

— VENEZUELA —

**Serious human rights
violations in connection
with the elections**



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VENEZUELA

Serious human rights violations in connection with the elections

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INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report addresses the grave and systematic human rights violations observed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR or Inter-American Commission) during the electoral process that took place in Venezuela in 2024.
2. Before, during, and after the July 28 presidential election, the regime engaged in a coordinated repressive strategy, in three stages, to illegitimately perpetuate its hold on power. Within the framework of this strategy, State terrorism was practiced in order to prevent the political participation of the opposition, hindering the development of a free, fair, competitive, and transparent electoral contest, and sowing terror among citizens¹. Such practices were possible thanks to lack of oversight and the co-optation of the different branches of government in the last two decades.
3. The first phase took place during the pre-electoral period and was aimed at preventing the political participation of the opposition, which constituted a violation of its right to equal opportunity to run and campaign without arbitrary or discriminatory restrictions. The State resorted to the power of institutions such as the Office of the Comptroller General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ), and the security forces to carry out arbitrary arrests of opponents, human rights defenders, and social leaders based on vague accusations. In addition, acts of harassment, persecution, and disqualification were recorded against opponents or persons perceived as such, as well as the withdrawal of international electoral observation missions. On the other hand, the National

¹ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed similar concern by noting in its August 13, 2024, oral update that "arbitrary detentions, disproportionate use of force fuelling a climate of fear." In this regard, see Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Venezuela: Ongoing arbitrary detentions, disproportionate use of force fuelling a climate of fear, Türk warns, August 13, 2024. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/08/venezuela-ongoing-arbitrary-detentions-disproportionate-use-force-fuelling>

Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL) imposed severe restrictions on freedom of the press, while the National Electoral Council (CNE) created obstacles aimed at denying the right to vote abroad of almost 5 million Venezuelans.

4. The second phase took place on July 28, during the presidential election. The government implemented a strategy aimed at manipulating the results to proclaim Nicolás Maduro as the winner without any kind of transparency. For this purpose, the CNE stopped the transmission of data under the pretext of an alleged cyber-attack. Likewise, it suspended the audits of the electoral process and refused to publish the voting records that supported the announced results. Anticipating an electoral fraud, the opposition gathered more than 80% of the digitized tally sheets nationwide, in order to ensure transparency and credibility of the results of the election. The sum of the votes contained in these tally sheets reportedly showed the victory of the opposition candidate Edmundo González Urrutia, with 67% of the votes.

5. The perception of fraud among the public triggered about 300 spontaneous demonstrations, led mainly by young men living in poverty. In response, the regime implemented a third phase of systematic repression, increasing the use of terror as a tool of social control. The authorities mobilized paramilitary (shock) groups against the demonstrations and launched "Operation Tun Tun," a reference to the characteristic sound of agents knocking on doors before making arrests. This operation resulted in at least 25 murders, dozens of brief forced disappearances, some 2,000 arbitrary detentions - including children and adolescents - torture, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, and serious violations of judicial guarantees and freedom of expression. In addition, the regime resorted to such tactics as mass arrests, raids without a judicial warrant, the public marking/painting of opponents' homes, raids of poor districts, and the sudden cancelation of passports. The political and human rights crisis in Venezuela is the result of the total co-optation of state institutions by a regime that seeks above all to hang

on to power illegitimately. The control of institutions designed to promote and protect human rights and democracy, along with large-scale corruption for the collection of licit and illicit gains, have served to guarantee impunity for the security forces².

6. The Inter-American Commission emphasizes that the Venezuelan case clearly illustrates the intrinsic relationship between human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. These three elements form a triad in which each one is defined, complements, and makes sense in combination with the others. The collapse of this triad, caused by the co-option of public powers by the Executive Branch, facilitated the establishment of a de facto regime.
7. The report concludes that the circumstances surrounding the July 28 presidential election constitute an alteration of the constitutional order. The lack of transparency surrounding the election, and in general, the curtailment of political rights recorded in this document make it impossible for this Commission to regard the reelection of Nicolás Maduro as democratic and legitimate. The report also concludes that the repression carried out by the State included practices of State terrorism aimed at instilling terror among citizens and silencing opponents. In this regard, the IACHR formulates a series of recommendations: in particular, an immediate end to the persecution and political repression; the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners; the cessation of arbitrary detentions; the publication of all the tally sheets and independent counting of the results; and the reestablishment of the constitutional order.

² The country's democratic institutions are not founded upon the separation and balance of the branches of government, as established by the Inter-American Democratic Charter. The Executive Branch concentrates public power after having co-opted institutions such as the Supreme Court of Justice, the National Assembly, the National Electoral Council, the Public Prosecutors' Office, and the Ombudsman's Office. The term of the National Assembly elected in 2015, considered by this Commission as the last institution of national public power vested with democratic legitimacy, ended in 2020. In this regard, see IACHR, 2021 Annual Report, Chapter IV.B, Venezuela, June 2, 2022. See also the Inter-American Democratic Charter, approved by the OAS member states during a Special Session of the General Assembly held on September 11, 2001 in Lima, Peru.

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

8. This report analyzes the serious human rights violations committed in Venezuela in connection with the electoral process held in 2024. Since 2005, the Venezuelan State has been included uninterruptedly in Chapter IV.B of the IACHR Annual Report. Throughout these 20 years, the Commission has documented the increasing concentration of power in the hands of the government, as well as the progressive erosion of the rule of law and the system of checks and balances.
9. Given the increase in political persecution in the country, in the context of the 2024 presidential elections, the IACHR activated all its protection mechanisms, including the installation of a Rapid and Integrated Response Coordination Unit (SACROI Venezuela).
10. The preparation of this report responds to an express request from numerous national and international human rights organizations. This document uses both primary and secondary sources of information. Regarding primary sources, the IACHR analyzed the testimonies received through the Special Monitoring Mechanism for Venezuela (MESEVE), the information available in cases, petitions, and precautionary and provisional measures, that presented in public hearings, as well as that recorded in the Commission's press releases and annual and thematic reports.
11. Regarding secondary sources, the report took into account: official acts of the State, at all levels and in any of its branches; including constitutional amendments, legislation, decrees, judicial decisions, and official pronouncements. It also took into account the conclusions reached by other international human rights bodies, including bodies responsible for treaties, rapporteurs, working groups, the United Nations Human Rights Council, and other specialized organs and agencies of the United Nations; and, in particular, the reports of the independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Also, human rights

reports from governments and regional bodies; reports from civil society organizations, and information submitted by civil society organizations and individuals; public information widely disseminated in the media; and relevant legal and academic research.

12. This report is divided into 4 chapters. The first chapter corresponds to the introduction. The second chapter documents the serious impairment of the democratic order and of political rights in the context of the presidential election. The third chapter looks at the situation of freedom of expression. The last chapter presents the conclusions and a series of recommendations for guaranteeing human rights and the return of democracy to Venezuela.
13. This report was approved by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, in exercise of its conventional and statutory powers, on December 27, 2024.



**PHASES OF
PERSECUTION AND
POLITICAL REPRESSION**

CHAPTER 2: PHASES OF PERSECUTION AND POLITICAL REPRESSION

14. This chapter analyzes the instrumentalization of state institutions by the regime to hang on to power illegitimately, as well as the practices pursued to persecute the opposition and prevent its political participation on equal terms. To this end, the regime's strategy will be analyzed in three separate phases. The first corresponds to the pre-electoral period, that is, from January 1 to July 27. The second phase refers to the events of July 28, the day of the presidential election. The third phase comprises the repressive response of the regime to the denunciations of electoral fraud and the widespread social demonstrations against it.

A. PHASE I: POLITICAL PERSECUTION IN THE PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD

15. In the pre-electoral period, the government used the machinery of the State not only to favor the campaign of Nicolás Maduro, but also to hinder and prevent the political participation of the opposition. This stage featured: administrative disqualifications of opponents; obstacles to the registration of opposition candidacies; discriminatory impediments to voting abroad; the withdrawal of international electoral observation missions; as well as arbitrary detentions and intimidation of opponents or persons perceived as such.

1. Administrative disqualifications of opponents

16. At least since 2021, the government and the opposition have been negotiating to establish democratic guarantees and overcome the crisis³. Several countries in the international community have supported these efforts, especially because of the need to achieve transparency and trust in the presidential elections. Finally, on

³ IACHR, Press Release No. 217/21, IACHR Calls for Serious, Broad, Inclusive Dialogue for the Urgent Reconstruction of Democratic Institutions in Venezuela, August 23, 2021.

October 17, 2023, the Venezuelan government and the opposition signed the "Partial Agreement on the Promotion of Political Rights and Electoral Guarantees for All Venezuelans" (Barbados Agreement), which established the commitment to hold peaceful presidential elections with international observation⁴.

17. Point 1 of the Barbados Agreement states: "(1) The parties recognize and respect the right of each political actor to choose their candidate for the presidential elections freely and in accordance with their internal mechanisms, taking into account the provisions of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the law⁵". Despite the provisions of point 1, on January 26, the Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ) issued a series of decisions aimed at reviewing the disqualifications imposed by the Office of the Comptroller General of the Nation against opposition leaders.

18. In these decisions, the TSJ decided to maintain the ban on Henrique Capriles Radonski and María Corina Machado (who won the opposition primary elections) from holding elected office and to temporarily lift the disqualifications of Leocenis García, Richard Mardo, Pablo Pérez, Zulay Medina, Daniel Ceballos, and Rosa Brandonisio de Scarano⁶. In the case of Henrique Capriles Radonski, the ratification of his disqualification was based on alleged administrative irregularities during his term of office as governor of the state of Miranda between 2011 and 2013. The TSJ argued that the request for review presented by Capriles did not comply with the

⁴ Point 1, Partial Agreement on the Promotion of Political Rights and Electoral Guarantees for All Venezuelans. Signed on October 17, 2023 by the Maduro government and the Unitary Platform (*Plataforma Unitaria*) in Bridgetown, Barbados.

⁵ Point 1, Partial Agreement on the Promotion of Political Rights and Electoral Guarantees for All Venezuelans. Signed on October 17, 2023 by the Maduro government and the Unitary Platform (*Plataforma Unitaria*) in Bridgetown, Barbados.

⁶ IACHR, Press Release No. 25/24. Venezuela: IACHR Condemns Political Disqualifications of Opposition Leaders, January 31, 2024.

established requirements, and therefore maintained the prohibition on his exercising public office⁷.

19. María Corina Machado was disqualified for alleged violations of administrative and fiscal regulations and for her support of international sanctions against Venezuela. Specifically, the authorities accused her of participating in a corruption scheme orchestrated by Juan Guaidó, which allegedly led to the "criminal blockade" of Venezuela and the diversion of national assets abroad⁸. The TSJ declared the request for precautionary protection filed by Machado inadmissible and confirmed the disqualification that prevented her from running for public office for 15 years⁹.
20. These kinds of disqualification are not new in Venezuela. In 2021, in connection with the elections of regional and municipal authorities, the CNE rejected 27 candidacies due to disqualifications imposed by the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic. This decision had a disproportionate impact on political parties opposing the government, such as the Communist Party of Venezuela, with 15 disqualifications, and the opposition parties pertaining to the Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (MUD), which received at least three disqualifications¹⁰.

⁷ Centro de Justicia y Paz (Cepaz), En Venezuela arrecia la persecución contra personas vinculadas a la política, available at <https://cepaz.org/en-venezuela-arrecia-la-persecucion-contra-personas-vinculadas-a-la-politica/>, March 22, 2024.

⁸ Infobae, La Justicia Electoral chavista formalizó la inhabilitación de María Corina machado para las presidenciales de julio (Chavista Electoral Justice system confirmed the disqualification of María Corina Machado for the July presidential elections), March 11, 2024. Available at: <https://www.infobae.com/venezuela/2024/03/11/la-justicia-electoral-chavista-formalizo-la-inhabilitacion-de-maria-corina-machado-para-las-presidenciales-de-julio/>

⁹ El Estímulo, TSJ ratifica inhabilitación de María Corina Machado y Henrique Capriles (TSJ ratifies the disqualification of María Corina Machado and Henrique Capriles), available at <https://elestimulo.com/politica/2024-01-26/tsj-anula-inhabilitacion-de-leocenis-garcia-y-richard-mardo-mas-anuncios/>, January 26, 2024.

¹⁰ IACHR, Press Release No. 085/22, Venezuela Must Protect the Political Rights of All People in Compliance with Inter-American Standards, April 22, 2022.

21. The IACHR recalls that the State of Venezuela was internationally condemned in the López Mendoza case for this type of sanctions. In this regard, it reiterates that, in accordance with the American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR), no administrative body may restrict the political rights to elect and be elected through sanctions involving disqualification or destitution. In accordance with Article 23.2 of the ACHR, in order to consolidate and protect a democratic order respectful of human rights, this type of sanction may only be imposed by sentencing by a competent court in criminal proceedings¹¹.

2. Obstacles to the registration of opposition candidacies

22. From March 21 to March 26, opposition leaders denounced to the public and the CNE that they could not access the automated nomination system due to technical problems. When the deadline for the registration of candidacies arrived on March 26, the aspiring opposition candidate, Corina Yoris, was unable to formalize her registration on behalf of the Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (MUD) due to the persistence of the above-mentioned problems¹². Finally, the people who were able to register as candidates were: Nicolás Maduro, for the United Socialist Party of Venezuela; Edmundo González Urrutia, for the Democratic Unity Roundtable (Mesa de la Unidad Democrática); Benjamin Rausseo, for the National Democratic Confederation; Luis Eduardo Martínez, for the Democratic Action Party; Enrique Márquez, for the Centrados Party; Claudio Fermín, for the Solutions for Venezuela Party; Daniel Ceballos, for the Arepa Digital Party; Antonio Ecarri, for the Alianza

¹¹ IA Court H.R. Case López Mendoza v. Venezuela. Merits, Reparations, and Costs. Judgment of September 1, 2011 C No. 233.

¹² IACHR, Press Release No. 067/24, IACHR: the State of Venezuela must ensure the political participation of the opposition in the presidential elections, without arbitrariness, April 5, 2024.

Lapiz Party, José Brito, for the Primero Venezuela Party; and Javier Bertucci, for the El Cambio¹³.

23. The Inter-American Commission stresses that these technical problems prevented the registration of the main candidates opposed to the regime¹⁴ while the pro-government candidates, as well as the low-profile opposition candidates, did not face any type of obstacle to registration. This circumstance suggests discrimination in access to public office and arbitrary restriction of the range of electoral options open to citizens¹⁵.

3. Discriminatory obstacles to voting abroad

24. In June 2024, the IACHR ascertained impediments for Venezuelans abroad to register in the electoral registry due to their migratory status. The Venezuelan Constitution establishes that all persons who have reached 18 years of age and are not disqualified are eligible to vote. Meanwhile, Venezuelan consulates, following instructions from the National Electoral Council (CNE), began to require a resident visa as the only valid proof for voter registration¹⁶. This requirement ignored the fact that millions of Venezuelans have a non-regularized migratory status, or a status different from that of a resident visa, such as: the Temporary Protection Permit (Colombia); the Temporary Stay Permit (Peru); the Temporary Residence Visa for Venezuelan

¹³ El País, Quiénes son los 10 candidatos a la presidencia de Venezuela (Who are the 10 candidates for the presidency of Venezuela), July 27, 2024. Available at: <https://elpais.com/america/2024-07-27/quienes-son-los-10-candidatos-a-la-presidencia-de-venezuela.html>

¹⁴ See par. 23.

¹⁵ IACHR, Press Release No. 067/24, IACHR: the State of Venezuela must ensure the political participation of the opposition in the presidential elections, without arbitrariness, April 5, 2024.

¹⁶ IACHR, Press release No. 141, 24, IACHR: Venezuela Must Ensure the Right to Vote of Venezuelans Who Live Outside the Country Whatever their Migration Status.

Citizens (Ecuador), and the Temporary Residence Visa for Venezuelan Citizens(Chile)¹⁷.

25. Due to the severe human rights crisis in Venezuela, at least 7.7 million people have been forced to leave the country since 2015 to safeguard their lives and the lives of their family members¹⁸. Although it is not known exactly how many of these people are over 18 years old, civil society organizations estimate that around 5.5 million Venezuelans were eligible to vote¹⁹. As a result, a significant number of potential voters abroad had their right to political participation impaired by not being able to register in the electoral registry²⁰.
26. The American Declaration, the American Convention, and the Inter-American Democratic Charter, state that the participation of citizens in decisions relating to their own development is a right and a responsibility; it also constitutes a necessary condition for the full and effective exercise of democracy. For that reason, requiring millions of people abroad to present a resident visa to register to vote is arbitrary and seriously affects the integrity of the presidential election²¹.

¹⁷ IACHR, Press release No. 141, 24, IACHR: Venezuela Must Ensure the Right to Vote of Venezuelans Who Live Outside the Country Whatever their Migration Status, June 18, 2024.

¹⁸ IACHR, Thematic Report, Migrants and Refugees from Venezuela, July 20, 2023. Available at: https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm?File=/en/iachr/media_center/preleases2023/260.asp

¹⁹ El País, Sólo el 1% de los venezolanos en el exterior puede votar en las elecciones (Only 1% of Venezuelans abroad are eligible to vote in presidential elections), July 27, 2024. Available at: <https://elpais.com/america/2024-07-27/solo-el-1-de-venezuelans-abroad-can-vote-in-presidential-elections.html>

²⁰ IACHR, Press release No. 141, 24, IACHR: Venezuela Must Ensure the Right to Vote of Venezuelans Who Live Outside the Country Whatever their Migration Status.

