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**Human rights situations that require the
Council's attention**

Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*

Summary

This report is submitted to the Human Rights Council in accordance with its resolution 57/36 of 11 October 2024. In the report, the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela sets out the findings of its investigation into gross human rights violations committed from the presidential elections held on 28 July 2024 until 31 August 2025.

* The present report was submitted to conference services for processing after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.

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I. Introduction

1. According to resolution 42/25, the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (hereinafter “the mission”) has been mandated to investigate gross human rights violations, such as extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including sexual and gender-based violence, committed since 2014. In its resolution 57/36, the Human Rights Council decided to extend the mission's mandate for two years to enable it to continue investigating “with a particular focus on the human rights situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the lead-up to, during and after the 2024 presidential elections, and on the violence perpetrated by armed individuals known as *colectivos*”.

2. In this report, the mission provides an update on the gross human rights violations that occurred between the period immediately prior to the 2024 presidential elections up to 31 August 2025. Detailed findings are contained in the conference room paper accompanying this report. The mission will present an additional conference room paper on the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB, by its Spanish acronym) in the weeks following this session.

3. In its 2024 report, the mission referred to the reactivation of the most violent form of the State's repressive machinery as well as to the gross human rights violations and crimes that occurred following the rejection of the presidential election results proclaimed by the National Electoral Council (CNE, by its Spanish acronym), which declared Nicolás Maduro the winner without publishing the voting records. During the period covered by this report, the state policy of silencing, discouraging and suppressing opposition to the Government was consistently executed, combining different methods, especially at times of heightened political tension such as the presidential inauguration or parliamentary and regional elections. In these contexts, repression increased and mainly took the form of arbitrary detentions and other gross human rights violations.

A. Methodology and standard of proof

4. The mission conducts its investigations in accordance with United Nations methodologies and best practices, considering a gender-sensitive approach. The mission works in accordance with the principles of independence, impartiality, objectivity, transparency, integrity and the principle of “do no harm”.

5. The mission employs the standard of proof of “reasonable grounds to believe” to reach its conclusions. This standard is met when the mission has gathered a body of reliable and corroborating information, on which a reasonable and diligent person would have reasonable grounds to believe that the incident or pattern of conduct occurred.¹

6. The investigation has been seriously hampered by the liquidity and financial crisis affecting the United Nations Secretariat, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which provides support to the mission in carrying out its work. As in previous years, and partly due to the Office's recruitment procedures, the mission had fewer human resources than those allocated by this Council. Of the 11 posts assigned, the mission had eight filled, of which only three remained staffed throughout the entire investigative year. For example, out of the five investigator posts, only two were filled, and for some months, just one. The gender advisor served only three months in a temporary capacity. The mission had a legal advisor for only five months and a reporting officer for four months, with an additional three months also in a temporary capacity.

7. Despite this, the mission has been able to fulfil its mandate by redefining tasks and objectives. In this scenario, 237 remote or in-person interviews were conducted with victims, family members, witnesses and informants, 364 pieces of evidence were analysed, and information was received from national and international civil society organisations,

¹ https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/CoI_Guidance_and_Practice.pdf, pp. 62 and 63.

intergovernmental bodies and governments. Information from open sources and official documents, judicial documents, independent forensic reports, videos, audio recordings, and photographs was also analysed. The Venezuelan authorities continued to refuse to cooperate with the mission, in breach of the Council's resolutions.

8. In January 2025, a field mission was conducted in another country, where direct contact was made with victims and family members, civil society organisations, and diplomatic officials from various States. The mission published three press releases.²

9. The scope of this report is not intended, in any way, to diminish or disregard other gross human rights violations that are not addressed herein. Its focus should not be construed as implying that such violations did not occur.

II. Context

10. Post-election protests of 2024 and subsequent repression in Venezuela resulted in 25 deaths and over 2,220 arrests, along with enforced disappearances -some of short duration- torture, ill-treatment, and sexual and gender-based violence, as documented and investigated by the mission in the previous cycle. Although some detainees were released during this period, arbitrary detentions continued systematically against opposition members or individuals perceived as such.

11. On 16 October 2024, changes took place in the senior military leadership. Among the most significant were those at the head of the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM, by its Spanish acronym), which passed from Major General Iván Hernández Dala, who had held the position since 2014, to Major General Javier Marcano Tábara; and the Bolivarian Intelligence Service (SEBIN, by its Spanish acronym), which was transferred from General Gustavo González López, who had held the position since 2019, to Major General Alexis Rodríguez Cabello. Iván Hernández Dala was appointed president of the Compañía Anónima Nacional Teléfonos de Venezuela on 20 November 2024; Gustavo González López was appointed Intendant for Strategic Affairs and Production Control at the State-owned Venezuelan oil Company (PDVSA, by its Spanish acronym) on 19 October 2024. Major General Elio Ramón Estrada was confirmed in his position as Commander General of the GNB, which he has held since July 2023.³

12. Parliamentary and regional elections were held on 25 May 2025. Most of the political opposition did not participate. In this context, the Government affiliated alliance, the Gran Polo Patriótico Simón Bolívar, won by a wide margin.⁴ The CNE -whose official website has remained inactive since 28 July 2024- acted without transparency and did not publish the electoral calendar or the disaggregated election results.⁵ According to the CNE, participation in these elections reached 42.63 per cent, based on so-called active voters.⁶ Opposition political forces, civil society organisations and analysts indicated that turnout was between 12 and 26 per cent.

13. In the May election, voters cast ballots for the first time for a governor and legislative council for the so-called State of Guayana Esequiba. The International Court of Justice had ordered Venezuela to "refrain from holding elections, or from preparing to hold elections, in

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ffmv/index>

³ See <https://www.travieso-evans.com/travieso/wp-content/uploads/gacetitas/2024/10-octubre/2024-10-16-42986.pdf> (in Spanish).

