

**Urgent Action Office** 3-1992 Yonge Street Toronto ON M4S 1Z7 Phone: (416) 363-9933 Fax: (416) 363-3103 [urgentaction@amnesty.ca](mailto:urgentaction@amnesty.ca)  
Second UA: 96/23 Index: AMR 53/7578/2023 Venezuela of January 11, 2024

## **VENEZUELA**

### **DETAINEES NEED IMMEDIATE CARE**

On December 20, 2023, Guillermo Zárraga was conditionally released after more than three years of arbitrary detention in Venezuela. Three other individuals subjected to arbitrary detention continue to suffer due to the authorities' neglect of their right to health and safety. Emirlendris Benítez, a mother and tradeswoman, was arbitrarily detained in August 2018 and subjected to torture. Juan Carlos Marrufo and María Auxiliadora Delgado, a married couple, have been in detention since March 2019. They are being unfairly held by authorities under the responsibility of President Nicolás Maduro. We urge him to ensure their unconditional release and, during their custody, guarantee immediate access to proper medical care.

#### **Write to the Venezuelan President urging him to:**

- Ensure that Emirlendris Benítez, Juan Carlos Marrufo and María Auxiliadora Delgado are immediately and unconditionally released.
- Guarantee that while they remain in custody of the state, you must guarantee their life, health and safety.
- Urgently grant them access to trusted and adequate medical care.

#### **Write to:**

President Nicolas Maduro  
Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela,  
Edificio Palacio de Miraflores,  
Avenida Urdaneta,  
Caracas, Venezuela  
Email: [correo@presidencia.gob.ve](mailto:correo@presidencia.gob.ve)  
X: @NicolasMaduro  
*Salutation: Your Excellency:*

#### **And copy:**

Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela  
32 Range Road  
Ottawa, ON K1N 8J4  
Tel: (613) 235-5151/ (613) 447-4576 (24h) Fax: (613) 235-3205  
Email: [consular@misionvenezuela.org](mailto:consular@misionvenezuela.org)

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Emirlendris Benitez is a Venezuelan mother, sister, and tradeswomen. On August 5, 2018, she was arbitrarily detained on fabricated grounds. Authorities falsely linked her to acts of violence committed against high-profile political leaders in Venezuela; an accusation for which there is no evidence and

which she has consistently stated that she had no part in. In custody, she was subjected to torture while pregnant. A few weeks after her arrest, she was forcibly transferred to a medical facility and her pregnancy was terminated without her knowledge or consent. The torture she was subjected to left her needing the long-term use of a wheelchair for mobility. In 2022, she was sentenced to a 30-year prison sentence by a partial and politically motivated court. Emirlendris should never have been detained, as it is believed the charges are politically motivated. Furthermore, the draconian sentence against her should be revoked and she must be immediately released.

Juan Carlos Marrufo and María Auxiliadora Delgado were first arrested on March 19, 2019, by the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM). They are a married couple, holding dual Spanish and Italian nationalities, respectively. They had decided to undergo an in vitro fertilization treatment when they were arrested. Their only connection to criminal offenses seems to be limited to María Auxiliadora being the sister of a retired military officer with alleged ties to an attack on Nicolás Maduro. Not only are they victims of arbitrary detentions, but they have also been deprived of their plans of growing their family.

Guillermo Zárraga is a Venezuelan engineer who worked as an operator technician for Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA, the Venezuelan state-owned oil company) at the Cardón Refinery in the Catalytic Complex located in Coro, Falcón state. He was also a leader in the Sindicato Único de Trabajadores (Unique Workers' Union) within that organization. He was detained at his home by officers from the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM) on December 14, 2020. During his detention, Guillermo was subjected to inhumane prison conditions. Prison authorities did not provide him with adequate sustenance and drinking water, severely deteriorating his health while in custody. On December 20, 2023, Guillermo was conditionally released, as were other victims of politically motivated arbitrary detention including Gabriel Blanco and John Álvarez.

Nicolás Maduro's government has continually harassed, prosecuted, and censored activists and civil society organizations working to protect the rights of Venezuelans amidst a complex humanitarian emergency and a deep human rights crisis that is making Venezuelans flee in unprecedented numbers in search of safety and protection. By November 2023, over 7.72 million had fled the country, representing over 25% of the country's total population.

Since 2020, four reports from the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have thoroughly documented hundreds of cases of extrajudicial executions; enforced disappearances; arbitrary detentions; and torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment committed in the country since 2014; as well as the ways in which the justice system serves as a tool for the government's policy of repression, and concluded that these grave human rights violations may amount to crimes against humanity.

***Please take action at your earliest convenience!***