²¹ IACHR, Press release No. 141/24, IACHR: Venezuela Must Ensure the Right to Vote of Venezuelans Who Live Outside the Country Whatever their Migration Status, June 18, 2024.

4. Withdrawal of international electoral observation missions

27. On May 29, 2024, the Venezuelan regime revoked the invitation to the European Union to observe the presidential election. This announcement was made by the President of the National Electoral Council, Elvis Amoroso²². The decision to withdraw the invitation to the European Union Electoral Observation Mission represents a clear disregard for point 4 of the Barbados Agreement²³. For the Inter-American Commission, this fact corroborated the lack of commitment to what had been agreed upon, as well as reluctance to accept international scrutiny in electoral matters.

5. Arbitrary arrests and intimidation of opponents or of persons perceived as such prior to the July 28 election

28. In the months leading up to the 2024 elections, the Venezuelan government stepped up repression against people in the opposition or perceived as such, using security forces to silence critics and neutralize electoral campaigns. This pattern included arbitrary detentions and harassment of at least 50 opponents, as well as human rights defenders and social leaders. Such actions reveal a pattern of persecution against Vente Venezuela, the campaign command unit of María Corina Machado, who supported the candidate Edmundo González Urrutia. The detentions were carried out in different places and without due process, and involving different state security forces, as well as unidentified persons. These acts reflected an effort to control the political landscape and dismantle the opposition's ability to organize and express itself in Venezuela²⁴.

²² France 24, Venezuela retira invitación a la Unión Europea para observar elecciones presidenciales."("Venezuela withdraws invitation to the European Union to observe presidential elections"), May 29, 2024.

²³ Point 4: Partial agreement on promoting political rights and electoral guarantees for all Venezuelans.

²⁴ IACHR, Press release No. 15924 - IACHR Urges Venezuela to End Political Persecution and to Enable Free Elections, July 8, 2024.

29. In general, arbitrary arrests prior to the July 28 election took place in public spaces, homes, workplaces, and at the airport. The main perpetrators were the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN), the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM), and the Bolivarian National Police (PNB), through the Directorate of Strategic and Tactical Actions (DAET). In some cases, unidentified individuals in pickup trucks without license plates or motorcycles were also involved. In several of the arrests, State agents took people out of their cars while pointing guns at them and then loaded them into official vehicles²⁵.
30. It should be noted that during the pre-electoral period, repression was not only directed against opponents, but also against human rights defenders and journalists. One of the most emblematic cases was that of Rocio San Miguel, who was detained while trying to board a flight at Maiquetia International Airport. As reported to this Commission, her whereabouts remained unknown for more than 48 hours, which constituted an enforced disappearance of short duration. Later, the human rights defender was charged with treason, terrorism, and conspiracy. Several relatives of Rocio San Miguel were also detained, including her daughter Miranda Diaz San Miguel, her brothers Miguel Angel San Miguel Sosa, and Alberto San Miguel, her daughter's father Victor Diaz Paruta, as well as the defender's former husband, Alejandro Gonzalez²⁶. Rocío San Miguel is the beneficiary of precautionary measures granted by the IACHR²⁷.

²⁵ Independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Unprecedented repression in Venezuela plunges nation into grave human rights crisis, says UN Fact-Finding Mission, 17 September 2024, paras. 106; 111 and 112.

²⁶ Access to Justice - El Observatorio Venezolano de la Justicia, Cronología del caso de Rocío San Miguel, (Chronology of the Rocío San Miguel case), available at <https://accesoalajusticia.org/cronologia-del-caso-de-rocio-san-miguel/>, September 23, 2024.

²⁷ IACHR, Precautionary Measure MC 349/11, January 18, 2012.

31. In the case of members of Vente Venezuela, the arbitrary arrests of 2024 began on January 23, when Luis Camacaro, Juan Freites, and Guillermo López, coordinators in the states of Trujillo, Yaracuy, and Vargas, were arrested simultaneously by officers of the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN). These arrests were carried out without warrants and without informing their families of their whereabouts, resulting in brief reports of enforced disappearance and lack of due process²⁸. This operation, carried out in a coordinated manner in several states, shows that efforts by the security services to intimidate the opposition formed part of a deliberate strategy.
32. On March 8, 2024, Emil Brandt Ulloa, director of María Corina Machado's campaign command in Barinas, was also arrested by SEBIN on charges of "conspiracy, association, gender (physical) violence, and insulting an official." His arrest came just days after Machado's visit to the region, suggesting a clear intention to intimidate supporters of her candidacy²⁹. Shortly thereafter, on March 20, Henry Alviárez and Dignora Hernández, both members of Vente Venezuela's organization and campaign team, were arrested in Caracas and accused of conspiring against President Maduro and seeking to destabilize the country³⁰.
33. Arrests of both social leaders and campaign members continued in April and June. On April 28, Víctor Castillo, head of the Comando

²⁸ List of political prisoners provided to the IACHR on November 10, 2024.

²⁹ El País, El servicio secreto de Venezuela detiene a uno de los coordinadores de campaña de María Corina Machado, available at <https://elpais.com/america/2024-03-09/el-servicio-secreto-de-venezuela-detiene-uno-de-los-coordinadores-de-campana-de-maria-corina-machado.html>, March 9, 2024.

³⁰ CNN Venezuela, Two close collaborators of María Corina Machado arrested in Venezuela, available at <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2024/03/20/venezuela-maria-corina-machado-captura-colaboradores-orix>, March 20, 2024. See also: El Universal, Fiscal General anunció las detenciones de Henry Alviarez y Dignora Hernández por supuestos planes de violencia (Attorney General announced the arrests of Henry Alviarez and Dignora Hernandez for allegedly planning violence), available at <https://www.eluniversal.com/sucesos/177586/fiscal-general-confirio-las-detenciones-de-henry-alviarez-and-dignora-hernandez-for-alleged-plans>, March 20, 2024.

con Venezuela, along with Ámbar Márquez and Óscar Castañeda, Machado supporters, were arrested after the opposition leader's visit to the municipality of Santa Rosalía, in the region of Portuguesa³¹. On June 14, Julián Iriarte, a member of the Comando con Venezuela in Vargas state, was arrested on charges of incitement to hatred and association to commit a crime³². Gabriel González, a journalist and member of the national communications team of Vente Venezuela, was arrested on June 17 in Caracas. This arrest is evidence that the persecution of journalists was designed to restrict public discourse, as well as silence critics³³.

34. In July 2024, the leaders of the Vente Venezuela party in Guanare, Portuguesa state, Mary Rodríguez and Mayra Montilla, were detained by Venezuelan state security forces. In the early morning of July 14, their homes in the El Progreso neighborhood were raided without a warrant by officers of the DGCIM, the Bolivarian National Police (PNB), the State Police, and the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB). Subsequently, the Public Prosecutor's Office charged them with conspiracy, criminal association, and obstruction of public roads, crimes that could carry sentences of up to 30 years in prison³⁴.

³¹ DW, Anti-Chavez activists denounce "arbitrary" detention of activists, available at <https://www.dw.com/en/antichavistas-denuncian-detención-arbitraria-de-activistas/a-68943837>, March 29, 2024.

³² Tarek Wialliam Saab (@TarekWilliamSaab), X (June 19, 2024, 3:10 PM), available at https://x.com/TarekWilliamSaab/status/1803505551843672449?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1803505551843672449%7Ctwgr%5Ebf63173da02c1eb0cd704efc40558f1eef92a360%7Ctwcon%5Es1_c10&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fpublish.twitter.com?url=https://twitter.com/TarekWilliamSaab/status/1803505551843672449

³³ Amnesty International, Gabriel González: Journalists in arbitrary detention in Venezuela, accessible at <https://www.amnistia.org/en/news/2024/09/27/314/gabriel-gonzalez-en-venezuela-hay-journalists-in-arbitrary-detention>, September 13, 2024.

³⁴ El Pitazo, Portuguesa | Funcionarios detienen a dos líderes de Vente Venezuela y allanaron sus casas (Officials detain two leaders of Vente Venezuela and raid their homes), available at <https://elpitazo.net/los-llanos/portuguesa-funcionarios-detienen-a-dos-lideresas-de-vente-venezuela-y-allanaron-sus-las-casas/>, July 14, 2024.

35. In addition to the above, the opposition denounced that at least ten commercial premises used for opposition campaign meetings were closed, and that several opposition delegations were repeatedly detained at roadblocks. In addition, opposition leaders denounced the lack of slots on public radio and television for non-government candidates³⁵. A prominent case occurred in June, when a restaurant in Corozopando, Guárico state, was closed down after a visit by opposition leader María Corina Machado³⁶. Likewise, the following month, the restaurant Asados Taguanes, located in Cojedes state, was also closed by the National Integrated Customs and Tax Administration Service (SENIAT) after a visit by the opposition candidate Edmundo González and his family³⁷.
36. The arbitrary arrests of opposition leaders or persons perceived as such, as well as human rights defenders and social leaders prior to the election, revealed a systematic pattern of political persecution in the country. The government's actions sought to silence critics, dismantle organized opposition, and maintain absolute control over the political and social landscape. The omission of judicial proceedings, the secrecy surrounding the situation of detainees, and the intimidation of their family members, in particular, are clear indications that the government's actions were deliberate, planned, and involved coordination among a number of institutions. In addition to the above, the highest authorities of the State issued threats about what would happen in the event of defeat. Indeed, on July 17, during

³⁵ IACHR, Press release No. 15924 - IACHR Urges Venezuela to End Political Persecution and to Enable Free Elections, July 8, 2024.

³⁶ Infobae, En su afán por sabotear el paso de la campaña opositora, el régimen de Maduro ataca los negocios de comerciantes pobres (In its eagerness to sabotage the opposition campaign, Maduro's regime attacks small-scale traders), available at https://www.infobae.com/venezuela/2024/06/04/en-su-afan-por-sabotear-el-paso-de-la-campana-opositora-el-regimen-de-maduro-ataca-los-negocios-de-comerciantes-pobres?utm_source=chatgpt.com, June 4, 2024.

³⁷ Infobae, El régimen de Maduro clausuró otro establecimiento comercial en el que atendieron al opositor Edmundo González (The Maduro regime closed another commercial establishment visited by opponent Edmundo González.), available at https://www.infobae.com/venezuela/2024/07/09/el-regimen-de-maduro-clausuro-otro-establecimiento-comercial-que-fue-visitado-por-el-opositor-edmundo-gonzalez?utm_source=chatgpt.com, July 8, 2024.

a campaign rally, Nicolás Maduro warned of a "bloodbath and a civil war in the country" if the opposition achieved an electoral victory³⁸.

37. In conclusion, the Inter-American Commission highlights the implementation of a systematic pattern of persecution and political repression in Venezuela in the months leading up to the 2024 elections. Arbitrary arrests of opposition leaders, human rights defenders, and opposition supporters, along with the use of state security forces to silence critics and hinder political activities, constitute an abuse of power. These actions undermine the basic principles of the rule of law and democracy, and violate the civil and political rights of Venezuelan citizens.

B. PHASE II: LACK OF TRANSPARENCY AND ELECTORAL MANIPULATION

38. The second stage of the electoral process was characterized by the lack of transparency in relation to electoral information and the denial of access to public information by the electoral authorities. In addition, the instrumentalization of the Judiciary and the Electoral Authorities was observed to prevent the results announced by the National Electoral Council (CNE) from being challenged by means of legal remedies. This set of factors, in addition to the steps taken to censor the media and critics after the presidential election, helped create a dearth of information that favored the official version of the electoral results. This section addresses three key aspects: the July 28 presidential election, the opposition's denunciation of possible electoral fraud, and the legal remedies filed in response to the controversy over the results.

³⁸ CNN en español, Maduro advirtió de "baño de sangre" en Venezuela si no gana las elecciones (Maduro warned of "bloodbath" in Venezuela if he does not win elections), July 17, 2024.

1. July 28 presidential election, CNE's announcement of election results, and allegations of electoral fraud

39. The presidential election was held on July 28. According to the "UN Panel of Experts for the Venezuelan Presidential Election of July 28", election day took place in a predominantly peaceful environment and was, logistically, well organized. The CNE reported a turnout of 59.97% of the total electoral roll, that is, 45.74% more than during the 2018 presidential election³⁹. The Inter-American Commission highlights citizens' extensive participation despite the regime's efforts to dismantle the opposition and prevent the main opposition candidate, María Corina Machado, from running as a candidate.
40. Venezuela has an electronic voting system that issues two physical supporting documents: a record of the votes cast at each voting table; and a receipt that each person who actually voted receives. According to the United Nations and the Carter Center⁴⁰ which were present on the ground during the elections, this system is secure and reliable⁴¹. According to the Carter Center: "The electronic voting system is excellent⁴²".
41. In this context, the IACHR received reports of restrictions on the verification of results in several voting centers, as well as the denial of access to the witnesses of candidate Gonzalez at the CNE headquarters. In addition, although the electronic transmission of results initially functioned normally, it was suddenly suspended

³⁹ UN Panel of Experts for Venezuela's July 28 Presidential Election, Preliminary Report, August 9, 2024.

⁴⁰ Carter Center, Carter Center Statement on Venezuela Election, July 30, 2024.

⁴¹ United Nations Panel of Experts for Venezuela's July 28 Presidential Election, Preliminary Report, August 9, 2024.

⁴² Remarks by Jennie K. Lincoln, Senior Advisor to the Carter Center, Permanent Council of the Organization of American States, October 2, 2024.

without any clear explanation in the hours following the closing of the polling stations⁴³.

42. For his part, the President of the CNE, Elvis Amoroso, announced on television that there had been a "terrorist cyber attack" which had affected the transmission of votes. According to the United Nations Mission, the CNE itself canceled three audits that could have determined the veracity of the alleged cyber attack⁴⁴. The Attorney General of the Nation, Tarek William Saab, announced that the cyber attack was executed from North Macedonia and was aimed at altering the results of the election. However, Saab clarified that the results had not been altered but slowed down, and held Lester Toledo, Leopoldo López, and María Corina Machado responsible for this⁴⁵. In response to these statements, North Macedonia reported that the Venezuelan authorities had not requested or provided information on the facts in order to conduct the corresponding verifications⁴⁶.

43. On July 28th, close to midnight, Elvis Amoroso, without the presence of the other CNE members, announced that President Nicolás Maduro had won the election with 5.150,092 votes, or 51.2% of the total votes; followed by Edmundo González, with 4,445,978 votes, equivalent to 44.2%. Amoroso maintained that these results reflected the votes transmitted from 80% of the voting tables and that they were irreversible, although mathematically they could be reversed with the votes not transmitted. Subsequently, on August 2, the CNE confirmed, with the supposedly transmitted results of 96.97% of the

⁴³ Espacio Público, [Toda elección legítima debe ser transparente \(All legitimate elections must be transparent\)](#), July 30, 2024.

⁴⁴ United Nations Panel of Experts for Venezuela's July 28 Presidential Election, Preliminary Report, August 9, 2024.

⁴⁵ NTN 24, Fiscal Saab abre investigación a María Corina Machado por supuesto ataque informático desde Macedonia del Norte (Prosecutor Saab opens investigation of María Corina Machado for alleged computer attack from North Macedonia), July 29, 2024.

⁴⁶ El Diario, Macedonia del Norte pidió pruebas a Venezuela de supuesto ataque electoral (North Macedonia asked Venezuela for proof of alleged electoral attack), July 30, 2024.

polling stations, that President Maduro had won the election with 51.95% (6,408,844 votes), while Edmundo Gonzalez obtained 43.18% (5,326,104 votes)⁴⁷.

44. The announcements made by the CNE were not supported by infographics or data broken down by polling station, city, or state, as required by Venezuelan electoral regulations⁴⁸. Following the announcement of the results by the president of the CNE, access to the CNE website was restricted⁴⁹. As of the date of this report, the CNE has not yet published the voting tally sheets, nor has it allowed their scrutiny by table. All voting records are in the custody of the State.
45. The United Nations Panel concluded that "the results management process of the CNE fell short of the basic transparency and integrity measures that are essential to holding credible elections. It did not follow national legal and regulatory provisions, and all stipulated deadlines were missed. In the experience of the Panel, the announcement of an election outcome without the publication of its details or the release of tabulated results to candidates has no precedent in contemporary democratic elections. This had a negative impact on confidence in the outcome announced by the CNE among a large part of the Venezuelan electorate"⁵⁰.
46. The Carter Center concluded that the July 28 presidential election "did not meet international standards of electoral integrity and cannot be considered democratic. (...) the electoral authority's failure to

⁴⁷ United Nations Panel of Experts for Venezuela's July 28 Presidential Election, Preliminary Report, August 9, 2024.

⁴⁸ United Nations Panel of Experts for Venezuela's July 28 Presidential Election, Preliminary Report, August 9, 2024.

⁴⁹ Espacio Público, [Toda elección legítima debe ser transparente](#) (All legitimate elections must be transparent), July 30, 2024.

⁵⁰ United Nations Panel of Experts for Venezuela's July 28 Presidential Election, Preliminary Report, August 9, 2024.

announce disaggregated results by polling station constitutes a serious breach of electoral principles”⁵¹.