⁴ According to the CNE, the ruling coalition obtained 82 per cent of the votes, winning 256 of the 285 seats in the National Assembly, 23 of the 24 governorships and 90 per cent of the seats in the state legislative councils. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpV_TZrQIVs (in Spanish).

⁵ Transparencia Venezuela en el Exilio, *Corrupción y derechos civiles y políticos en Venezuela en el marco de las elecciones regionales y parlamentarias del 25 de mayo de 2025* (in Spanish).

⁶ This category has not been defined and seems to refer to those voters who have participated in elections since 2020. This reduces the overall number of voters compared to the electoral register and increases the reported voter turnout percentage.

the disputed territory, which is currently administered and controlled by the Cooperative Republic of Guyana".⁷

14. On 27 July 2025, elections for mayors and municipal councils were held in the country's 335 municipalities. The opposition majority again abstained from participating. According to the CNE, candidates of the ruling alliance were elected mayors in 285 municipalities –representing 85 per cent– and voter turnout was reported at 44 per cent, again based on active voters. The political opposition estimated the abstention rate at 90 per cent. As a result of the 2025 elections, the ruling party has secured control of the political apparatus at all levels.

15. As previously reported, the authorities continued to invoke the argument of dismantling conspiracies against the Government or the elections to justify dozens of arrests. In addition to persons opposed to the Government, or perceived as such, a significant number of foreign nationals were detained and accused of mercenary, terrorist, or destabilising activities.

16. On 6 May 2025, after almost 14 months of confinement, the individuals who had been staying at the residence of the Argentine Ambassador in Caracas⁸ fled to the United States of America following an operation described as a rescue by the US Secretary of State.⁹ However, Venezuelan authorities claimed that the departure of these individuals was the result of a negotiation agreement, which included the departure from Venezuela of María Corina Machado's mother.

17. On 1 August 2025, the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court ruled that Prosecutor Karim Khan must recuse himself from the *Venezuela I Situation*.¹⁰ On 8 August 2025, Delcy Rodríguez visited the Deputy Prosecutor, who emphasised the Office's commitment to fulfilling its mandate by pursuing the investigation, initiated in 2018, while assessing the Government's progress in relation to complementarity.¹¹

III. Update on patterns of violations

18. During the period covered by this report, the mission investigated gross human rights violations including, *inter alia*, deaths in State custody, waves of arrests -including prolonged incommunicado detention and solitary confinement- deprivation of liberty in clandestine locations, torture, and acts of sexual and gender-based violence. The investigation focused on violations perpetrated in connection with the presidential elections, continuing the work initiated at the end of its previous investigation cycle. The conference room paper accompanying this report details the mission's investigations and includes an annex of 19 cases illustrating key violations and the mission's findings.

A. Arbitrary detentions

19. With regards to the post-election protests of 2024, the mission has corroborated that the detentions were part of a plan to silence the opposition, implemented progressively as the State perceived greater resistance. The increasing number of demonstrations against the results announced by the CNE led the State to launch a process of mass arrests under two modalities: on the one hand, indiscriminate arrests, carried out during or after the protests themselves, and on the other, selective arrests within the framework of Operation Tun Tun.¹² In the latter case, individuals were arrested for being opponents or identified as such due to their participation in protests or criticism of the Government.

⁷ See <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/171/171-20250501-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

⁸ A/HRC/57/57, para. 47.

⁹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tJRyq2x-2g&v=19s> (in Spanish).

¹⁰ See <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/CourtRecords/0902ebd180c3e9e5.pdf>

¹¹ See <https://x.com/IntlCrimCourt/status/1953814400973894003>

¹² See https://www.instagram.com/tvvnoticias/reel/C-Thh_6SfMN/ (in Spanish).

20. Those arrested were initially held in temporary detention centres. When these centres exceeded their capacity, the authorities opened investigation files based on real or fabricated criticism of the Government, particularly on social media or messaging networks, reports from regime-affiliated groups (“cooperating patriots”) or participation in protests. The authorities acknowledged that they had detained more than 2,220 persons in connection with the 2024 post-election crisis. The mission recorded the detention of at least 218 children and adolescents.¹³

21. The justice system, through its four terrorism courts, organised collective remote hearings, involving up to 103 individuals in a single case, held from temporary detention centres and based on the fabricated investigation files and pre-established charges. The courts automatically ordered pretrial detention in prisons refurbished for this purpose, such as Tocarón (Aragua State) and Tocuyito (Carabobo State), as well as in other detention centres, like Yare, La Crisálida and Rodeo.

22. Between January and August 2025, the mission documented a total of 200 detentions. The State's repressive machinery was particularly active around the presidential inauguration on 10 January, when the mission documented up to 84 detentions (67 men and 17 women), and during the election process on 25 May, when it documented 42 detentions (34 men and 8 women). Between these two events, the mission documented an additional 13 arrests (11 men and 2 women), and between June and August, a further 61 (43 men and 18 women).

23. The mission investigated 44 cases of detentions and found reasonable grounds to believe that all were arbitrary. Arbitrariness is determined by the manner in which the arrests were conducted; the absence of factual or legal grounds to substantiate them; undue restrictions on the exercise of civil liberties and political rights of opponents or critics of the Government; delays in bringing detainees before a judge; or serious violations of due process guarantees.

