [resolution 57/36](#), the Council extended the Fact-Finding Mission’s mandate for two more years, until October 2026.

Information on human rights violations can be submitted to the Mission securely and confidentially through this [link](#).

The members of the Fact-Finding Mission were appointed by the President of the UN Human Rights Council; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. While the UN Human Rights Office provides support to the Fact-Finding Mission, the members serve in their individual capacity and are independent from any government or organization, including the UN. Any views or opinions presented herein are solely those of the mandated members.

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