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Venezuela Fact-finding Mission expresses profound concern over detention of human rights activist, calls for end to government repression

13 February 2024

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GENEVA (13 February 2024) - The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela expressed deep concern over the fate of a human rights activist detained by authorities on Friday, and urged the Government to end a wave of repression against opponents that is intensifying nationwide.

Venezuelan security forces detained Rocío San Miguel, president of the organization Control Ciudadano, as she was trying to board a flight together with her daughter at Simón Bolívar International Airport with her daughter.

The country's Attorney General accused San Miguel of participating in an attempted conspiracy against President Nicolás Maduro and other senior officials, as well as involvement in attacks against military units and other institutions throughout the country. The whereabouts of both San Miguel and her daughter, and four other persons, are unknown.

"These are not isolated incidents, but rather a series of events that appear to be part of a coordinated plan to silence critics and perceived opponents," said Marta Valiñas, chairperson of the Fact-Finding Mission.

"The Government of Venezuela must provide information on the whereabouts not only of San Miguel and her daughter, but all detainees whose places of detention are still unknown," said Valiñas. "It is incumbent upon the Government to refrain from using repressive measures contrary to its international human rights and international criminal law obligations."

The Mission has raised concern over several recent acts that contravene international law which, including detentions and threats of detention of members of the National Primary Commission, as well as militants of the Vente Venezuela political party, winner of the opposition primary elections, and the disqualification from public office of political leaders, including opposition leader María Corina Machado.

Authorities have sought to justify these and other human rights violations as a response to conspiracies organized against the Government and high

State authorities.

"The Venezuelan State has violated the human rights of dozens of people when investigating alleged conspiratorial groups, depriving those investigated, detained and prosecuted of the most elementary rights," said Francisco Cox, member of the Fact-Finding Mission. "While the State has a right to investigate, this must be done with full respect for human rights and without committing international crimes."

"According to the Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons, to which Venezuela is a party, one of the constituent elements of enforced disappearances is the denial of information on the whereabouts of the person, which prevents the exercise of legal remedies and the pertinent procedural guarantees," said Patricia Tappatá, another member of the Fact-Finding Mission. "The belated and incomplete information on the whereabouts and state of health of San Miguel and her daughter fulfills the objective of instilling fear among those who express criticism of the Government, making the State responsible under international law."

"In Venezuela, measures of repression and intimidation aimed at reducing civic space - now at greater risk with the upcoming adoption of the law regulating non-governmental organisations which affects their independence- continue to be combined with other extremely serious measures of repression," said Valiñas. "It is worrisome that the Public Prosecutor's office, which has engineered all these arrests and threats of arrest, continues to operate in accordance with the Government's interest to provide an appearance of legality to all these abuses."

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Background: In September 2019, the United Nations Human Rights Council established the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by **resolution 42/25** for one year to assess alleged human rights violations committed since 2014. By its **resolutions 45/20** and **51/29**, the Human Rights Council extended the mandate of the FFMV for an additional two years, until September 2024. The Mission will present an oral update to the Human Rights Council in

March 2024 with an update on its investigations, and will present its report at a dialogue session of the Council in September.

For more information about Fact Finding Mission on Venezuela, please visit its ***webpage***.

For media queries, please contact: Todd Pitman, Media Adviser for the Human Rights Council's Investigative Missions: ***todd.pitman@un.org*** or +41 76 691 1761; or Pascal Sim, Human Rights Council Media Officer: ***simp@un.org*** or +41 22 917 9763.

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