24. The modus operandi of the security forces carrying out the arrests was, in general, the same as that observed by the mission in its previous and earlier report: arrests conducted by unidentified individuals, often hooded, without presenting arrest warrants or explaining the reasons for the detention. In several cases, officers used disproportionate force to carry out arrests, forcibly remove individuals from their homes, and place them in unmarked vehicles. In detention centres, detainees were unable to communicate with family members or lawyers and were not informed of the charges against them. Several persons were photographed with incriminating items which, according to the sources consulted, they did not possess at the time of their arrest and were subjected to interrogation without legal assistance.

25. Violations of due process guarantees, particularly during initial court appearances, continued to be committed systematically. Hearings were not public, although in some cases involving children and adolescents, the mission documented the presence of family members. Most hearings were conducted remotely via WhatsApp or other digital platforms, some at night or in early morning hours, from detention centres or from courthouses in other states, before judges, prosecutors and public defenders located in Caracas. Those on trial were unable to see, hear, understand, or question judicial officers, or even interact with the public defenders imposed on them, either before or during the hearing.

26. Under these conditions, detainees were charged, generally with crimes of terrorism, incitement to hatred, and instigation to commit a crime. In the case of children and adolescents, custody officers threatened them not to speak about the conditions of their detention. When they did speak out, as in the case of three girls who alleged having been subjected to acts of sexual and gender-based violence, the courts did not take up their complaints, nor were the corresponding investigations initiated.

27. Except in one of the cases investigated by the mission —that of Carlos Correa—, the inability for detainees to appoint trusted legal counsel persisted throughout proceedings, either due to judicial decisions or due to obstacles imposed by detention centre staff on the processing of such appointments. This restriction has had a serious impact on the rights of

¹³ In accordance with international law, children are persons under 18 years of age.

the accused, as in several cases public defenders also failed to communicate with them or their families. In addition, access to judicial files was denied.

1. Incommunicado detention

28. During the present investigation, the mission observed with concern the alarming use of incommunicado detention from the very moment of arrest. In some cases, incommunicado detention was imposed during detention, typically as a form of punishment.

29. Of the cases investigated, the mission found reasonable grounds to believe that in 19 of them, incommunicado detentions lasted for weeks and months, which may be considered prolonged incommunicado detention, prohibited under international standards because it may constitute torture and other cruel and inhuman treatment, depending on the circumstance.¹⁴ In seven of these cases, the period of incommunicado detention exceeded six months.

2. Detentions of foreign nationals

30. The authorities provided fragmented and unclear information about the foreign national detainees during this period, whom they accused of being mercenaries or involved in terrorist acts or international conspiracies. Based on official sources, the mission estimates that the number of foreign national detainees could range between 120 and 150 individuals, of whom it has managed to document 84 cases (81 men and 3 women).

31. The scale of this phenomenon reveals a pattern not previously observed by the mission. According to the documentation, most of the detentions were carried out by the GNB, the DGCIM, and the Administrative Service for Identification, Migration, and Foreigners (SAIME, by its Spanish acronym) in border areas with Colombia. In at least the case of French American national Lucas Hunter, the mission has reasonable grounds to believe that he was captured on Colombian territory near the border with Zulia State.

32. According to information obtained by the mission, the detained foreign nationals had entered Venezuela for various reasons: tourism, personal visits, family matters, or work. The risk of arbitrary detention for foreigners has led several States to advise their nationals against traveling to Venezuela.¹⁵

33. The practice of prolonged incommunicado detention was imposed on all detained foreign nationals, lasting more than six months in some cases, during which time they were also denied access to consular assistance from their respective States.¹⁶ This situation constitutes a breach of the obligations established under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and other international legal standards.¹⁷

3. Releases from prison

34. Persons detained in the context of the post-election protests began to be released in groups starting on 15 November 2024, including children and adolescents. According to official information from the Public Prosecutor's Office, by March 2025, 2,006 persons had been released from prison, although the organisation Foro Penal had only registered 1,399 (1,209 men and 190 women).

35. The released persons were accompanied by precautionary measures, such as the prohibition against making public statements about their cases, and the obligation to

¹⁴ CCPR/C/GC/35, paras. 35 and 56; CED/C/11, para. 5.

¹⁵ See <https://cancilleria.gob.ar/es/actualidad/noticias/alerta-consular-se-reitera-los-ciudadanos-argentinos-la-recomendacion-de-no> (in Spanish); <https://ve.usembassy.gov/reissued-may-12-2025-to-emphasize-the-extreme-danger-to-u-s-citizens-living-in-or-traveling-to-venezuela/>; <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/conseils-aux-voyageurs/conseils-par-pays-destination/venezuela> (in French); <https://www.nederlandwereldwijd.nl/reisadvies/venezuela> (in Dutch).

¹⁶ The mission has documented that communications from 13 States were ignored by the Venezuelan authorities.

¹⁷ CCPR/C/GC/35, para. 58; Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Advisory Opinion OC-16/99 of 1 October 1999. Series A No. 16; and ICJ. *Avena et al. Mexican Nationals (Mexico v. United States of America)*.

periodically report in person to courts based in Caracas -a measure that is particularly burdensome requirement for those outside the capital. These measures were applied uniformly, without consideration of the individual circumstances of each case.

36. The mission has documented that, in some cases, persons released were required to sign statements denying that their rights had been violated during detention as a precondition for release. It also found that most individuals did not receive formal release orders but were instead verbally and imprecisely informed of their release by guards, prosecutors, or public defenders. In certain cases, the release documents did not specify the precautionary measures to be complied with, leaving some individuals uncertain about the exact precise scope of their restrictions. Courts did not provide released individuals with access to their case files or related information.

37. According to documentation gathered by the mission, several foreign nationals, most of them United States citizens, were released as part of a bilateral negotiation between Venezuela and the United States of America. As of the date of this report, 17 U.S. nationals had been released in 2025: 6 on 31 January, 1 in May, and 10 on 18 July.