2. Opposition strategy in the face of possible electoral fraud

47. On the day of the election, the Venezuelan opposition collected 83.5% of the tally sheets nationwide, claiming their authenticity because they had the corresponding seals, signatures, and security codes. The sum of these tally sheets shows that Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia won the election⁵². In addition, the opposition compiled and centralized the tally sheets in an independent ("resultadosconvzla.com") and verifiable base of the actual results obtained at each polling station⁵³. When comparing these data with the official results, the opposition pointed out inconsistencies and possible manipulations that could be evidence of electoral fraud.
48. This strategy allowed the opposition to present to Venezuelan citizens and the international community concrete evidence questioning the legitimacy of the process, strengthening its claims of possible fraud and reinforcing the call for an impartial review of the results.
49. In the days following the election, the portal "resultadosconvzla.com" was blocked. In addition, as announced by the Attorney General, those responsible for the publication and maintenance of the portal are under criminal investigation for the crimes of usurpation of functions, falsification of public documents, incitement to disobedience of laws, computer crimes, association and conspiracy⁵⁴. The IACHR and its Office of the Special Rapporteur for

⁵¹ Carter Center, Carter Center Statement on Venezuela Election, July 30, 2024.

⁵² IACHR, Press release 184/24, IACHR and SRFOE condemn State terrorism practices in Venezuela, August 15, 2024.

⁵³ Resultados Con VZLA, Resultados Elecciones Presidenciales 2024 (Presidential Election Results 2024), access at <https://resultadosconvzla.com>, August 5, 2024.

⁵⁴ Espacio Público, [Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral](#) ([August: censorship and post-electoral repression](#)), September 5, 2024.

Freedom of Expression (SRFOE) warned that the information contained therein is of great public interest and requires enhanced protection, given its relevance for transparency and accountability⁵⁵.

50. The announcement of the results without the publication of the supporting documents, together with the reluctance to allow audits to verify the veracity of the alleged cyber-attack, generated public distrust in the results announced by the CNE and gave rise to numerous allegations of electoral fraud at the national and international level. The Inter-American Commission promptly called for the protection of electoral information through the publication of all voting records; for independent scrutiny, and for respect for the will of the people as expressed in the vote, in accordance with human rights standards⁵⁶.

3. Legal appeals filed following the results controversy

51. In view of the lack of transparency surrounding the election and the serious allegations of electoral fraud presented by the opposition, the international missions invited to witness the election on the ground, and the international community, on July 31, Nicolás Maduro filed an administrative electoral appeal before the Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ)⁵⁷. On August 22, 2024, the Electoral Division (*Sala Electoral*) published in social networks only the resolute part of the decision on said appeal, validating the announcement of the National Electoral Council (CNE)⁵⁸. It also indicated that the decision was final and,

⁵⁵ IACHR, Press Release No. 184/24, IACHR and SRFOE condemn State terrorism practices in Venezuela, August 15, 2024.

⁵⁶ IACHR, Press Release 184/24, IACHR and RELE condemn state terrorism practices in Venezuela, August 15, 2024.

⁵⁷ CNN en español, Maduro interpone un recurso ante el Tribunal Supremo de Justicia para que certifique los resultados (Maduro files an appeal before the Supreme Court of Justice to certify the results), July 31, 2024.

⁵⁸ Acceso a la Justicia, Seis observaciones al recurso contencioso electoral ante el TSJ sobre las elecciones del 28J, August 8, 2024.

therefore, not subject to appeal. As of the date of preparation of this report, the TSJ had not published the grounds for the decision, which constitutes a serious omission of its duty to give reasons for its rulings.

52. Contrary to what was announced by the TSJ on social networks, civil society organizations pointed out that the ruling is subject to review⁵⁹. In fact, two such appeals were filed before the Constitutional Chamber: one by former candidate Enrique Márquez and the other by the (also) former candidate for the presidency, Antonio Ecarri. Both appeals were rejected by the Constitutional Chamber of the TSJ⁶⁰.
53. Civil society organizations denounced several irregularities related to the administrative electoral appeal filed by Nicolás Maduro and the decision of the TSJ. First, they questioned the nature of the appeal. The CNE defines the administrative electoral appeal (*recurso contencioso electoral*) as "a brief, summary, and effective means to challenge the acts, actions, and omissions of the National Electoral Council (CNE) and to reestablish the subjective legal situations damaged by it, in relation to the constitution, operation, and cancellation of organizations with political purposes." This implies that the appeal is intended to challenge, not certify, an action by the CNE⁶¹.
54. Secondly, questions were raised regarding the procedural legitimacy of the appeal filed. Having been declared the winner, Nicolás Maduro did not have procedural legitimacy to file the appeal, so it should not have been admitted. Such legitimacy would have corresponded to any party that considered that the CNE's actions impaired its rights.

⁵⁹ Access to Justice, Six observations on the administrative electoral appeal to the TSJ regarding the 28J elections, August 8, 2024.

⁶⁰ Acceso a la Justicia, SC declara cosa juzgada para rechazar la revisión de la sentencia de la SE que valida la victoria de Maduro en las elecciones, (SC declares res judicata to reject review of SE ruling validating Maduro's election victory), October 14, 2024.

⁶¹ Acceso a la Justicia, Seis observaciones al recurso contencioso electoral ante el TSJ sobre las elecciones del 28J, August 8, 2024.

In addition to the above, Nicolás Maduro filed the administrative electoral appeal together with his lawyer Reinaldo Muñoz, who had been proposed as a candidate for the position of Attorney General of the Republic. For that reason he should not have acted as legal representative of the President of the Republic or of a presidential candidate in this context⁶².

55. Thirdly, civil society organizations claim that the TSJ has assumed electoral functions by declaring Nicolás Maduro as President before the CNE completed the process of vote-counting, adjudication, and proclamation of the winner. According to the regulations, the law grants up to 30 continuous days, counted from the day following the election, to publish the totality of the itemized results and to carry out the corresponding audits. However, the TSJ certified the victory of Nicolás Maduro based on partial results, before the CNE complied with this mandate⁶³.

C. PHASE III: STATE TERRORISM PRACTICES

56. The third phase documented human rights violations and State terrorism practices aimed at instilling fear and repressing social protests in order to consolidate the regime's power, following allegations of electoral fraud. This section addresses the following forms of repression: arbitrary use of force and loss of human lives; arbitrary arrests in connection with demonstrations; cancellation of passports, and other acts of harassment.
57. Serious allegations of irregularities and electoral fraud led to nearly 300 massive and spontaneous protests throughout the country that mobilized different social sectors, particularly in working-class

⁶² Acceso a la Justicia, Seis observaciones al recurso contencioso electoral ante el TSJ sobre las elecciones del 28J, August 8, 2024.

Acceso a la Justicia, Seis observaciones al recurso contencioso electoral ante el TSJ sobre las elecciones del 28J (Six observations regarding the administrative electoral appeal to the Supreme Court in connection with the July 28 election), August 8, 2024.

neighborhoods. In response, the regime employed state terrorism tactics to instill terror in the population, quell protests, and silence opponents. The main perpetrators include the state security forces and pro-government non-state armed groups (paramilitary), known as “colectivos”⁶⁴ who are legally part of the “Sistema Popular de Protección para la Paz”⁶⁵.

58. The repression followed patterns already observed by the IACHR in the 2014 and 2017 protests, such as arbitrary use of force, resulting in loss of life and injuries; arbitrary detentions and short-term enforced disappearances; judicial persecution and harassment against persons perceived as opponents and election observers; censorship and restrictions on freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. In addition, new and serious repressive patterns of intimidation were observed, such as the abrupt and arbitrary cancellation of passports of human rights defenders and journalists, as well as their families. The purpose was to prevent them from leaving the country: a serious violation of their right to freedom of movement⁶⁶.
59. A distinctive feature of this peak in repression is that the highest authorities of the regime and the security forces helped fuel the climate of terror with their statements and publications on social networks. As noted, on July 17, during a campaign rally, Nicolás Maduro warned of a “bloodbath and civil war in the country” if the opposition were to win the election⁶⁷. On August 5, also in a public ceremony, President Nicolás Maduro referred to “Operation Tun Tun”, a name that alludes to the knocking on the doors of the residences

⁶⁴ IACHR, Press release 18424, IACHR and SRFOE condemn State terrorism practices in Venezuela, August 15, 2024.

⁶⁵ See articles 1 and 4.2 of Decree Number 1,47, November 19, 2014.

⁶⁶ IACHR, Press release 18424, IACHR and SRFOE condemn State terrorism practices in Venezuela, August 15, 2024.

⁶⁷ CNN en español, Maduro advirtió de “baño de sangre” en Venezuela si no gana las elecciones (Maduro warned of “bloodbath” in Venezuela if he does not win elections), July 17, 2024.

of people suspected of having participated in the protests, by security forces, for their location and detention. In this context, the president sang a traditional Christmas melody with the lyrics "no seas llorón, vas pa' Tocarón", alluding to a penitentiary center located in the state of Aragua⁶⁸.

60. On August 7, then Deputy Diosdado Cabello, who would later be appointed Minister of the Interior, said during a television program that, within the framework of "Operation Tun Tun"⁶⁹ journalists would be arrested if they published information on the electoral controversy. On August 8, the DGCIM published on its social networks a video alluding to that operation⁷⁰.
61. Generally, in autocratic regimes such as Venezuela's, the process of adopting security measures does not follow pre-established procedures, nor is it communicated through official channels, but rather through direct messages from senior authorities through interviews or statements on social networks, among others. The IACHR considers that the threats made by the highest authorities, together with the serious, systematic, and widespread human rights violations ascertained after the election, are evidence of the intention to instill terror in the population through coordinated actions by the different branches of government and the use of public resources⁷¹.
62. In various pronouncements of the Inter-American system, it has been

⁶⁸ International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Report, September 9-11, 2024, par. 649.

⁶⁹ International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Report, September 9-11, 2024, par. 603.

⁷⁰ Although the international media reported on the magnitude of "Operation Tun Tun", the Inter-American Commission does not have sufficient evidence to determine whether the entire state repression was part of a specific operation, in line with the official discourse of the highest authorities, or whether it consisted of a set of coordinated security operations.

⁷¹ IACHR, Press release 184/24, IACHR and SRFOE condemn State terrorism practices in Venezuela, August 15, 2024.

concluded that States engage in terrorist practices when they implement policies that violate human rights, making perverse use of state resources to generate fear in the population, especially among political opponents⁷². Historically, in the region, such practices have been carried out directly by States or by non-State groups with the acquiescence, tolerance, or collaboration of States⁷³; these include forced disappearances and extrajudicial executions⁷⁴. These practices enjoy impunity, as there is no way to appeal for protection, since all supervisory agencies are subservient to the regime and are part of the State's repressive strategy. In light of the above, it is safe to say that the practices of the Venezuelan State during 2024 amounted to State terrorism.

1. Arbitrary use of force and loss of life

63. Between July 28 and 30, there were grave allegations of abuse by security forces against the demonstrations. The violence resulted in the deaths of at least 25 people, all men between the ages of 15 and 56⁷⁵. The names of the deceased persons registered by the IACHR, mostly as a result of the arbitrary use of force by the State or paramilitary groups are: Isaías Jacob Fuenmayor González (15); Ángel David Mora (17); Jeison Gabriel España Guillén (18); Anthony Enrique Cañizales Gareta (19); Luis Eduardo Roberto Hernández (19); Jhon Alejandro Graterol Mendoza (19); Anthony David Moya Mantia (20); Jesús Gregorio Tovar Perdomo (21); Dorian Rair

⁷² IA Court H.R. Case of Goiburú et al. v. Paraguay. Merits, Reparations, and Costs. Judgment of September 22, 2006. Series C No. 153 par. 66.

⁷³ IACHR, [Report on Terrorism and Human Rights](#), OEA/Ser.L/V/II.116.Doc. 5 rev. 1 corr., October 22, 2002, par. 17.a); IA Court H.R. Case of Goiburú et al. v. Paraguay. Merits, Reparations, and Costs. Judgment of September 22, 2006. Series C No. 153, par. 66 and Case of Gelman v. Uruguay. Merits and Reparations. Judgment of February 24, 2011. Series C No. 221, par. 99.

⁷⁴ IACHR, [Report on Terrorism and Human Rights](#), OEA/Ser.L/V/II.116.Doc. 5 rev. 1 corr. October 22, 2002, par. 17. a).

⁷⁵ International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Report, September 9-11, 2024, par. 547.

Rondón (22); Jeison Javier Bracho Martínez (22); Olinger Johan Montañó López (23) Euris Junior José Mendoza Royé (24) José Antonio Torrents Blanca; y (26) Aníbal José Romero Salazar; Carlos Oscar Porras (26); Gustavo Rojas (29); Walter Páez Lucena (29); Rancés Daniel Yzarra Bolívar (30) Gabriel Ramos (33); Víctor Alfonzo Bustos (34); Yorgenis Emiliano Leyva Méndez (35); Andrés Alfonso Ramírez Castillo (36); Julio Valerio García (40); Edgar Alexander Aristeguieta (42); Jesús Ramón Medina Perdomo (56)⁷⁶.

64. According to public information, 10 of the deaths were attributed to state security forces. Of these, eight were killed by the military and two by police. Six of the deaths could be attributable to the "colectivos" (paramilitary), which act with the consent, tolerance, or acquiescence of the State, and are even legally part of the "Sistema Popular de Protección para la Paz"⁷⁷. Two of the deaths were reportedly the result of joint actions by state security forces and non-state groups. In the other cases, there is insufficient information regarding the identity of the alleged perpetrators⁷⁸.
65. In relation to the causes of death, the documentary, and testimonial information allows us to conclude that all the victims were killed by firearms: seven shot in the neck, five in the chest, four in the head, three in the back, two in the abdomen, and three in other parts of the body⁷⁹. The trajectory of the projectiles indicates that the weapons were fired with lethal intent.
66. In periods of intense conflict in previous years, such as 2014 or 2017, the protests were led by middle and upper middle class people, and

⁷⁶ International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Report, September 9-11, 2024, par. 532.

⁷⁷ See articles 1 and 4.2 of the Decree No. 1.471 of November 19, 2014.

⁷⁸ IACHR, Press release 18424, IACHR and SRFOE condemn State terrorism practices in Venezuela, August 15, 2024.

⁷⁹ International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Report, September 9-11, 2024, par. 534.

took place, mostly, in central avenues or commercial or affluent neighborhoods. The protests that took place on July 28, 29, and 30 were mainly in poor neighborhoods and were led by young men living in poverty⁸⁰. Information documented by the International Independent Mission indicates that several of the people who died during those days worked as laborers, motorcycle taxi drivers, barbers, and small shopkeepers⁸¹. On the other hand, the eight fatal incidents in Caracas occurred in outlying districts such as El Valle, Sucre, San Juan, Antímano, and Macarao⁸². This change in the type of place and type of protester could suggest that the regime lost backing in social bases where it traditionally had enjoyed support.

67. On August 19, Tarek William Saab, Attorney General of the Nation, announced during an interview that María Corina Machado and Edmundo González Urritia would be summoned "at any time", since they could be "held responsible as intellectual authors of all these events", referring to the deaths of July 28, 29, and 30. On August 21, Saab reported that all the deaths were attributable to "instrumentalized criminal groups, wrongly called 'comanditos'", and added that the Public Prosecutors' Office had no reports of excessive use of force⁸³. At the 57th session of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, the Venezuelan ambassador affirmed that the "fascist right-wing" was responsible for the deaths⁸⁴.
68. The IACHR has been able to verify that the State's response was characterized by the excessive and disproportionate use of force, in

⁸⁰ IACHR, Press release 184/24, IACHR and SRFOE condemn State terrorism practices in Venezuela, August 15, 2024.

⁸¹ International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Report, September 9-11, 2024, par. 534.

⁸² International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Report, September 9-11, 2024, par. 542.

⁸³ International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Report, September 9 to 11, 2024, paras. 551 and 552.

⁸⁴ 57th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, interactive dialogue, September 19, 2024.

many cases including lethal force by "collective" groups, legally incorporated into the "Popular Protection System for the Paz"⁸⁵. It has cross-checked that information with data from public hearings, meetings with social organizations, and individual testimonies. In this regard, the Commission reiterates that the protocols on the use of public force must meet the criteria of legality, necessity, and proportionality. Faced with complex scenarios, the actions of the authorities should not be indiscriminate; rather, they should be able to identify the violent actors and distinguish them from those exercising the legitimate right to demonstrate.

69. As of the date of this report, the authorities have not published information on the context in which the deaths occurred, the progress of the investigations, or the evidence that would justify holding opposition leaders responsible for what happened. The lack of a diligent investigation into these events corroborates the lack of independence of the Public Prosecutors' Office, as well as the instrumentalization of collective groups.

2. Arbitrary mass arrests in connection with demonstrations

70. Following the first demonstrations on July 28, the regime launched a series of neighborhood raids to arrest people en masse and indiscriminately. While most of the arrests occurred during the demonstrations, there were also arrests in other places of people who were not taking part in the demonstrations⁸⁶.
71. Between July 28 and August 24, civil society organizations recorded 1,542 arrests, including women and adolescents, as well as people with disabilities, indigenous people, journalists, and media

⁸⁵ See Articles 1 and 4.2 of the Decree No. 1.471 of November 19, 2014.

