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Third UA: 01/25 Index: AMR 53/9053/2025 Venezuela of February 25, 2025

## **VENEZUELA FREE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NOW**

Four human rights defenders in Venezuela are unfairly imprisoned for standing up for justice. Javier Tarazona has been behind bars since 2021. In 2024, authorities detained Rocío San Miguel, Carlos Julio Rojas, and Kennedy Tejeda.

These individuals are prisoners of conscience. They must be released immediately and without conditions. We call on Nicolás Maduro to free them without delay. While they remain in custody, the government must ensure their safety, protect them from torture, and uphold their right to a fair trial.

### **Write to the President of Venezuela urging him to:**

- Immediately and unconditionally release Javier Tarazona, Rocío San Miguel, Carlos Julio Rojas, Kennedy Tejeda, and all others arbitrarily detained in Venezuela.
- Ensure their right to life and access to medical care while they remain in custody.
- Protect them from torture and other ill-treatment under any circumstances.
- Guarantee their right to a fair trial, including due process and legal protections.

### **Write to:**

President of the Republic Nicolas Maduro  
Palacio de Miraflores,  
Av. Nte. 10, Caracas 1012,  
Caracas, Venezuela  
X: @NicolasMaduro  
Salutation: *Dear President Maduro,*

### **And copy:**

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

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Javier Tarazona, an educator and director of the NGO FundaRedes, was arrested on July 2, 2021, while trying to report government harassment to the public prosecutor's office.

Rocío San Miguel, a lawyer and president of the civil society group Control Ciudadano, was detained on February 9, 2024. While in custody, she suffered a shoulder fracture that requires urgent surgery and rehabilitation.

Carlos Julio Rojas, a journalist and community organizer, was arrested on April 15, 2024, for speaking out about issues affecting his community.

Kennedy Tejada, a young lawyer and volunteer for Foro Penal, was detained on August 2, 2024, while inquiring about the whereabouts of two men who had reportedly been arrested.

These four prisoners of conscience have endured severe human rights abuses. In the days following their arrests, they were forcibly disappeared, denied access to trusted legal representation, and held incommunicado for extended periods. Some have reported being tortured, while all have been denied proper medical care. International justice mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court (ICC), are closely monitoring these abuses as potential crimes under international law.

The Venezuelan government has intensified its repression of activists, journalists, and human rights defenders. This crackdown escalated after the July 28, 2024, election, when authorities arbitrarily detained over 2,000 people for political reasons. Many were falsely charged with terrorism or incitement of hatred, including children and people with disabilities.

By February 17, 2025, at least 1,061 people remained arbitrarily detained, including 121 women, four teenagers, and 58 individuals whose fate and whereabouts are unknown. At the same time, the broader humanitarian crisis continues to drive people out of the country. By November 2024, more than 7.8 million Venezuelans had fled in search of safety.

In addition to arrests and harassment, the government has passed laws to restrict civil society. In August 2024, authorities approved the "Law for the Audit, Regularization, Action, and Financing of Non-Governmental and Related Organizations," commonly known as the "anti-NGO law." This law forces NGOs to disclose detailed information about their members, personnel, assets, donors, and financial transactions. Organizations that fail to comply face possible closure and criminal prosecution. These restrictions began taking effect in February 2025, further limiting the ability of civil society organizations to operate freely.

Since 2020, the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) has documented widespread human rights violations in Venezuela, including extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and torture. In 2024, the FFM found "reasonable grounds" to believe that the crime of political persecution had been committed.

Meanwhile, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has been investigating crimes against humanity in Venezuela since November 2021. This includes unlawful detentions, torture, sexual violence, and politically motivated persecution carried out by state forces and pro-government groups since April 2017.

***Please take action as soon as possible until August 17, 2025. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.***