38. In addition, under an agreement between El Salvador, the United States of America, and Venezuela, on 18 July 2025, El Salvador transferred to Venezuela, 252 individuals who had been held in high-security prisons, including those previously deported from the United States of America. In exchange, Venezuela committed to releasing 80 individuals. As of 24 July 2025, human rights organisations had recorded the release of 71 individuals under this agreement, most of whom had been detained during the 2024 post-election protests. Outside the scope of these negotiations, a further 13 detainees were released on 24 August 2025.

39. As for children and adolescents, according to information from Foro Penal, all but three had been released by December 2024. In the context of the presidential inauguration, the authorities detained two additional children, although one was released on 11 June 2025. As of the date of this report, four children remain in detention in connection with the electoral protests. The mission has documented that precautionary measures like those imposed on adults were applied to at least 143 children, without consideration for their age or best interests.

4. Extortion related detentions and detentions of family members

40. A pattern repeatedly identified in previous reports by the mission has been that of extortion-related detentions carried out by various security forces, a phenomenon also highlighted by civil society.¹⁸ The allegations refer to individuals who were asked to pay money in order to be released without being charged, or to avoid being detained, even when passing through a checkpoint where their names appeared on a list. The amounts demanded ranged from USD 1,000 to USD 50,000, according to information received from the affected individuals, their families, and diplomatic sources. In one case investigated, the family of a detainee paid USD 3,500 to the head of a DGCIM office to secure his release.

41. Sexual extortion against women was also documented, with women being offered release or improved detention conditions in exchange for engaging in sexual relations. This issue is discussed below in the section on sexual and gender-based violence.

42. The detention of family members as retaliation or as bait to arrest opponents or individuals perceived as such by the Government, a pattern identified by the mission since its first report, continued during this investigative period. The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that this practice was used against the spouse of a social activist, who was detained by security forces to facilitate the arrest of the partner, who had been tricked into going to meet her. Another case investigated was that of Rafael Tudares Bracho, the son-in-law of Edmundo González, who was detained three days before the presidential inauguration while taking his children to school.¹⁹

¹⁸ See <https://transparenciave.org/economias-ilicitas/las-caras-de-la-extorsion-en-venezuela-2024/> (in Spanish).

¹⁹ See <https://x.com/MarianaGTudares/status/1937267164681015420> (in Spanish).

B. Arbitrary deprivation of life

1. Deaths in the context of post-election protests

43. The mission has confirmed that 25 individuals died in connection with the post-2024 election protests, including a GNB sergeant. As of 11 November 2024, the Public Prosecutor's Office had acknowledged 28 deceased persons.²⁰ This did not include three of the victims identified by the mission, and added six others, including a second GNB officer. Based on information obtained and that disclosed by the Public Prosecutor's Office, the mission has reasonable grounds to believe that the deaths of these six individuals were not part of the same post-election context of fatal incidents. For example, three individuals died in traffic related events, including the second GNB officer, who was struck by a drunk driver;²¹ another person was killed by an individual who had been threatening residents in a neighbourhood over a land dispute.²²

44. The mission has deepened its initial investigation into the deaths of 14 of the 25 deceased individuals: seven who were fatally wounded in the State of Aragua (city of Maracay) on 29 July 2024;²³ two who were killed on the same day during protests in El Valle, Capital District (near the El Valle Shopping Centre);²⁴ and five others during protests that took place on 29 and 30 July 2024 in the State of Zulia (municipality of San Francisco),²⁵ and the Capital District (parish of Antimano),²⁶ and on 30 July 2024 in the States of Carabobo²⁷ (city of Valencia), Lara (city of Carora),²⁸ and Miranda (city of Guarenas).²⁹

45. The State has maintained its position that none of the deaths during the protests are attributable to the security forces, but rather to the political opposition, through its activists (*"comanditos"*), criminal gangs, or criminals hired by them.³⁰ The mission's investigation has not revealed any such connections.

46. The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that State security forces were involved in six of the 14 deaths referred to. In another six cases, a series of indications point in the same direction. Of the remaining two, in one case the mission has reasonable grounds to believe that the fatal shot came from inside a political office of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV, by its Spanish acronym) where its militants were gathered. In the other case, concerning the death of the GNB officer, the mission does not have sufficient elements to establish responsibility according to its standard of proof. The details of each of these deaths are summarised below.

47. In the case of the protest in Maracay, of the seven individuals who died, six were protesters and one was a GNB sergeant. This protest took place in the area between the San Jacinto obelisk roundabout and the 99th Special Forces Brigade of the Army. Based on testimonies from victims, witnesses, and relatives of the deceased, corroborated by video footage, an independent forensic analysis, and open-source information, the mission has reasonable grounds to believe that members of the GNB and the Army fired firearms from the Brigade premises and its surroundings at protesters.

²⁰ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYemt3r-kzM> (in Spanish).

²¹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGVtWNjG6H0> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwQ3-clYnb4> (in Spanish)

²² See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYemt3r-kzM> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGVtWNjG6H0> (in Spanish).

²³ Anthony Moya, José Antonio Torrents, Gabriel Ramos, Andrés Ramírez, Rancés Yzarra, Jesús Tovar, and Jesús Medina.

²⁴ Olinger Montaña and Anthony García Cañizales.

²⁵ Isaías Fuenmayor.

²⁶ Aníbal Romero.

²⁷ Víctor Bustos.

²⁸ Walter Páez.

²⁹ Carlos Porras.

³⁰ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h31wT15O3W8>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGVtWNjG6H0> and <https://diariolajornada.com/?p=210975> (in Spanish).