⁸⁶ Efecto Cocuyo, "Indefensión, vulnerabilidad y silencio: las mujeres detenidas en las protestas postelectorales" (Defenselessness, vulnerability, and silence: women detained in protests after the election), August 17, 2024. Available at: <https://efectococuyo.com/lahumanidad/defenselessness-vulnerability-and-silence-women-detained-in-post-election-protests/>

workers⁸⁷. The Commission notes that, in an unusual development, the number documented by the social organizations was lower than the number announced by President Nicolás Maduro, who said on August 6 that the number of people detained had risen to 2,229⁸⁸.

72. In this context, President Maduro made public statements prejudging and stigmatizing the protesters. For instance: "Thanks to the response and reaction capacity of the civic-military-police union we dealt with the fascist outbreak in accordance with the Constitution and in peace"; or "this time there will be no pardon, this time what there is going to be is Tocarón", referring to a prison in the state of Aragua⁸⁹.
73. Testimony gathered by this Commission, as well as by the International Independent Mission, indicates that all detentions occurred without arrest warrants, and without informing family members of the place of detention. Many of the arrests were made following anonymous denunciations through applications such as VenApp. This application, created by the government to report breakdowns in public services, was used to denounce people suspected of participating in demonstrations⁹⁰.
74. The arrests of children and adolescents in connection with demonstrations are extremely worrying. According to information provided by the organization Foro Penal, after the presidential

⁸⁷ Foro Penal, "Political Prisoners in Venezuela." Available at: <https://foropenal.com/foro-penalbalance-of-politics-prisoners-in-venezuela-as-of-26-august-2024/>

⁸⁸ International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Report, September 9-11, 2024, par. 580.

⁸⁹ Acceso a la Justicia, Procesos sumariales sin derecho a la defensa ni información para los detenidos en el marco de las protestas, (Summary proceedings without the right to defense or information for those detained during protests), August 13, 2024.

⁹⁰ International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Report, September 9-11, 2024, par. 557.

elections in Venezuela, at least 158 adolescents were arbitrarily and indiscriminately detained.

75. According to the civil society organization, in many cases, the adolescents were pre-classified by the authorities as terrorists and deprived of liberty in the same cells as adults, and in some cases without separation by gender. In addition, all of these persons were assigned an official public defender, denying them the possibility of having a defense lawyer they trusted, and several of them were presented virtually before the courts and charged with terrorism, without the presence of their family members, guardians, or persons responsible for them⁹¹.
76. The IACHR condemns cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of adolescents deprived of their liberty. Such is the case of a pregnant teenager who was subjected to gender-based violence while in state custody. Agents hinted to her that they would make her have an abortion so she would not have terrorist children⁹². In addition, she was forced to perform physical exercises and put herself in uncomfortable and humiliating positions. There is also a recorded case of a potentially autistic child who, as of the date of this report, is still being deprived of his liberty without seeing his family or receiving medical attention. Another case of particular concern is that of a

⁹¹ IACHR, Press Release No. 212/24, IACHR condemns the arbitrary detention of children and adolescents in the aftermath of the elections in Venezuela, September 12, 2024.

⁹² Comisión de la Mujer de la Universidad de los Andes (Women's Commission of the Universidad de los Andes), "Régimen de Maduro ignora enfoque de género al detener y privar de libertad a mujeres tras elecciones presidenciales" (Maduro regime disregards gender when arresting and imprisoning women following the presidential election), August 21, 2024; Debate, "Te vamos a hacer abortar para que no tengas hijos terroristas: Gobierno de Maduro amenaza a embarazada" (We are going to make you abort so that you don't have terrorist children: Maduro government threatened pregnant woman.), August 18, 2024; La Patilla, "Hay una joven embarazada: Reportan que al menos 10 adolescentes se encuentran detenidos en Mérida tras protestas" (There is a young pregnant woman: at least 10 adolescents are reportedly detained in Mérida following protests), August 5, 2024.

child who reported having been beaten in detention and who, as a result, suffered from facial paralysis⁹³.

77. The mothers of several of the adolescents deprived of their liberty have denounced that the authorities are allegedly using torture and ill-treatment to make the adolescents confess to crimes they did not commit. According to testimonies gathered, State agents have beaten them to force them to record videos declaring that they participated in the demonstrations in exchange for money. They also stated that their children were threatened with disproportionate penalties if they refused to admit their participation in violent acts. Some mothers have publicly expressed their helplessness in the face of calls from their children pleading to be removed from detention centers. The media have documented that several of the children show severe depression and traces of beatings; that they are confined in cells with latrines overflowing with sewage and forced to relieve themselves in public places⁹⁴.
78. In this regard, the IACHR recalls that, in accordance with the State's international obligations, all procedural acts resulting from torture and cruel treatment, or any type of coercion capable of breaking a person's will, must be annulled⁹⁵.
79. In general, those arrested following serious allegations of electoral fraud, including political leaders such as María Oropeza⁹⁶, Williams

⁹³ IACHR, Press Release No. 212/24, IACHR condemns the arbitrary detention of children and adolescents in the aftermath of the elections in Venezuela, September 12, 2024.

⁹⁴ BBC, "My son spends the day crying and gives his food to other prisoners because he no longer wants to eat": the testimony of the mother of one of the more than 100 teenagers detained after the elections in Venezuela, August 30, 2024.

⁹⁵ IA Court H.R. Case of Cabrera García and Montiel Flores v. Mexico. Preliminary Objection, Merits, Reparations, and Costs. Judgment of November 26, 2010. Series C No. 22, par. 166.

⁹⁶ IACHR, Press Release No. 178/24, IACHR Grants Precautionary Measures to María Andreina Oropeza Camacho, Who Has Disappeared in Venezuela, August 10, 2024.

Dávila⁹⁷, Freddy Superlano⁹⁸, and Biagio Pilieri⁹⁹ are being subjected to criminal proceedings for crimes drafted in an ambiguous and loose manner that, in addition to having excessively high penalties, contravene freedom of expression and seek to induce terror of prosecution. The charges brought by the Public Prosecutors' Office include the crimes of incitement to hatred, terrorism, conspiracy, treason, association to commit a crime, resistance to authority, obstruction of streets or roads, and breaking of laws.

80. In the criminal proceedings that followed the arrests, numerous human rights violations were reported, in particular violations of judicial guarantees. These violations include the imposition of court-appointed public defenders, which denies access to a reliable technical defense; and the violation of the right to be tried by an ordinary judge (*juez natural*) in the case of adolescents who are brought before courts responsible for handling anti-terrorism cases¹⁰⁰. Likewise, civil society organizations reported other violations, such as the refusal to provide interpretation in the case of indigenous persons deprived of their liberty, and the absence of reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities in criminal proceedings and prisons¹⁰¹.

⁹⁷ IACHR, Press Release No. 183/24, IACHR Reviews and Modifies Precautionary Measures Granted to Williams Dávila in Venezuela, August 14, 2024.

⁹⁸ IACHR, Press Release No. 193/24, IACHR Grants Precautionary Measures to Political Leader Freddy Superlano in Venezuela, August 26, 2024.

⁹⁹ IACHR, Press Release No. 209/24, IACHR grants precautionary measures to Biagio Pilieri Gianninoto and his son, members of the Convergencia political party in Venezuela, September 7, 2024.

¹⁰⁰ Acceso a la Justicia, Procesos sumariales sin derecho a la defensa ni información para los detenidos en el marco de las protestas, (Summary proceedings without the right to defense or information for those detained during protests), August 13, 2024.

¹⁰¹ IACHR, Press release 184/24, IACHR and SRFOE condemn State terrorism practices in Venezuela, August 15, 2024.

3. Passport cancellations and other acts of harassment

81. In the context of the post-electoral repression, new and old repressive patterns were observed. Among the new patterns are the abrupt and arbitrary cancellation of passports, for no apparent reason. At least 40 human rights defenders, social leaders, journalists, and their families have been victims of this practice aimed at limiting freedom of movement and instilling terror. In some cases, passports were confiscated by the authorities at the Simón Bolívar International Airport in Maiquetía while people were trying to travel abroad. In other cases, people found out about the cancellation of their passports by consulting the web page of the Administrative Service for Identification, Migration, and Foreigners (Servicio Administrativo de Identificación, Migración y Extranjería, SAIME)¹⁰². Another unusual pattern observed was the persecution of poll watchers and election observers. According to press reports, at least 5 of these people have been forced to move to Colombia due to death threats¹⁰³. The Commission considers that these actions were in reprisal for defending and promoting human rights and democracy.
82. In addition, in connection with repressive tactics following the election, old-fashioned forms of intimidation were practiced, such as the marking of houses of people opposed to the elections or perceived as such with an “X”¹⁰⁴. In 2020 the Inter-American Commission also documented the marking of houses with the words “furia bolivariana”¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰² IACHR, Press release 184/24, IACHR and SRFOE condemn State terrorism practices in Venezuela, August 15, 2024.

¹⁰³ The New York Times, Venezuelan election observers forced into exile in Colombia, September 10, 2024.

¹⁰⁴ International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Report, September 9 to 11, 2024, summary.

¹⁰⁵ IACHR, Annual Report 2020, April 16, 2021.

83. As a result of political persecution, several opposition leaders sought protection in the residence of the Argentine ambassador in Caracas. Among them are Pedro Urruchurtu, international affairs coordinator; Claudia Mancero, communications coordinator; Omar González, political secretary; Magalli Meda, strategic planning coordinator; and Humberto Villalobos, electoral coordinator. On September 6, the official residence of the Embassy of Argentina in Caracas (under the custody of the Brazilian State since August 1, 2009¹⁰⁶) was harassed by State agents. At least 20 armed public officials intervened at the site and proceeded to cut off the electricity supply and suspend the entry of food for at least 24 hours¹⁰⁷. A similar situation occurred on November 24. State security agents closed streets and surrounded the residence of the Argentine ambassador in Caracas in an act of intimidation¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade, and Worship of the Republic of Argentina, Press Release: Departure of the staff of the Argentine Embassy in Venezuela, August 1, 2024.

¹⁰⁷ IACHR, Press Release No 21524. Venezuela: IACHR condemns forced exile of Edmundo González and acts of aggression at Argentina's embassy in Venezuela, September 13, 2024.

¹⁰⁸ DW, Argentina denuncia nuevo "asedio" a su embajada en Caracas (Argentina denounces new "siege" of its embassy in Caracas), November 23, 2024.

**FREEDOM OF
EXPRESSION**

CHAPTER 3: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

84. The IACHR and its Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (SRFOE) continued to document severe restrictions on freedom of expression in Venezuela, especially with regard to criticism of the government. The practice of journalism faces significant obstacles due to fear of violence, harassment, and the possible criminalization of news reporting. Human rights organizations are also affected by legislative reforms that threaten their funding and independence. Criminal law, including anti-terrorism laws, continues to be applied for alleged purposes of silencing dissident or critical opinions.
85. In 2024, the IACHR and its Special Rapporteurship warned about the persecution and repression of opponents, political leaders, electoral witnesses, activists, human rights defenders, journalists, and the media, in the context of the July 28 presidential elections. In addition to this, there are reports of a lack of state transparency, especially in electoral matters, as well as more widespread "areas of silence", where journalistic coverage of issues of public interest is practically non-existent. These factors create an adverse environment for the exercise of fundamental rights in the country, particularly affecting freedom of expression, freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and political participation.

1. Criminalization of journalists and use of criminal law for silencing purposes

86. In 2024, there were well documented cases of judicial proceedings and criminal sanctions against journalists in Venezuela, especially in connection with the election. Arrests and criminal proceedings were reportedly carried out under the "Anti-Hate Law", without judicial guarantees and with severe restrictions on the right to defense. Common charges include terrorism, incitement to hatred, public incitement of unrest, illicit association, disturbance of public order, and obstruction of the public highway, with allegations of tampering

with evidence by the authorities. In addition, difficulties have been reported for relatives of detained journalists, such as lack of information on their whereabouts, excessive requirements for visits, and extortion by officials. Families of journalists accused of terrorism face obstacles to their traveling to the Caracas metropolitan area, where the specialized courts are located¹⁰⁹.

87. In the first months of the year, the Attorney General reportedly issued warrants for the arrest of journalist Sebastiana Barráez, lawyer and human rights defender Tamara Suju, the president of Venezolanos Perseguidos Políticos en el Exilio (Veppex) (Venezuelans in Exile for their Political Views), José Antonio Colina, and youtubers Wender Villalobos and Norbey Marín, who were accused of serious crimes¹¹⁰. In particular, Barráez, Suju, Colina, Villalobos, Marín, and Mario Carratú Molina were reportedly accused of "attempted intentional homicide", "terrorism", and "association." These accusations were related to the "white armband case" (*caso brazalete blanco*), involving persons allegedly seeking to carry out terrorist acts, including the kidnapping of the governor of Táchira and the assassination of the President of the Republic¹¹¹. Through her social networks, journalist Sebastiana Barráez denied the accusation made by the Attorney General's Office.
88. For their part, the National College of Journalists (CNP) and various civil society organizations have described the criminalization of journalist María Sebastiana Barráez Pérez as a serious infringement

¹⁰⁹ Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (SRFOE), Press Release No. 19024, The SRFOE Alerts the International Community about Arbitrary Detention of Journalists and Criminalization of Dissent in Venezuela, August 23, 2024.

¹¹⁰ Espacio Público, [Fiscalía ordena detención de periodista Sebastiana Barráez, defensora Tamara Suju y otros \(Public Prosecutor's Office orders the arrest of journalist Sebastiana Barráez, defender Tamara Suju and others\)](#), January 22, 2024.

¹¹¹ Espacio Público, [Fiscalía ordena detención de periodista Sebastiana Barráez, defensora Tamara Suju y otros \(Public Prosecutor's Office orders the arrest of journalist Sebastiana Barráez, defender Tamara Suju and others\)](#), January 22, 2024.

of freedom of expression and due process¹¹². They have also alerted the international community to the Venezuelan State's attempts to silence communicators, especially during the election year¹¹³.

89. In addition, the Attorney General reportedly ordered the arrest of Voz Media journalist Orlando Avendaño on charges of "instigation" of hatred¹¹⁴. The prosecutor's office alleged that the journalist disrupted public order with a publication on X (Twitter)¹¹⁵. According to public reports, agents of the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) raided his home in Valencia and confiscated electronic equipment from his home¹¹⁶. In this regard, journalist Avendaño denied having called for insurrection and denied receiving funds from a political organization, stressing that, "[t]he only thing I have done,

¹¹² Radio noticias Venezuela, Colegio Nacional de Periodistas respaldó a Sebastiana Barráez (Colegio Nacional de Periodistas endorsed Sebastiana Barráez), February 1, 2024.

¹¹³ Reporte Ya, [@ReporteYa], (February 1, 2024), La CNP advirtió a la comunidad internacional que el Estado venezolano intenta silenciar a los comunicadores del país, especialmente, en este año electoral (The CNP warned the international community that the Venezuelan State is trying to silence the country's communicators, especially, in this election year), X, <https://x.com/reporteya/status/1753035060712738905?s=48&t=058FybLgNCirdwkhUkjOkw>.

¹¹⁴ Voz, [El gobierno de turno de Maduro acusa falsamente a Orlando Avendaño, periodista de Voz Media, de "instigar al odio" y llamar a la rebelión \(Maduro's government falsely accuses Orlando Avendaño, journalist of Voz Media, of "instigating hatred" and calling for rebellion.\)](#), April 1, 2024; Infobae, [Persecución en Venezuela: el gobierno de turno de Maduro investiga al periodista Orlando Avendaño, que rechazó las acusaciones \(Persecution in Venezuela: Maduro's government of the day is investigating journalist Orlando Avendaño, who rejected the accusations\)](#), April 2, 2024.

¹¹⁵ Voz, [El gobierno de turno de Maduro acusa falsamente a Orlando Avendaño, periodista de Voz Media, de "instigar al odio" y llamar a la rebelión \(Maduro's government falsely accuses Orlando Avendaño, journalist of Voz Media, of "instigating hatred" and calling for rebellion.\)](#), April 1, 2024; Infobae, [Persecución en Venezuela: el gobierno de turno de Maduro investiga al periodista Orlando Avendaño, que rechazó las acusaciones \(Persecution in Venezuela: Maduro's incumbent government investigates journalist Orlando Avendaño, who rejected the accusations\)](#), April 2, 2024.

¹¹⁶ Voz, [Líderes de la comunidad internacional condenan la persecución de la dictadura de Maduro contra Orlando Avendaño, reconocido periodista venezolano crítico del chavismo \(Leaders of the international community condemn the Maduro dictatorship's persecution of Orlando Avendaño, a well-known Venezuelan journalist critical of Chavismo.\)](#) April 1, 2024; Efecto Cocuyo, [ONG: Investigación contra Orlando Avendaño es un acto de hostigamiento \(NGO: Investigation against Orlando Avendaño is an act of harassment\)](#) April 3, 2024.

as a journalist, is to exercise my freedom of expression”¹¹⁷. Subsequent to these events, the President allegedly harassed and threatened journalist Avendaño on television after a publication on his social network X (formerly Twitter) about women who besieged opposition leader María Corina Machado¹¹⁸.

