

Venezuela must stop human rights violations following elections, say experts

GENEVA (4 September 2024) – A group of independent experts* expressed grave concern about allegations of serious human rights violations in the context of Venezuela's 28 July presidential election. Several monitoring bodies, including electoral observers invited by the Government, reported a lack of transparency and veracity.

"We found a high degree of defencelessness among citizens, human rights defenders, persons involved in social and community work, journalists, and all persons perceived as opposition. Information received indicates that this situation arises within a context characterised by the arbitrary use of the criminal justice system by the Attorney General's Office against these groups, the criminalization of human rights advocacy, rampant corruption, impunity, and the lack of an independent judiciary capable of investigating serious human rights violations," the experts said.

Experts noted that before, during and after the elections, a spate of violations was recorded including arbitrary detentions, excessive use of force against demonstrators, unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, harassment, unlawful dismissals, persecution and prosecution of political opponents, perceived opponents and people exercising their rights to peaceful assembly, and freedom of expression, as well as violations of due process.

They further noted that following the elections, people mobilized peacefully to express their dissatisfaction with electoral irregularities. In this context, they had received reports of more than 1,300 arbitrary detentions, including of children, adolescents, elderly, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, women, LGBTIQ+ persons, and also of enforced disappearances, and at least 21 deaths, denounced as being caused by firearms allegedly by non-state actors, acting with the support of the security forces.

The approval of a national law for the control of civil society will only tighten restrictions on the right to freedom of association, the experts warned, this is in addition to the existing misuse of terrorism charges before a special terrorism jurisdiction. They also noted restrictions of some of the main social media platforms and messaging applications.

"There is evidence of a systematic pattern of human rights violations, which neglects the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and increases the risk to life for anyone who is critical of the Government," the experts said. They called to the authorities to immediately stop these practices; to guarantee the release of all persons arbitrarily detained; to put an end to acts of censorship and other forms of harassment; to advance independent investigations of all human rights violations. Businesses, such as internet providers and software applications, should not enable or facilitate those violations.

The experts are in contact with the Government of Venezuela on these issues.

Over the past five years the experts sent at least [22 letters](#) to the Government, which show a general context of systematic and serious human rights violations; no response was received to most of them.

Ms. Gina Romero, [Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association](#); Ms. Cecilia M Bailliet, [Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity](#); Mr. Michael Fakhri, [Special Rapporteur on the right to food](#); Ms. Margaret Satterthwaite, [Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers](#); Ms. Aua Baldé (Chair-Rapporteur), Ms. Gabriella Citroni (Vice-Chair); Ms. Grażyna Baranowska, and Ms. Ana-Lorena Delgadillo Pérez, of the [Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](#); Ms. Mary Lawlor, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights](#)

defenders; Ms. Heba Hagrass, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; Mr. Morris Tidball-Binz, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Mr. Ben Saul, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism; Ms. Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Ms. Laura Nyirinkindi (Chair), Ms. Claudia Flores (Vice-Chair), Ms. Dorothy Estrada Tanck, Ivana Krstić, and Haina Lu, Working group on discrimination against women and girls; Mr. Jose Francisco Cali Tzay, Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples; Ms. Fernanda Hopenhaym (Chairperson), Ms. Pichamon Yeophantong, Mr. Damilola Olawuyi, Mr. Robert McCorquodale and Ms. Lyra Jakulevičienė, Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises.

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