48. The initially peaceful protest began to turn violent when anti-riot forces used tear gas. In response, groups of protesters threw stones, Molotov cocktails, or similar items, and other objects, which led to the indiscriminate use of potentially lethal force, apparently without valid justification. All the fatal victims were wounded within the same geographic area, around the Brigade, and within the same time frame, starting at 5.30 p.m. The shots that struck the victims hit vital parts of their bodies (abdomen, head, neck, chest). At least one of the shots was fired from a distance no greater than ten meters. Less than 15 days after the incident, the Attorney General announced the arrest of a suspect in the death of the GNB sergeant. The Public Prosecutor's Office initiated an investigation into the other six deaths, but its progress or conclusion remains unknown.

49. In other protests, it has been documented and corroborated that members of the GNB, DAET/PNB, and the Carabobo State Police fired firearms at the protesters in the direction of the protests. In the case of the two victims in El Valle, the video evidence analysed shows the moment when these individuals fell wounded after a nine-second burst of gunfire was heard, in an area where the GNB was operating and from which the protesters were fleeing. Neither of the two victims was carrying out actions that posed a risk to the life or physical integrity of others.

50. In the case of Romero, whose death in the parish of Antimano has been denied by the authorities, the analysed footage shows the moment when he is struck in the abdomen by a firearm projectile. Based on this footage, Romero was not posing a threat to anyone's life or physical integrity when he was hit. The shot came from an area from which, according to documentation, the DAET/PNB was firing at protesters. In the deaths Fuenmayor, a 15-year-old and Porras, the mission has documented that officers from the GNB and the Carabobo State Police,³¹ respectively, fired long guns -and in one case also handguns- in the direction of the protests. In the case of Bustos, an unidentified security force also fired at protesters.

51. Walter Páez is the only victim for whom the mission has reasonable grounds to believe that his death was caused by a non-state actor. Páez died from surgical abdominal sepsis after undergoing surgery for a gunshot wound sustained during a protest in front of the PSUV office in Carora. The mission's investigation revealed that Páez took part in a demonstration that escalated into violent incidents, including the throwing of stones, sticks, Molotov cocktails, and other objects, and even the burning of the PSUV premises.

52. According to the information gathered, PSUV supporters responded to the violence of the protest with gunfire from inside the party's office. The investigation by the Scientific, Penal, and Criminal Investigations Corps (CICPC) found spent casings only inside that office. Impacted ammunition remnants were also found in front of the office, in the protest area. The mission also obtained an image of a civilian carrying a handgun inside the PSUV office during the incidents. Based on this evidence, the mission has reasonable grounds to believe that Páez died as a result of a gunshot fired from the PSUV office. The mission has received information that CICPC officers were pressured not to implicate individuals associated with PSUV.

2. Deaths in State custody

53. The mission has investigated the deaths in custody of five individuals.³² Four of them were detained in the context of 2024 post-election protests, either during the demonstrations or at their homes as part of Operation Tun Tun.³³ The fifth individual was detained on 9 January 2025, near a protest held in the context of the presidential inauguration.

54. According to official information, two of these individuals died by hanging: Jesús Álvarez in the Tocuyito prison and Lindomar Bustamante in the Tocarón prison. The mission has obtained information that both victims had been subject to ill-treatment during their

³¹ See <https://www.instagram.com/p/C-I8g9nxUC3/> (in Spanish).

³² According to the Venezuelan Prison Observatory, since 2015, the total number of persons detained for being critical or opposed to the Government, or perceived as such, who have died in State custody stands at 22. See <https://oveprisiones.com/149-muertos-bodia-del-el-sistema-penitenciario-se-consolida-como-herramienta-de-represion-torturay-muerte/> (in Spanish).

³³ A/HRC/57/57, paras. 29 and 60.

detention, including interrogations involving beatings, restrictions on water and food, denial of medical care and specific medication, and isolation in punishment cells. Bustamante died the day after completing a 15-day period of solitary confinement in one of those cells. In the case of Álvarez, the mission was informed that the victim did not have marks on his neck but had a stitch on his head and a bruise on one of his cheekbones. The autopsy report was not shared with the family.

55. The other three deaths occurred as a result of irreversible health deterioration. In the first case documented by the mission, Osgual González entered the Tocuyito detention centre in good health. When his health deteriorated, his family requested his transfer to a medical centre, but he was only given painkillers. According to reports, the detainee died from an uncertain diagnosis and the condition for releasing the body was that no statements be made.³⁴

56. Reinaldo Araujo was detained on his way to a medical appointment, while passing near a demonstration on 9 January 2025. From the moment of his deprivation of liberty, at a PNB facility in the State of Trujillo, officers from the detention centre, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and the Public Defender's Office were informed about a viral respiratory condition he was suffering from, which posed a high risk due to his morbid obesity and COVID-19 aftereffects. All of these officials and authorities were asked to provide special care for Araujo, which was never provided. The detainee died a month and a half after his detention, in a hospital where he was admitted when he could no longer breathe without an oxygen mask.

57. Jesús Martínez began to show skin infections on his limbs 15 days after his detention in a PNB facility in the State of Anzoátegui. The detainee and his family requested special care from the authorities given that he had underlying health conditions, including type II diabetes mellitus. After nearly two months of continuous requests, the detainee was admitted to a hospital, where it was determined that both legs had to be amputated because the infections had developed into necrotizing fasciitis. The detainee died from septic shock. A report by an independent team of forensic doctors who reviewed the case history established that, given the patient's condition, strict glucose control, appropriate diet and medication, daily monitoring of the lesions, and prompt treatment of cuts or minor injuries were necessary. None of which were carried out.