90. On March 31, journalist and youtuber Óscar Alejandro Pérez was arrested at the National Airport of Maiquetía¹¹⁹. Following his arrest, his relatives reported that he was charged with "terrorism" related activities. Reports in the public domain indicate that the journalist was taken to the Anti-Terrorism Division of the Scientific, Criminal and Criminalistic Investigations Corps (CICPC) in Caracas and released the following day¹²⁰.
91. During the last year, reports were also received regarding the arrest of journalist Carlos Julio Rojas on April 15. According to public reports, while he was with his wife, unknown subjects abducted him

¹¹⁷ Avendaño, O., [@OrlvndoA], (April 1, 2024), The only thing I have done, as a journalist, is exercise my freedom of expression. It's not a crime, X, <https://x.com/OrlvndoA/status/1774917112588386689>.

¹¹⁸ Espacio Público, [@espaciopublico], (July 16, 2024), Nicolás Maduro again harassed and threatened journalist Orlando Avendaño on television broadcast, (Nicolás Maduro volvió a hostigar y amenazó en transmisión de televisión al periodista Orlando Avendaño) X, <https://x.com/espaciopublico/status/1813333723888209971>.

¹¹⁹ Espacio Público, [Detienen al creador de contenidos Oscar Alejandro Pérez en el Aeropuerto de Maiquetía \(Content creator Oscar Alejandro Pérez detained at Maiquetia Airport, Venezuela Maiquetia Airport\)](#), April 1, 2024.

¹²⁰ Infobae, [Periodistas presos o con orden de captura y medios bajo amenaza: crece la represión contra la prensa en Venezuela \(Journalists imprisoned or with arrest warrants and media under threat: repression against the press in Venezuela grows\)](#), April 7, 2024.

in a van without license plates¹²¹. The IACHR and the Office of the Special Rapporteur reported that the journalist had an arrest warrant for his participation as an alleged instigator and logistical operator in an assassination attempt against the President¹²². Attorney General published a photograph of Rojas handcuffed between two armed men, charging him with terror¹²³.

92. On April 12, journalist Yuyser González, of NoticiasDigital, was reportedly approached by alleged officers of the Bolivarian National Police (PNB) who tried to arrest him at the entrance of a shopping mall in Barinas¹²⁴. According to reports in the public domain, after a

¹²¹ Espacio Público, [@espaciopublico], (April 15, 2024), Dos hombres vestidos de negro, encapuchados y a bordo de una camioneta sin placas, se llevaron –a la fuerza- al activista y periodista Carlos Julio Rojas (Two men dressed in black, hooded and aboard a van without license plates, took away - by force - activist and journalist Carlos Julio Rojas), X, <https://x.com/espaciopublico/status/1780051098922868919>; Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Prensa de Venezuela. (SNTP), [@sntpvenezuela], (Apr 15, 2024) Hombres encapuchados y vestidos de negro se llevaron la noche de este #15Abr al periodista y activista comunitario Carlos Julio Rojas (Hooded men dressed in black took away this #15Apr night journalist and community activist Carlos Julio Rojas), X, <https://x.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1780045720738795958>; Provea, [@_Provea], (Apr 15, 2024), 2 hombres de negro secuestran al activista comunitario y periodista, Carlos Julio Rojas, este lunes 15 en Caracas, denuncian sus familiares (2 men in black kidnap community activist and journalist, Carlos Julio Rojas, this Monday 15 in Caracas, according to his relatives), X, <https://x.com/Provea/status/1780044290472743423>.

¹²² Saab, T.W., [@TarekWilliamSaab], (Apr. 15, 2024), Ministerio Público@MinpublicoVEN #informa de la detención el día de #hoy de Carlos Julio Rojas, X, <https://x.com/TarekWilliamSaab/status/1780075541804065271?t=JvCxol0a4Ehk7wr2gTDdpw&s=19>; Runrun.es, Cinco delitos le imputaron a periodista Carlos Julio Rojas (Journalist Carlos Julio Rojas accused of five crimes), April 2024.

¹²³ Infobae, [Nueva arremetida contra la prensa en Venezuela: detuvieron a un periodista y otro forcejeó con quienes pretendieron llevárselo \(New attack against the press in Venezuela: a journalist was detained and another one fought with those who tried to take him away\)](#), April 16, 2024.

¹²⁴ Instituto Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS), [Presuntos funcionarios de la PNB intentaron detener al periodista Yuyser González \(Alleged PNB officers attempted to arrest journalist Yuyser González\)](#), April 15, 2024.

struggle, a bystander recorded the incident and shared it on social networks, thus avoiding arrest¹²⁵.

93. On May 7, 2024, the Venezuelan Attorney General accused Venezuelan media and journalists of being part of an alleged extortionist media structure led by former Minister Tareck El Aissami. According to the Attorney General, this structure was dedicated to "propagating dirty war and smear campaigns against state authorities"¹²⁶. He also mentioned that El Aissami maintained a relationship with the Armando.Info portal, directed by Roberto Deniz and Ewald Scharfenberg¹²⁷. The Attorney General's accusations add a video in which Samark Lopez, an imprisoned businessman accused of corruption, was pointing at journalists of the portal¹²⁸.
94. In the first half of August, following the July 28 elections, the arrest of at least nine journalists was documented, four of whom were charged with terrorist crimes¹²⁹. Among them is photojournalist Yousner Alvarado, accused of terrorism. According to information

¹²⁵ Infobae, [Nueva arremetida contra la prensa en Venezuela: detuvieron a un periodista y otro forcejeó con quienes pretendieron llevárselo \(New attack against the press in Venezuela: a journalist was detained and another struggled with those who tried to take him away\)](#), April 16, 2024.

¹²⁶ El Nacional, [Saab vincula a periodistas venezolanos con El Aissami «Dirigían campañas de descrédito contra el Estado» \(Saab links Venezuelan journalists to El Aissami: "They led campaigns to discredit the campaigns against the State"\)](#), May 7, 2024.

¹²⁷ Public Prosecutors' Office of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, [@MinpublicoVEN], (May 7, 2024), Tarek William Saab: It also states that El Aissami had a relationship with the ArmandoInfo portal, directed by Roberto Deniz and Ewald Scharfenberg, X, <https://x.com/MinpublicoVEN/status/1787899980641931629?t=pMQWCgoAkmc-hXwhZmKQ2g&s=08> Armando.Info, A la opinión pública, May 7, 2024.

¹²⁸ Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP), [Ministerio Público de Venezuela criminaliza el trabajo investigativo de periodistas de Armando.Info \(Venezuelan Public Prosecutor's Office criminalizes the investigative work of Armando.Info journalists\)](#), May 9, 2024; Ntn24, "Un mal chiste": Periodistas de 'ArmandoInfo' niegan vínculos con Tareck El Aissam ("A Bad Joke: Journalists of 'ArmandoInfo' deny links with Tareck El Aissami)", May 8, 2024.

¹²⁹ Reporteros Sin Fronteras (RSF), [Venezuela: RSF registers 70 attacks against press freedom in 15 days](#), August 13, 2024.

provided to this Commission and to SRFOE, he is currently being held incommunicado at Detachment 33 of the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB), without access to private defense¹³⁰. Paúl León, a cameraman for VPI TV, was also arrested on charges of incitement to violence and disturbing the public order, and is being held incommunicado at the Valera Police Station 2¹³¹; Deisy Peña, a photographer for the mayor's office of Carrizal, was reportedly arrested without a warrant after covering a peaceful protest and is being held in a unit of the Bolivarian National Police (PNB) in Los Teques¹³²; and José Gregorio Carnero, a journalist and broadcaster, who was reportedly arrested on charges of conspiracy and subversive activities¹³³.

95. Likewise, the Voluntad Popular party reported the detention and possible forced disappearance of Roland Oswaldo Carreño Gutiérrez¹³⁴. According to reports, on August 2, 2024, in the afternoon hours in the city of Caracas, he was reportedly deprived of his liberty by State agents attached to the SEBIN¹³⁵. On August 3 and 4, 2024, an attempt was made to file a writ of habeas corpus due to forced disappearance and a complaint with the Attorney

¹³⁰ RSF, [Venezuela: RSF records 70 attacks on press freedom in 15 days](#), August 13, 2024.

¹³¹ El Pitazo, [Camarógrafo Paúl León irá a juicio tras ser detenido en una cobertura postelectoral \(Cameraman Paúl León to go on trial after being detained during post-election coverage\)](#), October 23, 2024

¹³² RSF, [Venezuela: RSF registers 70 attacks on press freedom in 15 days](#), August 13, 2024; Efecto Cocuyo, [Fiscalía ratifica cargos de terrorismo contra reportera Deisy Peña \(Prosecutor's Office ratifies terrorism charges against reporter Deisy Peña\)](#), October 23, 2024.

¹³³ DW, [SNTP: acusan a 4 periodistas de "terrorismo" en Venezuela \(SNTP: 4 Journalists Accused of "Terrorism" in Venezuela\)](#), August 8, 2024.

¹³⁴ Espacio Público, [Agosto: censura y represión poselectoral, \(August: post-electoral censorship and repression\)](#), September 5, 2024.

¹³⁵ IACHR, [Resolution 50/2024](#), Precautionary Measure No. 883-24, Roland Oswaldo Carreño Gutiérrez regarding Venezuela, August 17, 2024, par. 4.

General's Office to initiate an investigation¹³⁶. However, both judicial and investigative agencies reportedly refused to receive them¹³⁷. Likewise, family members and lawyers have reportedly gone to the different headquarters of the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM) and SEBIN, who have stated that they do not have the journalist in their custody¹³⁸. In this context, the IACHR granted precautionary measures to journalist Carreño Gutiérrez and urged the State to adopt the necessary measures to protect his rights to life and personal integrity¹³⁹.

96. The arrest of journalist Ana Carolina Guaita Barreto, correspondent of the digital newspaper La Patilla, was also reported. According to the information obtained by the IACHR and its Special Rapporteurship, on August 20, 2024, the journalist was allegedly arbitrarily deprived of her liberty by alleged agents of the security forces¹⁴⁰. It was alleged that the deprivation of liberty occurred when she was leaving her home, in the parking lot area of her building¹⁴¹. In that place, she was allegedly cornered by officials who did not identify themselves and detained her for allegedly failing to comply with constitutional and conventional procedures¹⁴². According to her relatives, the journalist is being held at the headquarters of the

¹³⁶ IACHR, [Resolution 50/2024](#), Precautionary Measure No. 883-24, Roland Oswaldo Carreño Gutiérrez regarding Venezuela, August 17, 2024, par. 5.

¹³⁷ IACHR, [Resolution 50/2024](#), Precautionary Measure No. 883-24, Roland Oswaldo Carreño Gutiérrez regarding Venezuela, August 17, 2024, par. 5.

¹³⁸ IACHR, [Resolution 50/2024](#), Precautionary Measure No. 883-24, Roland Oswaldo Carreño Gutiérrez regarding Venezuela, August 17, 2024, par. 5.

¹³⁹ IACHR, Press Release No. 186/24, [IACHR Grants Precautionary Measures to Journalist Roland Oswaldo Carreño Gutiérrez in Venezuela](#), August 17, 2024.

¹⁴⁰ IACHR, [Resolution 58/2024](#), Precautionary Measure No. 907-24, Ana Carolina Guaita Barreto regarding Venezuela, August 27, 2024, par. 4.

¹⁴¹ IACHR, [Resolution 58/2024](#), Precautionary Measure No. 907-24, Ana Carolina Guaita Barreto regarding Venezuela, August 27, 2024, par. 4.

¹⁴² IACHR, [Resolution 58/2024](#), Precautionary Measure No. 907-24, Ana Carolina Guaita Barreto regarding Venezuela, August 27, 2024, par. 4.

Security Directorate of the La Guaira Governor's Office, where she was kept in solitary confinement until August 21¹⁴³.

97. On August 22, 2024, journalist Ana Carolina Guaita Barreto was reportedly taken by SEBIN agents to an unknown location, and since then there has been no news of her whereabouts or place of detention¹⁴⁴. In addition, it was reported that her parents are in hiding for fear of being arrested¹⁴⁵. In light of these facts, the IACHR granted precautionary measures in favor of Guaita and requested the State of Venezuela to adopt the necessary measures to protect her right to life and personal integrity, as well as to report on her custody status and the circumstances of her detention¹⁴⁶.
98. On August 16, the editor of the web portal La Sapa del Orinoco, Gilberto Reina, was arrested at his residence in Ciudad Bolivar, Bolivar state. According to public reports, Reina's arrest came hours after he posted a video on Instagram of a protest regarding the results announced by the CNE on July 29¹⁴⁷.
99. According to information in the public domain, on August 17, members of the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB) assaulted and attempted to arrest journalist David Marcano, of the newspaper El

¹⁴³ Villegas, V., [@Vladi_VillegasP], (August 22, 2024), Familiares de la periodista Ana Carolina Guaita Barreto informan que está detenida en la sede de la Dirección de Seguridad de la Gob de La Guaira (Relatives of journalist Ana Carolina Guaita Barreto report that she is being held at the headquarters of the Security Directorate of the Government of La Guaira), X, [https:// x.com/Vladi_VillegasP/status/1826600742712737841?t=g5rRPxf3KRnYfWC_TwI5yA&s=09](https://x.com/Vladi_VillegasP/status/1826600742712737841?t=g5rRPxf3KRnYfWC_TwI5yA&s=09).

¹⁴⁴ ACHR, [Resolution 58/2024](#), Precautionary Measure No. 907-24, Ana Carolina Guaita Barreto regarding Venezuela, August 27, 2024, par. 5.

¹⁴⁵ ACHR, [Resolution 58/2024](#), Precautionary Measure No. 907-24, Ana Carolina Guaita Barreto regarding Venezuela, August 27, 2024, par. 5.

¹⁴⁶ IACHR, Press Release No. 196/24, [IACHR grants precautionary measures to journalist Ana Carolina Guaita in Venezuela](#), August 27, 2024.

¹⁴⁷ El Carabobeño, [Detenido editor del semanario digital La Sapa del Orinoco \(Editor of the digital weekly La Sapa del Orinoco arrested\)](#), August 17, 2024.

Periodiquito, while he was covering a protest in the Bicentennial Square in Maracay, in the state of Aragua¹⁴⁸. For its part, the National College of Journalists (CNP) denounced the arbitrary detention of journalist Víctor Ugas after a confrontation with content creator Emmanuel Marcano¹⁴⁹. Ugas was reportedly presented in court on August 18, charged with the crime of "incitement to hatred"¹⁵⁰. In addition, on August 25, officers of the Bolivarian National Police (PNB) reportedly detained journalist Carmela Longo in Caracas. According to the National Union of Press Workers (SNTP), her son was also arrested and his electronic equipment confiscated¹⁵¹. Longo was reportedly transferred to the Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DIP) and released on August 26 after a hearing, where she was charged with terrorism and incitement to hatred. Currently, she is reportedly required to appear periodically before a judicial authority, with a prohibition to leave the country and to comment on her case¹⁵².

100. Reports were also received of the detention of journalist Nelin Escalante since October 25, after he was approached by officials of the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM) at the Líder Shopping Center, located in Caracas¹⁵³. According to reports from the National College of Journalists, Escalante was later

¹⁴⁸ Espacio Público, [Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral \(August: censorship and post-electoral repression\)](#), September 5, 2024.

¹⁴⁹ Espacio Público, [Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral \(August: censorship and post-electoral repression\)](#), September 5, 2024.

¹⁵⁰ Espacio Público, [Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral \(August: censorship and post-electoral repression\)](#), September 5, 2024.

¹⁵¹ Espacio Público, [Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral \(August: censorship and post-electoral repression\)](#), September 5, 2024.

¹⁵² Espacio Público, [Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral \(August: censorship and post-electoral repression\)](#), September 5, 2024.

¹⁵³ Efecto Cocuyo, [[@EfectoCocuyo](#)], (Oct. 26, 2024), [@cnpven](#) denounced that the whereabouts of journalist Nelin Escalante, who was approached by officials of the Dgcim, X, are unknown, <https://x.com/EfectoCocuyo/status/1850260938085036472?t=FXbA8I93OoG9aPZEpNXwJQ&s=19>.

transferred to the DGCIM headquarters in Boleíta¹⁵⁴. The IACHR and its Rapporteurship learned that the journalist was released on October 31 after being detained for six days¹⁵⁵.

101. As of the closing date of this report, the IACHR and the Office of the Special Rapporteur have documented the detention of at least 12 journalists following the July 28 elections. At the same time, the Commission and SRFOE express particular concern about the death of radio broadcaster and Voluntad Popular party activist Edwin Santos, on October 25, 2009¹⁵⁶.
102. As the IACHR and the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression have already pointed out, arrests of journalists represent one of the main tactics used by the Government to intimidate them or in retaliation for the performance of their work; and they are usually carried out without a court order or legal

¹⁵⁴ VPItv, [@VPITV], (Oct. 26, 2024), The National College of Journalists (@cnpven) denounced the arbitrary detention of journalist Nelin Escalante, X, <https://elinformadorve.com/29/10/2024/venezuela/colegio-nacional-de-periodistas-exige-fe-de-vida-del-periodista-nelin-escalante/> #google_vignette; SNTP, [@sntpvenezuela], (October 30, 2024), Moisés Gutiérrez, lawyer of the @Coalicion_ddhh, reported that it has been 120 hours since the disappearance of journalist Nelin Escalante, X, <https://x.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1851674638679408706?t=EZgtEriV8jQjKTZEJk5HA&s=08>; National College of Journalists (CNP), [@cnpven], (Oct. 29, 2024), It has been more than 96 hours since Nelin Escalante went missing. Family members and lawyers have not been able to see him despite having gone to the Dgcim to find out the status of his situation, X, <https://x.com/cnpven/status/1851323890867241092?t=kmIbWfCUJZEtgBVuontUaQ&s=08>.

¹⁵⁵ Infobae, [El gobierno de turno de Nicolás Maduro liberó al periodista Nelin Escalante tras estar desaparecido durante seis días \(The government of Nicolás Maduro released journalist Nelin Escalante after he had been missing for six days\)](#), November 1, 2024; Noticias de aquí, [El periodista Nelin Escalante fue puesto en libertad y se encuentra con su familia \(Journalist Nelin Escalante was released and is now with his family\)](#), November 1, 2024; Ntn24, ["Estamos bien": aparece el periodista venezolano Nelin Escalante tras ser interrogado por varios días en el DGCIM \("We are fine": Venezuelan journalist Nelin Escalante appears after being interrogated for several days at the DGCIM\)](#), November 1, 2024.

¹⁵⁶ Espacio Público, [@espaciopublico], (October 25, 2024), Hallan sin vida al locutor y activista del partido Voluntad Popular, Edwin Santos, este viernes 25 de octubre, (Spokesperson and activist of the Voluntad Popular party, Edwin Santos, found dead on Friday, October 25) X, <https://x.com/espaciopublico/status/1849889475570102746>.

basis¹⁵⁷. The Office of the Special Rapporteur reiterates that journalism is the primary and principal manifestation of freedom of expression, since it is journalists and the media that keep society informed on matters of public interest and contribute to the existence of broad, robust, and pluralistic public debate¹⁵⁸. For this reason, States have the obligation to create the conditions for journalists to freely, independently, and safely go about their work¹⁵⁹.

2. Harassment and attacks on the press and impediments to press coverage

103. According to information in the public domain, national and foreign journalists face a climate of hostility and repression characterized by threats, physical attacks, censorship, and restrictions on access to information¹⁶⁰. For example, on February 15, René Herrera, a journalist with *Revista del Tuy*, reported that workers of the State Railroad Institute prevented him from covering the Libertador Simón Bolívar station (La Rinconada) by denying him access to verify reports of irregularities, and that he was searched by officers of the Bolivarian National Police (PNB)¹⁶¹.

¹⁵⁷ IACHR, Annual Report 2022, [Report of the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression](#), OEA/Ser.LV/II Doc. 50, March 6, 2023, paras. 1367, 1377; IACHR, Annual Report 2023, [Report of the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression](#), OEA/Ser.LV/II Doc. 386, December 6, 2023, paras. 1615, 1618, 1624, and 1625.

¹⁵⁸ I/A Court H.R., Advisory Opinion OC-5/85 of November 13, 1985. “Compulsory Membership in an Association Prescribed by Law for the Practice of Journalism” (Articles 13 and 29 American Convention on Human Rights), par. 71; IACHR, Background and Interpretation of the Declaration of Principles.

¹⁵⁹ IACHR, Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, [The Inter-American Legal Framework regarding the Right to Freedom of Expression](#), OEA Ser.LV/II CIDH/RELE/INF. 209, December 30, 2009, par. 8 and paras. 165 ff.

¹⁶⁰ RSF, [Venezuela: RSF records 70 attacks on press freedom in 15 days](#), August 13, 2024.

¹⁶¹ Espacio Público, [Situación general del derecho a la libertad de expresión e información, enero – abril 2024 \(General situation of the right to freedom of expression and information, January - April 2024\)](#), May 3, 2024.

104. Likewise, Luis López, a journalist of the regional media *La Verdad de Vargas*, reported on January 24 the presence of police officers near his home in Carlos Soublette parish, in the state of Vargas. In a video posted on social networks, López expressed his concern and affirmed that he was doing his job and had "nothing to hide"¹⁶². He also denounced that SEBIN officers took photographs of his house from a motorcycle and a pickup truck¹⁶³.
105. On January 17, state security officials reportedly forced Gerson Cuevas, a journalist with the YouTube channel *Televisora Cultural Barinense*, and Neptalí Querales, a photojournalist with the newspaper *La Noticia de Barinas*, to hand over their telephones. According to public reports, they allegedly deleted audiovisual content related to a police operation at the headquarters of the National Federation of Education Workers' Unions and Colleges of Venezuela (Fenatev), where teacher Víctor Venegas was arrested¹⁶⁴.
106. During election day, July 28, 2024, civil society organizations documented at least 15 cases and 16 complaints of violations of the right to freedom of expression. In particular, journalists were banned from accessing voting centers, even though they had been certified by the National Electoral Council (CNE)¹⁶⁵. Nine journalists, four

¹⁶² Espacio Público, [Situación general del derecho a la libertad de expresión e información, enero – abril 2024 \(General situation of the right to freedom of expression and information, January - April 2024\)](#), May 3, 2024.

¹⁶³ Espacio Público, [Situación general del derecho a la libertad de expresión e información, enero – abril 2024 \(General situation of the right to freedom of expression and information, January - April 2024\)](#), May 3, 2024.

¹⁶⁴ IPYS, [Efectivos de seguridad del Estado borraron contenido informativo a dos comunicadores en Barinas \(State security forces erased information content of two journalists in Barinas, Venezuela Barinas\)](#), January 24, 2024.

¹⁶⁵ Espacio Público, [Reporte parcial 28jul: prohíben cobertura en centros electorales \(Partial report July 28: coverage prohibited in polling stations\)](#), July 28, 2024.

media outlets, two private individuals, two photojournalists and one cameraman were among the people affected¹⁶⁶.

107. Following the July 28 elections, the IACHR and its Office of the Special Rapporteur warned about the escalation of repression against journalists and the media in Venezuela. The main attacks against the press have included: raids, media closures, confiscation of equipment, cancellation of passports, deportation of international journalists, unjustified dismissals, threats, and censorship, which have generated a climate of fear among media professionals, who have been forced to restrict their reporting activities¹⁶⁷. At the local level, the Commission and the Office of the Special Rapporteur have received reports of threats of criminalization by mayors, governors, and members of “collectives”¹⁶⁸. The circulation of pamphlets and lists containing personal information of journalists and polling station members to facilitate their arrest and detention has also been reported¹⁶⁹.

108. In particular, in 2024, a worrying pattern was observed in the detention and expulsion of international correspondents in Venezuela, as well as the prohibition of their entry into the country. Such was the case of Colombian journalists Carolina Trinidad and Vanessa de la Torre, from *Radio Caracol*, on July 28, who were reportedly deported from the airport of Maiquetía¹⁷⁰.

¹⁶⁶ Espacio Público, [Reporte parcial 28jul: prohíben cobertura en centros electorales \(Partial report July 28: coverage prohibited in polling stations\)](#), July 28, 2024.

¹⁶⁷ Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (SRFOE), Press Release No. 19024, The SRFOE Alerts the International Community about Arbitrary Detention of Journalists and Criminalization of Dissent in Venezuela, August 23, 2024.

¹⁶⁸ Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (SRFOE), Press Release No. 19024, The SRFOE Alerts the International Community about Arbitrary Detention of Journalists and Criminalization of Dissent in Venezuela, August 23, 2024.

¹⁶⁹ Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (SRFOE), Press Release No. 19024, The SRFOE Alerts the International Community about Arbitrary Detention of Journalists and Criminalization of Dissent in Venezuela, August 23, 2024.

¹⁷⁰ RSF, [Venezuela: RSF records 70 attacks on press freedom in 15 days](#), August 13, 2024.

109. On August 1, Chilean journalists Iván Núñez and José Luis Tapia were reportedly detained and held incommunicado at the military post of Chururú (Barinas) after entering the country from Cúcuta, Colombia¹⁷¹. Similar events occurred on August 2 with Spanish journalist Álvaro Nieto, director of *The Objective*, who was reportedly expelled after a two-hour interrogation¹⁷² and on August 3, with Ecuadorian journalist Dayana Krays¹⁷³, who was deported after a two-hour interrogation. Likewise, reports were received regarding the arrest and expulsion of Italian journalist Marco Barilet¹⁷⁴.
110. There were also reports of the deportation of Argentine journalist Jorge Pizarro. The Association of Argentine Journalistic Entities (ADEPA) issued a vehement protest against his detention and possible expulsion¹⁷⁵. Italian journalist Barbara Schiavulli reported that a group of international reporters were denied visas two days before their trip, preventing them from covering the presidential elections¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷¹ RSF, [Venezuela: RSF records 70 attacks on press freedom in 15 days](#), August 13, 2024.

¹⁷² RSF, [Venezuela: RSF records 70 attacks on press freedom in 15 days](#), August 13, 2024.

¹⁷³ RSF, [Venezuela: RSF records 70 attacks on press freedom in 15 days](#), August 13, 2024.

¹⁷⁴ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

¹⁷⁵ Asociación de Entidades Periodísticas Argentinas (ADEPA), [@Adepargentina], (July 25, 2024), Repudiamos enérgicamente la detención y posible deportación del periodista Jorge Pizarro (We strongly repudiate the detention and possible deportation of journalist Jorge Pizarro), X, https://x.com/Adepargentina/status/1816479261236101274?t=ZDd_8_iiq_8_xvMsTaK_9-c0_Bw&s=08; Espacio Público, [@espaciopublico], (July 25, 2024), El gobierno venezolano le impidió la entrada al país al periodista argentino, Jorge Pizarro (The Venezuelan government prevented Argentine journalist, Jorge Pizarro, from entering the country), X, <https://x.com/espaciopublico/status/1816463273677423012>.

¹⁷⁶ Espacio Público, [@espaciopublico], (July 23, 2024), La periodista italiana Barbara Schiavulli (@schiavulli) denunció que a un grupo de reporteros internacionales no podrán venir a Venezuela para cubrir las elecciones presidenciales (Italian journalist Barbara Schiavulli (@schiavulli) denounced that a group of international reporters will not be allowed to come to Venezuela to cover the presidential elections), X, <https://x.com/espaciopublico/status/1815760022183260360>.

111. The Commission and the SRFOE were notified of the detention and expulsion of Cake Minuesa, reporter for the Spanish media *Ok Diario*, during the July 28 election. Minuesa, who allegedly described the result announced by the CNE as "fraud", was detained by officers of the Military Counterintelligence Directorate (DGCIM). According to *Ok Diario*, he was transferred to Bogota on July 29 to be deported to Spain. According to public reports, the journalist was released following efforts by the Spanish Foreign Ministry and the Spanish Embassy in Caracas¹⁷⁷.
112. The post-electoral period also saw the dismissal of at least 100 workers from the public television channel *Venezolana de Televisión*, following a review of their statements and content in the instant messaging service WhatsApp, where anti-government messages were found. According to publicly available information, the channel's human resources office is reportedly monitoring publications by the workers¹⁷⁸.
113. In this regard, the Commission reiterates that intimidation and threats to social communicators severely restrict freedom of expression, and that it is the duty of the State to prevent and investigate such acts¹⁷⁹. The Commission and its Office of the Special Rapporteur have maintained that attacks against journalists and the media are aimed at silencing them, thus not only violating the individual right of reporters to express and disseminate their ideas, opinions, and information, but also affecting the right of a society to freely access

¹⁷⁷ Espacio Público, [Protestas #29J: detenciones y ataques a la prensa \(Protests #29J: arrests and attacks on the press\)](#), July 29, 2024.

¹⁷⁸ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

¹⁷⁹ IACHR, [Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression](#), 2000.

information¹⁸⁰. A independent and critical press is a prerequisite for ensuring respect for other freedoms that are part of a democratic system and the rule of law¹⁸¹.

114. In addition, there are reports of stigmatizing statements against journalists and independent media. Public officials, at both the national and local levels, frequently call them "coup plotters", "accomplices", and "financed terrorists"¹⁸². Thus, for example, on March 25, the president criticized the EFE (Spain), AFP (France), and AP (USA) news agencies for not covering any of the more than 10 candidates nominated. In this regard, he stated that "the agencies of the West, the United States, Europe, and the right wing have no regard for morality. They cover up what is really happening in Venezuela"¹⁸³. Likewise, he allegedly disqualified other news agencies such as CNN en Español, accusing it of trying to "taint the

¹⁸⁰ IACHR, [Background and Interpretation of the Declaration of Principles](#); IACHR, Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, [Violence against journalists and media workers: Inter-American Standards and National Practices on Prevention, Protection, and the Prosecution of Perpetrators](#), OEA/Ser.LV/II. IACHR/RELE/INF. 12/13. December 31, 2013.

¹⁸¹ IACHR, Background and Interpretation of the Declaration of Principles; IACHR, Annual Report 2023, Report of the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, OEA/Ser.LV/II/Doc. 386, December 6, 2023, par. 1613.

¹⁸² Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (SRFOE), Press Release No. 19024, The SRFOE Alerts the International Community about Arbitrary Detention of Journalists and Criminalization of Dissent in Venezuela, August 23, 2024.

¹⁸³ Espacio Público, Situación general del derecho a la libertad de expresión e información, enero – abril 2024 (General situation of the right to freedom of expression and information, January - April 2024), May 3, 2024.

electoral process¹⁸⁴." According to public reports, these statements are typical of those made during his campaign¹⁸⁵.

115. The IACHR and its Rapporteurship for Freedom of Expression reaffirm that public authorities are duty-bound to maintain a discourse favorable to public deliberation and freedom of expression. In this sense, they have a duty to refrain from making stigmatizing or intentionally false statements that may increase the inherent risk of attacks on journalists' life and integrity¹⁸⁶. International human rights standards require that authorities treat journalists in interviews at press conferences with respect and fairness. The inter-American human rights system understands that stigmatizing statements by public officials could constitute an indirect restriction on the right to freedom of expression¹⁸⁷.

¹⁸⁴ Espacio Público, [@espaciopublico], (July 20, 2024), Nicolás Maduro volvió a hostigar de manera verbal a las agencias internacionales de noticias CNN en español, EFE, AFP y AP, a las que calificó como "basura" y las acusó de "querer manchar el proceso electoral" en Venezuela, (Nicolás Maduro once again verbally harassed international news agencies CNN en español, EFE, AFP, and AP, which he called "trash" and accused them of "wanting to taint the electoral process" in Venezuela), X, <https://x.com/espaciopublico/status/1814637101738029524>.

¹⁸⁵ SNTP, [@sntpvenezuela], (July 22, 2024), Nicolás Maduro vuelve a arremeter contra las agencias internacionales @AFPespañol, @EFEnoticias y @AP_Noticias, así como contra el canal@CNNEE, al tildarlos como "sicarios de la mentira". (Nicolás Maduro once again lashes out against the international agencies @AFPespañol, @EFEnoticias and @AP_Noticias, as well as the channel@CNNEE, by calling them "hitmen of lies.") Se trata de una conducta reiterada durante la campaña del mandatario (This conduct was typical of his behavior during the presidential campaign), X, <https://x.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1815492367459213707>.

¹⁸⁶ United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Protection and Promotion of Freedom of Opinion and Expression; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media; Organization of American States (OAS) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression; African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information, [Joint Declaration 2021 on Political Leaders, Public Officials, and Freedom of Expression](#), October 20, 2021.

¹⁸⁷ I/A Court H.R. Case of Ríos et al. v. Venezuela. Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations, and Costs. Judgment of January 28, 2009. Series C No. 194, par. 139.

3. Attacks, raids, and closure of media outlets

116. By the end of 2023, civil society organizations documented the closure of at least 408 media outlets in Venezuela during the last 20 years, as a result of a prolonged process of restricting freedom of information and the practice of journalism in the country¹⁸⁸. According to published reports, radio stations have been the most affected, with 285 stations closed in the last two decades, representing 71% of the total number of media outlets shut down¹⁸⁹.
117. The NGO Espacio Público has pointed out the scarcity of information in regions such as Falcón, where 36 radio stations operate, 29 of which only broadcast music and content sympathetic to the government¹⁹⁰. It has also documented that 13 states lack independent media following these closures, including Amazonas, Apure, Aragua, Barinas, Cojedes, Delta Amacuro, Falcón, Guárico, Mérida, Monagas, Portuguesa, Sucre, and Trujillo¹⁹¹.
118. Between January and April 2024, the IACHR and the Office of the Special Rapporteur were informed of reports of the closure of at least 13 radio stations in the states of Apure, Bolívar, Carabobo, Distrito Capital, Lara, Portuguesa, Trujillo, and Zulia¹⁹². According to information in the public domain, these closures are part of a government policy aimed at limiting the dissemination of opinions and information.

¹⁸⁸ Voz de América, [Venezuela: Más de 400 medios de comunicación cerrados en dos décadas \(More than 400 media outlets closed in two decades\)](#), January 8, 2024.

¹⁸⁹ Voz de América, [Venezuela: Más de 400 medios de comunicación cerrados en dos décadas \(More than 400 media outlets closed in two decades\)](#), January 8, 2024.

¹⁹⁰ Voz de América, [Venezuela: Más de 400 medios de comunicación cerrados en dos décadas \(More than 400 media outlets closed in two decades\)](#), January 8, 2024.

¹⁹¹ Voz de América, [Venezuela: Más de 400 medios de comunicación cerrados en dos décadas \(More than 400 media outlets closed in two decades\)](#), January 8, 2024.

¹⁹² Espacio Público, Situación general del derecho a la libertad de expresión e información, enero – abril 2024 (General situation of the right to freedom of expression and information, January - April 2024), May 3, 2024.