58. The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that the officials of the detention centres involved, as well as those who became aware of the detainees' health condition of the detainees in the last two cases, did not act with due diligence to prevent the deterioration of the deterioration of their health and their deaths.³⁵

59. The State has not provided information to clarify any of the five deaths. Nor have the families of the deceased received direct and comprehensive explanations from the authorities regarding the circumstances of each death. On the contrary, as documented, some families were forced to hold strictly private funerals under CICPC surveillance. The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that the authorities have not fulfilled their obligation to conduct impartial, thorough and transparent investigations to clarify the possible responsibilities of the officers involved.

C. Enforced disappearances

60. The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that in 12 cases (six men, two women, and four children) there was an enforced disappearance. In two of these cases, the disappearance lasted for several months, while in the other 10, for days or hours. According to an expansive interpretation of the legal definition of enforced disappearance, the total number reaches 13 cases.

61. Regarding foreign nationals, due to judicial and political secrecy and opacity, the mission was able to confirm, in only two out of 84 cases, that either no hearing took place

³⁴ <https://elpitazo.net/regiones/familiares-sepultan-al-presopolitico-osgual-gonzalez-en-lara-bajo-custodia-de-la-pnb/>

³⁵ CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 25.

within six months of detention, or that the hearing occurred more than three months after the time of detention. In the remaining 82 cases documented by the mission, it has not been possible to confirm the judicial presentation of the detainee within the prescribed 48-hour timeframe. More information would be required to determine whether these constitute cases of enforced disappearance.

62. In many cases, from the moment of their detention, individuals were held incommunicado with no contact with the outside world, and despite efforts by their families and their States of nationality to locate them, neither their fate, whereabouts, nor legal situation are known.

63. The judicial system has a key responsibility to ensure respect for personal freedom, personal integrity, and life. During the period covered by this report, the mission corroborated that judges did not fulfil this responsibility. The systematic blocking and rejection of the processing and/or timely application of the *habeas corpus* remedy is one example. In the period before and after the 2024 presidential elections, the mission documented at least 22 cases in which *habeas corpus* petitions were not received. As of 31 August 2025, in at least 28 cases, *habeas corpus* petitions had not been received or resolved.

64. The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that the *habeas corpus* remedy has been deprived of its effectiveness as a means of protection for individuals who may be victims, *inter alia*, of violations of the rights to life, personal integrity, and liberty, rights inherently involved in cases of enforced disappearance;³⁶ and that the intentional obstruction by justice system officers contributes the commission of this gross violation.

D. Torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (ill-treatment)

65. The mission continued documenting cases of torture and ill-treatment related to the 2024 electoral crisis, which occurred especially in temporary detention centres, such as military facilities, and those of State security or intelligence corps. These acts were also perpetrated in penitentiaries and clandestine detention centres. The facts investigated revealed that State security forces continue to use the methods reported in previous reports to inflict severe suffering on victims in order to extract information, humiliate or punish them. Most of the people detained after 28 July 2024 who suffered these abuses reported that the perpetrators beat them for being *guarimberos* and "terrorists," seeking to force them to acknowledge their political dissent.

66. A member of Voluntad Popular who assisted with logistical tasks on the day of the presidential election was detained by the DGCIM on 20 August 2024 and repeatedly beaten in one of its facilities on the stomach, hands and back with wooden and metal rods. The individual was coerced into providing information about political party leaders. The injuries were corroborated by the mission. Another political activist, detained on two occasions, on 15 and 31 July 2024, was subjected to electric shocks on his feet while SEBIN officers interrogated him to determine the whereabouts of opposition members and the identities of those responsible for safeguarding the election records. The mission also obtained information that security forces carried out beatings, kicks, punches, and blows with bats, and used plastic bags to suffocate individuals under interrogation, including children and adolescents.

67. The mission also documented acts of sexual torture, including forced nudity, threats of sexual violence, and the application of electricity to the genitals. These forms of violence were directed predominantly against women and girls. Acts of violence based on perceived or assumed sexual orientation were also documented, targeting men perceived as homosexual.

68. The mission continued to document acts of psychological torture already reported in previous reports, involving interrogation methods used to pressure detainees to provide information, including threats of harm to themselves or their families. A remote forensic

³⁶ See Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Advisory Opinion OC-8/87 of 30 January 1987. Series A No. 8, para. 35.

evaluation conducted under the Istanbul Protocol on a person who had been detained in a clandestine centre revealed the serious psychological consequences caused by the methods used. This person was interrogated while blindfolded and immobilised with the *pulpo*.³⁷ The expert report describes "a deep sense of vulnerability, despair and helplessness, in a context of constant threat, with no safe spaces for him or those close to him".

69. The mission has documented other forms of punishment against detained persons who were opponents or perceived as such, with the same intent and effect of causing severe suffering. These include denial of access to food, water, and medical care. In at least two documented cases, after requesting improved conditions, detainees were confined to punishment cells referred to by inmates as "Tigrito", a narrow cubicle with no light or ventilation. The existence of such cells has been reported in the Tocarón and Tocuyito prisons, although similar punishment spaces had previously been identified by the mission in other prisons. Other punishment spaces identified include the "Adolfo's bed" in Tocarón, similar to the "Tigrito", and "Saturno" in Tocuyito, a room measuring approximately 2x2 metres in size with a crossbar from which detainees are suspended by their wrists. One released person reported that, as an additional form punishment, detainees were beaten while hanging from the crossbar.