119. On January 23, 2024, *Radio Hispana 89.5 FM* in San Felipe, Yaracuy, was reportedly vandalized by unknown groups that painted "Furia Bolivariana 2024." This act was repeated in businesses and opposition parties¹⁹³.
120. The IACHR and its Special Rapporteurship learned that on February 2, the National Telecommunications Commission (Conatel) reportedly closed the radio station Onda 100.9 FM in Valencia, Carabobo. According to the SNTP, the station had been previously inspected in 2023¹⁹⁴. In addition, on February 23, Conatel reportedly ordered a shut-down of the transmitters of *Senda 96.1 FM*, *Mágica 93.3 FM* y *Clásicos 93.9 FM* in Ciudad Ojeda, Zulia¹⁹⁵.
121. On March 8, 2024, Conatel officials, accompanied by military personnel, reportedly closed *Bendición Stereo 93.9 FM* in Umeta, Bolivar state, arguing that the station was becoming too prominent ("*brillaba demasiado*"). According to the Administrative Ruling, the

¹⁹³ SNTP, [@sntpvenezuela], (January 23, 2024), Las instalaciones de Radio Hispana 89.5 FM en #SanFelipe, estado #Yaracuy, amanecieron vandalizadas por la acción de grupos desconocidos que rayaron sus paredes con la frase "Furia Bolivariana 2024 (The facilities of Radio Hispana 89.5 FM in #SanFelipe, #Yaracuy state, woke up to find the station vandalized by the action of unknown groups that had painted its walls with the phrase "Furia Bolivariana 2024"), X, <https://x.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1749928253387579502>; Abc, Sindicato de prensa de Venezuela denuncia la vandalización de sedes de medios y gremiales (Venezuelan Press Union denounces the vandalization of media and union headquarters of media and trade unions), January 23, 2023; El Diario, Sindicato de prensa de Venezuela denuncia la vandalización de sedes de medios y gremiales (Venezuela's press union denounces the vandalization of media and trade union headquarters), January 24, 2024.

¹⁹⁴ Espacio Público, Febrero: aumenta la intimidación y la censura (February: intimidation and censorship on the rise), March 4, 2024.

¹⁹⁵ Espacio Público, Situación general del derecho a la libertad de expresión e información, enero – abril 2024, (General situation of the right to freedom of expression and information, January - April 2024), May 3, 2024; CNP Caracas, [@CNPCaracas], February 24, 2024, Este #23Feb en #CiudadOjeda fueron cerradas por orden de #Conatel emisoras de radio Mágica 93.3 FM, Senda 96.1 FM, and Clásicos 93.9 FM. Menos medios, menos noticias y más censura (Fewer media, less news and more censorship), X, <https://x.com/CNPCaracas/status/176139490057304918?t=VYHe58KG22EpdzyS-lg1A&s=19>.

station did not have a license or concession for the use of the radioelectric spectrum¹⁹⁶.

122. On the other hand, *Ecos del Paramo 100.3 FM*, a radio station located in Tuñame, Trujillo state, reportedly ceased operations on February 27 following an order by Governor Omar Marquez. According to public information, state officials and police officers took equipment from the station, alleging that it was operating clandestinely and without permission from Conatel¹⁹⁷.

123. Similarly, on March 4, the Spanish-language Deutsche Welle (DW) news channel was removed from the *SimpleTV* cable network in Venezuela, following the publication of a video that addresses corruption in Latin America, including Venezuela¹⁹⁸. The channel, which could be accessed in 770, was reportedly displaying a "not found" message and was also removed from Supercable and NetUno¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹⁶ Espacio Público, Situación general del derecho a la libertad de expresión e información, enero – abril 2024 (General situation of the right to freedom of expression and information, January - April 2024), May 3, 2024.

¹⁹⁷ Espacio Público, [Gobernador del estado Trujillo ordenó cierre de Ecos del Páramo 100.3 FM \(Governor of Trujillo State ordered the closure of Ecos del Paramo 100.3 FM\)](#), February 28, 2024; Espacio Público, [Febrero: aumenta la intimidación y la censura \(February: Intimidation and Censorship Increases\)](#), March 4, 2024.

¹⁹⁸ SNTP, [@sntpvenezuela], (March 4, 2024), Este #4Feb salió de la parrilla de @Simpletvve la señal de la televisora @DW_espanol (On February 4, the signal of the Spanish DW television station could no longer be found on @Simpletvve), X, <https://x.com/sntpvenezuela/status/1764839651385184585>; CNP Caracas, [@CNPCaracas], (Mar 4, 2024), #Hoy sacaron de @Simpletvve al canal @DW_espanol. luego que Ministro de Comunicación los señalará como propagadores de odio (Today, they removed the Spanish DW television station from @Simpletvve after the Minister of Communication accused it of spreading hate), X, <https://x.com/CNPCaracas/status/1764845539168792956>.

¹⁹⁹ Albertonews, [SNTP tras salida de la señal de la DW en Venezuela: «Esta sería la segunda vez es sacada de las cableras por instrucciones del Gobierno» \(SNTP after the departure of the DW signal in Venezuela: "This would be the second time it is taken out of the cable companies on instructions from the Government"\)](#), March 4, 2024.

124. Subsequently, accusations were made by the Minister of Communication, Freddy Nájuez, who criticized *DW* for "covering up the genocide in Gaza", "lying", "defaming", and "spreading hatred" of Venezuela²⁰⁰. The President, in his program "Con Maduro +", described *DW* as "semi-Nazi"²⁰¹. The SNTP indicated that this is the second time that *DW*' s signal has been removed by the government, the first time being in April 2019²⁰².
125. Since March 4, some Internet companies in Venezuela have reportedly blocked access to the news portal *El Político*. The Observatorio de Internet VE sin Filtro confirmed the blockade, in which CANTV and the private companies Movistar, Digitel, Inter and NetUno were allegedly involved²⁰³.
126. On April 12, 2024, *Radio Cristal 610 AM* in Barquisimeto, in the state of Lara , and *Reconciliación 93.5 FM* in Quíbo were reportedly

²⁰⁰ Talcual, [Sacan a DW de la parrilla de SimpleTV y de otros servicios tras críticas de Freddy Nájuez \(DW removed from SimpleTV and other services after Freddy Nájuez's criticisms\)](#), March 4, 2024; Albertonews, [Venezuela saca de la parrilla de las cableras el canal alemán DW tras reportaje sobre el Cartel de Los Soles \(Detalles\)\(Venezuela removes the German channel DW from the air after report on the Cartel de Los Soles \(Details\)\)](#), March 4, 2024; Infobae, [Censura en Venezuela: la dictadura de Maduro sacó al canal alemán DW de la programación de TV por suscripción \(Censorship in Venezuela: Maduro's dictatorship removed the German channel DW from TV programming\)](#), March 4, 2024; Prensa Latina, [Ministro denuncia campaña de odio de medio alemán contra Venezuela \(+Post\) \(Minister denounces hate campaign by German tv station against Venezuela\)](#), March 4, 2024.

²⁰¹ Albertonews, [SNTP tras salida de la señal de la DW en Venezuela: «Esta sería la segunda vez es sacada de las cableras por instrucciones del Gobierno» \(SNTP after the departure of the DW signal in Venezuela: "This would be the second time it is taken out of the cable companies on instructions from the Government"\)](#), March 4, 2024.

²⁰² Albertonews, [SNTP tras salida de la señal de la DW en Venezuela: «Esta sería la segunda vez es sacada de las cableras por instrucciones del Gobierno» \(SNTP after the departure of the DW signal in Venezuela: "This would be the second time it is taken out of the cable companies on instructions from the Government"\)](#), March 4, 2024.

²⁰³ Espacio Público, [Operadoras de internet bloquean portal informativo El Político\(Internet operators block information portal El Político\)](#), March 6, 2024.

closed down²⁰⁴. On April 5, Conatel shut down *Excelente 107.9 FM* in Upata, in the state of Bolívar, and took away equipment²⁰⁵. In addition, the digital media *Última Hora*, in Portuguesa, reportedly ceased operations due to threats from the pro-government governor Primitivo Cedeño, and to "safeguard the physical integrity of its journalists and workers."

127. It was also reported that the main Internet operators in Venezuela have blocked access to *The Wall Street Journal's* website after the publication on August 1 of an opinion article by opposition leader María Corina Machado, in which she questioned the results of the presidential elections²⁰⁶.

128. There were also reports that the mayor of Boconó, Alejandro García, had urged the local media to avoid publishing critical content, accusing the radio station *Boconesa 107.3 FM* of being a "coup plotter and an accomplice" in an attack on the Dalla Acosta High School on , July 28²⁰⁷. In addition, the governor of Trujillo, Gerardo Márquez, reportedly threatened the media that they would be "visited" by "Operation Tun Tun", referring to the visit of state security agencies²⁰⁸. Also the coordinator of Conatel in the state of Monagas, Rosalva Teresen, informed the Monagas media of the ban on broadcasting news that "violate regulations on publishing violence"

²⁰⁴ Infobae, [Nueva arremetida contra la prensa en Venezuela: detuvieron a un periodista y otro forcejeó con quienes pretendieron llevárselo \(New attack against the press in Venezuela: a journalist was detained and another struggled with those who tried to take him away\)](#), April 16, 2024.

²⁰⁵ Infobae, [Nueva arremetida contra la prensa en Venezuela: detuvieron a un periodista y otro forcejeó con quienes pretendieron llevárselo \(New attack against the press in Venezuela: a journalist was detained and another struggled with those who tried to take him away\)](#), April 16, 2024.

²⁰⁶ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

²⁰⁷ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

²⁰⁸ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

(“*infrinjan elementos clasificados de violencia*”), warning of possible fines or the withdrawal of licenses²⁰⁹.

129. In view of the above facts, the Commission and its Office of the Special Rapporteur reiterate that direct or indirect pressures aimed at silencing the informative work of social communicators are incompatible with the right to freedom of expression. Principle 13 of the Declaration of Principles stipulates: “the exercise of power and the use of public funds by the state, the granting of customs duty privileges, the arbitrary and discriminatory placement of official advertising and government loans, the concession of radio and television broadcast frequencies, among others, with the intent to put pressure on and punish or reward and provide privileges to social communicators and communications media because of the opinions they express threaten freedom of expression, and must be explicitly prohibited by law.” The IACHR and SRFOE emphasize that the allocation of radio and television frequencies must take into account democratic criteria that guarantee equal opportunities, diversity, and pluralism²¹⁰.

4. Discrimination and persecution of critics and opponents

130. The Commission and its Office of the Special Rapporteur have documented various repressive practices and acts of violence against activists, human rights defenders, opposition leaders, and electoral witnesses. Thus, for example, on February 2, 2024, officials of the Criminal Investigation Service of Zulia state reportedly arrested *influencer* Marcos Caraballo for wearing “indecent clothing” in a photo shoot in front of the Basilica of La Chinita. Nerio Antonio

²⁰⁹ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

²¹⁰ IACHR, Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Expression Standards for Free and Inclusive Broadcasting, OEA/Ser.LV/II IACHR/RELE/INF. 3/09, December 30, 2009, par. 58.

Bello, supplier of the disguise, was also reportedly arrested following complaints on social networks and pressure from religious sectors²¹¹.

131. Similarly, LGBTIQ+ activist, Yendri Velásquez, was detained on August 3 at the International Airport of Maiquetía, La Guaira, when he attempted to travel to Switzerland to participate in the United Nations Committee against Racial Discrimination. According to publicly available information, he was informed at the airport that his passport had been canceled, and he was subjected to enforced disappearance before being released that night in Caracas²¹². In addition, there are reports from civil society organizations warning about discriminatory messages from government officials in the national television networks such as *Globovisión and Venezolana de Televisión*, which are allegedly leading to harassment and persecution of LGBTIQ+ people and human rights defenders²¹³.

132. On February 9, lawyer and activist Rocío del Carmen San Miguel Sosa was arrested at the Simón Bolívar International Airport when she attempted to travel with her daughter²¹⁴. The Public Prosecutors' Office confirmed her arrest on the basis of an arrest warrant for allegedly being linked to the "White Armband" conspiracy, whose objective was to assassinate the president and other officials²¹⁵.

²¹¹ Espacio Público, Situación general del derecho a la libertad de expresión e información, enero – abril 2024 (General situation of the right to freedom of expression and information, January - April 2024), May 3, 2024.

²¹² Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

²¹³ Espacio Público, [Febrero: aumenta la intimidación y la censura \(February: intimidation and censorship on the rise\)](#), March 4, 2024.

²¹⁴ Aula Abierta, [Detención de la profesora y defensora de derechos humanos Rocío San Miguel vulnera también la libertad académica y la democracia \(Detention of professor and human rights defender Rocío San Miguel also violates academic freedom and democracy\)](#), February 13, 2024.

²¹⁵ CNN en español, Detienen a la presidenta de la ONG venezolana Control Ciudadano, Rocío San Miguel, February 11, 2024; Aula Abierta, [Detention of teacher and human rights defender human rights defender Rocío San Miguel also violates academic freedom and democracy](#), February 13, 2024.

133. According to published sources, in the course of 2024, there were reports of the arbitrary detention of citizens who shared or disseminated information critical of the government. Such was the case of Jesús Alexander Suárez, when on August 1 he was arrested in Puerto Cabello by the SEBIN after posting a video on TikTok mentioning the President of the Republic and the Minister of the Interior, Justice and Peace. According to reports in the public domain, after his arrest he was recorded "confessing" under duress. The video was posted on the Instagram account of Col. Alexander Granko Arteaga²¹⁶.
134. That same day, a 43-year-old woman was reportedly arrested in Ocumare del Tuy for writing "freedom" on the street with flour from the CLAP program²¹⁷. According to reports, she was accused of "incitement to hatred." In Anzoátegui, Jesús Manuel Martínez was reportedly arrested by the regional police for disseminating content "promoting and inciting hatred²¹⁸." Likewise, the arrest of Iris Rincón in Maracaibo for criticizing the President of the Republic and the CLAP program on TikTok was also reported. Rincón was charged with "incitement to hatred." According to reports, the GNB commander shared a video where she apologizes and assures that she was paid to record it²¹⁹. A similar episode occurred with the lawyer and coordinator of Vente Venezuela in Portuguesa, María Oropeza, who was allegedly arbitrarily detained after publishing a critical video about the persecution of opposition figures²²⁰.

²¹⁶ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

²¹⁷ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

²¹⁸ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

²¹⁹ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

²²⁰ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

5. Restriction of civic limits and restrictive legislation

135. On April 2, 2024, Executive Vice President Delcy Rodríguez presented a bill against Fascism, Neo-Fascism, and Similar Expressions, which had already received approval during an initial debate in the National Assembly²²¹. Rodríguez informed through her account on X (formerly *Twitter*) that the President of the Republic has decided to establish a High Commission of State against Fascism and Neo-Fascism, in charge of presenting a bill to the National Assembly²²². According to civil society organizations, in a context of increasing political repression and violations of freedom of expression, this law was one of a series of regulations that seek to restrict civic liberties and silence critics, in line with the previous Anti-Hate Law²²³.
136. As the Commission and the Office of the Special Rapporteur were able to ascertain, Article 4 of the proposal defines characteristic features of "fascism" as racism, chauvinism, classism, moral conservatism, neoliberalism, misogyny, and any phobia "against human beings and their right to non-discrimination and diversity." In addition, "neo-fascism and similar expressions" reportedly include any ideological stance that reproduces, in whole or in part, the principles and methods of fascism.
137. Article 11, on the "Prohibition of fascist messages", allegedly establishes a list of prohibited acts related to the apology and promotion of fascism. Paragraph 3 prohibits messages that "denigrate democracy, its institutions and republican values", creating a wide

²²¹ Provea, [Venezuela frente al espejo del fascismo: perspectivas de derechos humanos sobre el proyecto "Ley contra el fascismo, neofascismo y expresiones similares" | Laboratorio de Paz \(Venezuela in the Mirror of Fascism: Human Rights Perspectives on the Draft "Law against Fascism, Neo-Fascism, and Similar Expressions" | Peace Laboratory, April 4, 2024.](#)

²²² Provea, [Venezuela frente al espejo del fascismo: perspectivas de derechos humanos sobre el \(Venezuela in the Mirror of Fascism: Human Rights Perspectives...\)](#)

²²³ Espacio Público, [Ley contra el odio y el fascismo, dos caras de una misma moneda \(Law against hate and fascism, two sides of the same coin\)](#), April 15, 2024.

margin of discretion that may restrict freedom of expression and silence criticism of the government. Furthermore, item 5 prohibits expressions that "exalt or uphold principles and methods of fascism²²⁴." In this regard, civil society organizations have expressed their concern, since the ambiguous wording would allow arbitrary interpretations and discretionary use by the authorities²²⁵.

138. According to reports from civil society organizations, the Anti-Fascism Law would impose severe restrictions on freedom of expression and the right of association. In particular, it would oblige the media to "guarantee slots free of fascist messages", allowing Conatel to impose administrative sanctions, such as excessive fines and revocation of licenses, as well as prison sentences of up to 12 years for those who promote fascism, and permitting the closure of organizations that promote or advocate fascism²²⁶.