70. The mission also documented the isolation of detainees, including in these punishment cells, for periods exceeding 15 consecutive days, which constitutes "prolonged solitary confinement", prohibited by international standards as it may amount to torture or ill-treatment.³⁸ In one case, the detainee was subjected to solitary confinement in a punishment cell on three occasions, one of which lasted 21 days. The same detainee also reported that others were forced to sleep naked and were woken at dawn with buckets of cold water.

71. The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that at least seven persons who experienced any of the situations described *above* were victims of torture or ill-treatment.

72. Starting in August 2024, the Tocarón and Tocuyito detention centres were hastily refurbished to receive most of the persons deprived of their liberty in the context of the 2024 post-election protests. Over the following months, other centres also received these detainees, including San Francisco de Yare (State of Miranda), Rodeo I, and the La Crisálida women's centre (State of Miranda).

73. The mission has received reports of provision of spoiled food or food containing insects, and poor hygiene in eating utensils, which has caused illness among detainees.³⁹ Reports have also been received of families being prohibited from delivering nutritious food, resulting in significant weight loss, up to 20 kilograms. Detainees with chronic illnesses have not had access to the specific diets required for their medical conditions. Restrictions on the frequency and portion size of meals have also been reported, used as punitive measures against individuals who are opponents or perceived as such.⁴⁰

74. The mission has received information that in Tocarón and Tocuyito, the water was yellow in colour and came from wells, giving it an dusty taste, unfit for human consumption, and causing diarrhoea.⁴¹ One released person informed the mission that only one litre of water per day was provide for two persons, which had to be used for drinking, personal hygiene and sanitation. At Rodeo I, inmates received only three glasses of water per day at the

³⁷ Metal device with several handles described by the mission in previous reports. See A/HRC/45/33, para. 285.

³⁸ Mandela Rules 43 and 44.

³⁹ See <https://www.elnacional.com/venezuela/familiares-de-detenido-en-tocuyito-están-muriendo-de-hambre/>; <https://provea.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Prision-injusta-celdas-inhumanas-INFORME-SOBRE-LAS-CONDICIONES-CARCELARIAS-DE-LOS-PRESOS-POLITICOS-EN-VENEZUELA-2.pdf>; <https://www.infobae.com/venezuela/2025/02/20/las-familias-de-los-presos-politicos-detenido-tras-el-fraude-de-nicolas-maduro-pidieron-la-revision-de-los-casos/> and <https://www.infobae.com/venezuela/2024/11/24/las-terribles-condiciones-a-las-que-están-sometidos-los-presos-politicos-venezolanos-en-la-carcel-rodeo-i/> (in Spanish).

⁴⁰ A/HRC/58/48/Add.1, para. 87.

⁴¹ See <https://provea.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Prision-injusta-celdas-inhumanas-INFORME-SOBRE-LAS-CONDICIONES-CARCELARIAS-DE-LOS-PRESOS-POLITICOS-EN-VENEZUELA-2.pdf> (in Spanish).

beginning of their detention. Water rationing was also used as a punitive measure against individuals who were opponents or perceived as such.

75. The cells in Tocarón can measure 3x2 metres and even six persons were held there at the same time. Conditions were even more extreme in temporary detention centres, such as the PNB facility in Los Guayos, State of Carabobo, where 14 persons were held in a 5x5-metre cell for 20 days.

76. Detainees did not receive timely or specialised medical care when needed, nor were they provided with specific medications. These issues are illustrated above, in the section on deaths in State custody, and below, in the section on sexual and gender-based violence in relation to sexual and reproductive health.

77. The mission has concluded that in 21 cases, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the conditions of detention exceeded a threshold such that they may constitute cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

E. Sexual and gender-based violence

78. The mission has confirmed a new increase in cases of sexual and gender-based violence against women, girls, children, adolescents and men deprived of their liberty following the presidential elections as already identified in the 2024 report. Testimonies and information were received from victims, family members, witnesses and organisations regarding, *inter alia*, coercive transactional sex, invasive searches involving forced nudity, reproductive violence, and possible acts of sexual slavery and/or forced prostitution. The mission documented twenty-two such cases in six states of the country committed by State officers in coercive environments, such as detention centres.

79. According to testimonies collected, at least one woman and five children (aged 15–17) were subjected to sexual exploitation through coercive transactional sex. A woman who was detained in a GNB facility for four months informed the mission that she witnessed an act of sexual violence against another woman deprived of liberty. She also reported that male sergeants demanded sexual relations in exchange for access to telephone calls.

80. According to the testimony of a man detained in Tocarón between August and November 2024, guards selected inmates at night and offered them benefits in exchange for sex. The witness reported these sexual acts were committed in a corridor on the first floor of wing B. Another witness reported that, in another centre, women detained in the context of the 2024 post-election protests were victims of repeated sexual violence by male guards, who also shared with male detainees a "price list" for the sexual services of female inmates. Some of these cases, with additional information, could be considered forced prostitution.

81. The mission received information from a psycho-medical team that collected testimonies from 18 persons released from prison (15 men and 3 women) and two family members. Half of the released individuals reported having been subjected to forced nudity at the beginning of their detention, and two men reported receiving electric shocks to their genitals to extract a confession. The mission also received information about the lack of medical care and access to medication for LGBT individuals, due to being political opponents or perceived as such, and as a form of discrimination based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

82. The mission has documented cases of reproductive violence, including lack of access to sexual and reproductive health and menstrual hygiene products, as well as violations of the rights of pregnant and breastfeeding women. Neither of two arrested pregnant women received the required gynaecological and obstetric care. One of them, who was 11 weeks pregnant with a high-risk pregnancy at the time of her detention, was denied ultrasounds and routine check-ups. Another woman, detained on 2 August 2024 by the GNB, was separated from her breastfeeding baby and was only allowed to breastfeed him occasionally and at the discretion of her guards. The guards demanded sexual favours in exchange for allowing her to feed her baby regularly.