139. One of the objectives of this law would be to disqualify those who allegedly promote fascist behavior, which could affect their right to participate in politics and enjoy parliamentary immunity. In addition, it would contemplate fines for those who finance organizations that commit acts contrary to the regulations, which could imply "undue interference by the State in matters of international cooperation in violation of the principle of autonomy as a guarantee of free association²²⁷." On August 12, the President of the National

²²⁴ Cepaz, [Relatoras Especiales ONU solicitan a Venezuela revisar y reconsiderar el proyecto de Ley contra el fascismo \(UN Special Rapporteurs request Venezuela to review and reconsider the draft law against fascism Law against Fascism\)](#), October 8, 2024.

²²⁵ Provea, [Venezuela frente al espejo del fascismo: perspectivas de derechos humanos sobre el \(Venezuela in the Mirror of Fascism: Human Rights Perspectives...\)](#)

²²⁶ Espacio Público, [Ley contra el odio y el fascismo, dos caras de una misma moneda \(Law against hatred and fascism, two sides of the same coin\)](#), April 15, 2024; Cepaz, [Relatoras Especiales ONU solicitan a Venezuela revisar y reconsiderar el proyecto de Ley contra el fascismo \(UN Special Rapporteurs ask Venezuela to review and reconsider the draft Law against Fascism of Law against Fascism\)](#), October 8, 2024.

²²⁷ Espacio Público, [Ley contra el odio y el fascismo, dos caras de una misma moneda \(Law against hate and fascism, two sides of the same coin\)](#), April 15, 2024.

Assembly, Jorge Rodríguez, announced the suspension of the parliamentary recess in order to pass these laws²²⁸.

6. Restrictions on freedom of expression on the Internet

140. Cases of violations of freedom of expression on the Internet increased during 2024. In particular, in March, 2024, there were massive service outages in several regions of the country, allegedly caused by power failures, particularly in the states of Nueva Esparta, Lara, Sucre, Trujillo, Táchira, and Barinas and the states of Carabobo, Falcón, Lara, and Zulia²²⁹. On March 14, another outage in Táchira reduced connectivity to 91% nationwide, but in that state, connectivity was halved²³⁰.

141. In addition, the government reportedly used the blocking of digital portals as a strategy to silence the independent press and non-governmental organizations²³¹. In particular, on July 22, the main operators reportedly blocked the domain *vesinfiltro.com*. On that day, six news sites, including *TalCual*, *El Estímulo*, *Analítica* and *Runrun.es*, as well as the organizations Medianálisis and the platform *Ve Sin Filtro*, were blocked by internet providers Cantv, Movistar, Digitel, Inter and NetUno²³².

²²⁸ Espacio Público, *Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral* (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

²²⁹ Infobae, [Periodistas presos o con orden de captura y medios bajo amenaza: crece la represión contra la prensa en Venezuela](#) (Journalists imprisoned or with arrest warrants and media under threat: repression against the press in Venezuela on the rise), April 7, 2024.

²³⁰ Infobae, [Periodistas presos o con orden de captura y medios bajo amenaza: crece la represión contra la prensa en Venezuela](#) (Journalists imprisoned or with arrest warrants and media under threat: repression against the press in Venezuela grows), April 7, 2024.

²³¹ Ntn24, ["Estamos a puertas de un 'blackout informativo' en Venezuela para el 28 de julio": \("We are on the verge of a 'news blackout' in Venezuela for July 28"\) secretario del Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Prensa](#) (secretary of the National Press Workers Trade Union), July 23, 2024.

²³² IPYS, [Persisten bloqueos a sitios web durante campaña electoral](#) (Websites are still being blocked during the electoral campaign), July 24, 2024.

142. On July 17, state-owned *Cantv* reportedly implemented a Domain Name System (DNS) blocking on the website of the organization *Espacio Público*, according to measurements by *Ve Sin Filtro*²³³. Likewise, civil society organizations register around 62 sites that were blocked by Conatel, including verification platforms such as the Venezuelan *Fake News Observatory*, *EsPaja*, and *Cazadores de Fake News*, prior to the July 28 elections²³⁴.
143. Following the presidential election, the government has intensified the crackdown in the digital sphere, using technology to identify, monitor, and intimidate opponents and critics²³⁵. Blocking of websites, social networks and instant messaging platforms has been documented, as well as the use of applications that encourage citizens to inform on each other. In particular, the *VenApp* application, originally intended for the management of public services, has been reconfigured with functions to report people to the government of the day using labels such as "suspicious" activities, "fascist guarimba", "disinformation", and "public disorder"²³⁶. According to the information available, the *VenApp* application has been disabled in the Apple Store and Google Play stores, preventing its download on iOS and Android devices in

²³³ IPYS, [Persisten bloqueos a sitios web durante campaña electoral \(Websites are still being blocked during the electoral campaign\)](#), July 24, 2024.

²³⁴ ProBox Digital Observatory, [TerrorEnRedes: la estrategia digital de Maduro para reprimir las voces críticas \(TerrorEnRedes: Maduro's digital strategy to repress criticism\)](#) August 25, 2024; Access Now, [Carta abierta sobre la violencia política posibilitada por la tecnología en Venezuela \(Open Letter on Technology-Enabled Political Violence enabled by technology in Venezuela\)](#) August 5, 2024.

²³⁵ IACHR, Press Release No. 184/24, [IACHR and SRFOE condemn State terrorism practices in Venezuela](#), August 15, 2024.

²³⁶ IACHR, Press Release No. 184/24, [IACHR and SRFOE condemn State terrorism practices in Venezuela](#), August 15, 2024.

Venezuela²³⁷. In this context, the IACHR and its RELE have received information on random street detentions for the inspection of content on mobile devices, as well as the use of video surveillance and patrolling drones²³⁸.

144. According to reports in the public domain, state security forces are said to be actively monitoring social networks and asking supporters to report dissident activities, leading to arrests and raids without warrants²³⁹. Detainees are allegedly being denied access to a fair trial and are being sent to "re-education centers." This would be part of "Operation Tun Tun", which utilizes platforms such as Instagram, Telegram, and X (formerly Twitter) to reveal names, photos, and addresses of dissidents and opponents, including activists, journalists, and election witnesses²⁴⁰. In addition, government leaders are allegedly using their social networks and state-owned media to expose and intimidate²⁴¹.

145. On August 5, the President of the Republic announced his intention to regulate or block TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter), accusing these platforms of promoting "hatred and fascism." Two days later, it transpired that he had initiated a criminal investigation against those responsible for the page resultadosconvzla.com and

²³⁷ El Diario, [Inhabilitaron la aplicación VenApp de iOS y Android: los detalles, 31 de julio de 2024](#) (VenApp app disabled from iOS and Android: the details, July 31, 2024); Tal Cual, [Es Paja ¿VenApp fue eliminada de Google Play Store y Apple App Store en Venezuela? \(Es Paja ¿Was VenApp removed from Google Play Store and Apple App Store in Venezuela?\)](#), August 1, 2024.

²³⁸ Access Now, [Carta abierta sobre la violencia política posibilitada por la tecnología en Venezuela \(Open Letter on Technology-Enabled Political Violence in Venezuela\)](#), August 5, 2024; IACHR, Press Release No. 184/24, [IACHR and SRFOE condemn State Terrorism practices in Venezuela](#), August 15, 2024.

²³⁹ Access Now, [Carta abierta sobre la violencia política posibilitada por la tecnología en Venezuela \(An Open Letter on Technology-Enabled Political Violence in Venezuela\)](#), August 5, 2024.

²⁴⁰ Access Now, [Carta abierta sobre la violencia política posibilitada por la tecnología en Venezuela \(An Open Letter on Technology-Enabled Political Violence in Venezuela\)](#), August 5, 2024.

²⁴¹ Access Now, [Carta abierta sobre la violencia política posibilitada por la tecnología en Venezuela \(An Open Letter on Technology-Enabled Political Violence in Venezuela\)](#), August 5, 2024.

ordered the suspension of the social network X for 10 days, in addition to blocking the messaging application Signal and insisting that citizens uninstall WhatsApp²⁴².

146. On August 9, the government also reportedly blocked the website Reddit and warned television networks of sanctions if they covered demonstrations. According to public reports, the state-owned *CANTV* blocked Microsoft domains, affecting access to Microsoft Teams and other services. There were also reports of blockages in the *CANTV* network of Binance and Mercado Libre portals and applications, among others²⁴³.
147. On August 14, the Internet connection in the country reportedly dropped to 81% of its capacity, especially affecting the states of Trujillo, Barinas, and Portuguesa²⁴⁴. As the Commission and its Special Rapporteurship were able to ascertain, a blackout occurred on August 31 that affected at least 20 states, causing an immediate drop in the connexion²⁴⁵.
148. The IACHR and its SRFOE recall that, as part of their positive obligation to promote and facilitate the enjoyment of human rights, States must take all measures within their power to ensure that all persons have effective access to the Internet. Likewise, the obligation to respect implies that the authorities refrain from interfering with access to the Internet and digital communication platforms, unless

²⁴² Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

²⁴³ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

²⁴⁴ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

²⁴⁵ Espacio Público, Agosto: censura y represión postelectoral (August: censorship and post-electoral repression), September 5, 2024.

the restriction is in full compliance with the requirements set forth in the applicable human rights instruments²⁴⁶.

7. Academic freedom and repression of the educational community

149. Criminalization, persecution, threats, harassment, and arbitrary detentions of members of the educational community and human rights defenders, for political reasons, continue to be recurrent practices denounced by Venezuelan civil society organizations²⁴⁷. In particular, between January and November 2024, the organization Aula Abierta recorded a total of 180 protests by members of the university community. Of these, 125 were carried out in universities in the center of the country, 28 in Los Andes, 6 in the East, and 21 in the West. Of the documented protests, 89 were in person and 91 were virtual²⁴⁸. The main demands were for a decent wage and the defense of university autonomy. The latter, in particular, prompted 15 protests in defense of the financial autonomy of universities and 24 protests related to the defense of democracy and human rights²⁴⁹.
150. Regarding arbitrary detentions of members of the university community in the exercise of freedom of expression and academic freedom, the organization Aula Abierta documented, between June 2021 and March 2024, at least two cases of detention of professors and ten of students. Between 2014 and 2024, more than 410 arbitrary detentions were recorded, as well as nine extrajudicial

²⁴⁶ Information sent by Aula Abierta, on file at the Office of the Special Rapporteur, May 31, 2024.

²⁴⁷ El Espectador, John Álvarez, el estudiante que duró cuatro meses preso, fue liberado en Venezuela, 23 de diciembre, 2024 (John Álvarez, the student who spent four months in prison, was released in Venezuela), December 23, 2024; Aula Abierta, Detención de la profesora y defensora de derechos humanos Rocio San Miguel vulnera también la libertad académica y la democracia (Detention of professor and human rights defender, Rocio San Miguel also violates academic freedom and democracy), February 13, 2024.

²⁴⁸ Information sent by Aula Abierta, on file at the Office of the Special Rapporteur, December 18, 2024.

²⁴⁹ Information sent by Aula Abierta, on file at the Office of the Special Rapporteur, December 18, 2024.

executions and four forced disappearances of members of the university community²⁵⁰.

151. In addition, the IACHR and its Office of the Special Rapporteur observe that, following the election, repressive practices against members of the educational community appear to have intensified. There have been reports of multiple cases of arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, threats, and stigmatization, as well as acts of vandalism in academic facilities. In particular, between July 28 and September 30, 2024, Aula Abierta documented 51 incidents of retaliation against members of the university community, including 12 professors detained for their participation in post-election protests, 22 students deprived of their liberty, 31 cases of harassment, and 71 students expelled from the Universidad Nacional Experimental de la Seguridad.(UNES)²⁵¹. There were also acts such as the cancellation of a teacher's passport and 18 student protests demanding improvements in university services.
152. Also, on July 28, 2024, irregularities were denounced at the National Experimental Security University (UNES) in Caracas, where students were pressured to vote for Nicolas Maduro under threat of retaliation. At least 25 students who refused to vote for the president remain missing, and their families have denounced the lack of official information about their whereabouts²⁵². Likewise, on August 1, 2024, an attack on the Gustavo Leal Library of the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) was reported following a critical statement made

²⁵⁰ Information sent by Aula Abierta, on file at the Office of the Special Rapporteur, May 31, 2024.

²⁵¹ Aula Abierta, Resumen ejecutivo: violaciones a la libertad académica y la autonomía universitaria en Latinoamérica (Executive Summary: violations of academic freedom and the autonomy of universities in Latin America), October 2024. Information received by REDESCA-IACHR.

²⁵² Aula Abierta, [Represalias contra universitarios en elecciones presidenciales en Venezuela entre el 28 y 30 de julio 2024 \(Retaliation against university students in presidential elections in Venezuela between July 28-30, 2024\)](#), July 30, 2024.

by the university regarding the elections²⁵³. In addition, pro-government armed groups reportedly intercepted students and teachers, threatening and accusing members of the educational community of being "terrorists."

²⁵³ Aula Abierta, ONU: Universitarios venezolanos detenidos tras la elección del 28 de julio sufren graves violaciones de derechos humanos (UN: Venezuelan university students detained after the July 28 election suffer serious human rights violations), October 30, 2024.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

153. The absence of the rule of law and of an institutional framework guided by the separation and independence of the branches of government continues to be the greatest challenge for ensuring respect of, and guarantees for, human rights in Venezuela.
154. A presidential election was held on July 28, 2024. The circumstances surrounding this election clearly constitute an alteration of the constitutional order. The regime executed a planned strategy aimed at preventing the political participation of the opposition, hindering the development of a free, fair, and competitive contest, and repressing social protests provoked by a deliberate lack of information regarding the election and allegations of fraud. All this, with the participation, acquiescence, and tolerance of the institutions created to safeguard democracy and protect human rights.
155. The Inter-American Commission highlights that, as of the date of preparation of this report, the State has still not presented the voting records that support the results announced by the National Electoral Council, which named Nicolás Maduro as the winner. The dearth of information regarding the election and, in general, the restrictions on political rights documented in this report prevent this Commission from considering that the reelection of Nicolás Maduro was democratic and legitimate.
156. The refusal to provide information and serious allegations of fraud prompted nearly 300 demonstrations nationwide. State repression included practices of state terrorism aimed, in particular, at instilling terror among citizens and silencing opponents. Well documented violations include: extrajudicial executions, short-term forced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture, and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, cancellation of passports, violent deaths, and countless violations of judicial guarantees and freedom of expression.

157. The Inter-American Commission notes that impunity persists for serious human rights violations committed in previous years, especially since 2017. This impunity is also a consequence of the lack of separation and independence of the branches of government, particularly the Judiciary. For this reason, the Commission urges the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to formally file a case for the commission of crimes against humanity.
158. The IACHR calls on the international community to recognize the serious human rights crisis in Venezuela, to remain vigilant in the face of new surges in repression, and to activate all diplomatic and institutional channels for the return of democracy to the country. It also reaffirms its interest and willingness to visit the country, and therefore formally requests the State's consent to accompany and verify compliance with the following recommendations.

General recommendations and democratic institutions

1. Put an immediate end to persecution and political repression.
2. Immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners, particularly children and adolescents.
3. Cease arbitrary detention as a form of reprisal against those who express a critical or dissident position against the regime, human rights defenders, and social leaders.
4. Restore the constitutional order, guaranteeing:
 - i. the independence and balance of powers, particularly of the Judiciary and the Electoral Branch;
 - ii. political participation without any type of repression or discrimination, and;

- iii. effective citizen control over the actions of the different branches of government.
5. Publish all voting records and allow for an independent audit, with international observers.
6. Guarantee a legitimate and peaceful succession in line with the Constitution.
7. Adopt suitable and effective measures to ensure the independence of the Judiciary.
8. Adopt suitable and effective measures to ensure the independence of the Public Prosecutors' Office.

Fight against impunity and administration of justice

9. Immediately release persons arbitrarily deprived of their liberty.
10. Ensure compliance with due process guarantees at all procedural stages related to detentions in connection with the election.
11. Investigate with due diligence all allegations of human rights violations in connection with the election, and prosecute and punish those materially and intellectually responsible for violations.

Political rights and participation in public life

12. Adapt the domestic regulatory framework to ensure that any disqualification of persons aspiring to hold elected office is imposed in accordance with inter-American standards.
13. Refrain from illegal or arbitrary detentions, particularly of children and adolescents; and in the event that a person is deprived of his or her liberty, ensure that all due process guarantees are complied with, including prompt presentation before a competent,

independent, and impartial judicial authority.

14. Guarantee the right to vote abroad to Venezuelan nationals who are over 18 years of age and do not have a final criminal conviction.

Violence and citizen security

15. Ensure that the use of force is in strict compliance with the principles of exceptionality, legality, necessity, proportionality, non-discrimination, and accountability.
16. Take immediate, decisive steps to exclude armed civilian groups from performing citizen security duties.
17. Ensure that the actions of security and intelligence institutions are subject to external and independent oversight, which may include, in the particular case of Venezuela, international technical assistance.

Freedom of expression

18. Grant journalists full guarantees to ensure that they are not detained, threatened, assaulted, or have their work materials and tools taken away for exercising their profession.
19. Amend ambiguous or imprecise criminal laws that curtail freedom of expression -- such as those designed to protect the honor of ideas or institutions, or those designed to protect national security or peace -- so as to avoid the use of criminal proceedings to inhibit free democratic debate on matters of interest.
20. Refrain from restricting the operation of websites, blogs, applications, or other electronic or similar systems for disseminating information on the Internet, including support systems such as Internet Service Providers (ISPs), or search engines.

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