83. The mission continued to document invasive searches during visits to detention centres, particularly targeting women, who are generally the only visitors authorised in most prisons. The testimonies collected identify female guards as the main perpetrators of these acts. These cases occurred in Rodeo I, Yare III, military facilities and PNB police stations. The most serious searches consisted of forced nudity, sometimes with physical contact, and vaginal inspection. These have been already identified by the mission in previous reports. These acts were mainly suffered by young women, but also by girls, including one who was forced by two female officers to show her genitals as a condition for visiting. Another child was subjected to physical touching during the inspection and was also forced to remove her sanitary towel while she was menstruating. In another case, a PNB police officer did not allow the mother of a detained adolescent to get dressed until she had been observed naked by other male police officers.

84. The similarities identified in the *modus operandi*, the profiles of the victims and perpetrators, as well as the locations where the acts were committed in the documented cases corroborate the existence of a pattern of sexual and gender-based violence. These acts take place in places of deprivation of liberty and are committed against women, girls, adolescents, and men, including LGBT persons, who are political opponents or perceived as such.

IV. Restrictions on civic space

85. The Mission has documented the detention of 18 cases of journalists in the performance of their work between August 2024 and August 2025 due to their real or perceived status as opponents of the Government. As of the date of this report, 11 journalists (10 men and one woman) remain in detention. Between January and June 2025, Espacio Público recorded a total of 144 attacks on freedom of expression, including 44 incidents related to the digital environment.⁴²

86. The State has made progress in the adoption and implementation of regulations that restrict or have the potential to restrict civil society participation in public life. The Law on Oversight, Regularisation, Action and Financing of Non-Governmental Organisations and Non-Profit Social Organisations came into force on 15 November 2024.⁴³ The law serves as a mechanism of political control of non-governmental organisations, through mandatory registration, disproportionate administrative sanctions, and the granting of broad discretionary powers granted to the Government. Some organisations have been visited by State security forces, rather than administrative officers, to verify the registration process. Only a few organisations have managed to complete the registration process, while others chose to suspend their operations or relocate outside Venezuela.⁴⁴

87. The mission has also obtained information on irregularities in the registration process for organisations, such as unequal treatment, requirements not established by law, lack of certification of the initiation of the process, and denial of registration without written justification. The political nature of the process has made it difficult to identify professionals willing to audit the financial information. Cases of bribery in registration offices have also been reported.

88. The Constitutional Law of Liberator Simón Bolívar against the Imperialist Blockade and in Defence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela came into force on 28 November 2024.⁴⁵ This law is concerning due to its vague language and the possibility that severe administrative and criminal measures and sanctions (including prison sentences of up to 30 years, disqualification from public office for up to 60 years, denial of alternatives to imprisonment, or confiscation of property) may be imposed based on a discretionary interpretation of its provisions. Its ambiguous wording and broad scope allow it to be used as

⁴² See <https://espaciopublico.org/libertad-expresion-junio-2025-venezuela/> (in Spanish).

⁴³ Official Gazette No. 6,855 Extraordinary, 15 November 2024.

⁴⁴ Since 2023, while still a bill, the mission expressed concern about the clear orientation of the law to limit, rather than facilitate, the exercise of the right to freedom of association. See, *inter alia*, <https://www.ohchr.org/es/press-releases/2023/01/venezuela-draft-ngo-law-reaching-point-no-return-closure-civic-space>; A/HRC/54/CRP.8, para. 98, and A/HRC/57/57, para. 102.

⁴⁵ Official Gazette, No. 6,859 Extraordinary, 29 November 2024.

a tool for persecuting civil society organisations that collaborate with international bodies, including this Council. To date, the mission is not aware of any cases in which the law has been applied, although senior state authorities have publicly called for its implementation to disqualify candidates from the 25 May 2025 elections.⁴⁶

89. The draft bill Against Fascism, Neo-Fascism and Similar Expressions, which the mission mentioned in its last report, noting its lack of specificity, has not yet been approved. International human rights bodies and mechanisms have again expressed concern about the risks posed by that the application of its ambiguous provisions, primarily to freedoms of expression and association.⁴⁷ The risk for human rights organisations would be that their reports potentially be deemed contrary to this bill, thereby discouraging their participation in multilateral spaces such as this Council. This would reduce the flow of independent information used by international mechanisms to monitor and assess the situation in the country.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

90. The investigation, which explores in greater depth the events surrounding the 2024 elections and subsequent developments, allows the mission to conclude that gross human rights violations and international crimes were committed, and that the State policy of silencing, discouraging, and quashing the opposition to the Government continues to be systematically implemented. The various events in 2025 have clearly shown how this policy is being maintained and, adapting to different circumstances, combines various methods of persecution and repression, depending on moments and events of heightened political tension.

91. All of this confirms the mission's previous findings in its latest report, in which it considered that some of the violations documented before and after the 2024 presidential elections -including arbitrary detentions, torture and sexual violence, as well as other related violations- taken as a whole, constitute the crime against humanity on political grounds. This crime continues to be committed to the present day against Government critics, political opponents, and others perceived as such.⁴⁸

92. The mission's investigation has revealed acts of extreme cruelty and contempt for the victims, resulting in loss of life due to lack of timely medical care, as well as coercive acts of sexual violence against detained women, including adolescent girls. In addition, some violations have crossed national borders, such as the detention of foreign nationals from 29 sovereign States. Furthermore, laws continue to be adopted and applied that prevent, restrict, or discourage free and independent participation in civic and democratic spaces.

93. The findings of the investigation during this period provide the mission with reasonable grounds to believe that justice system authorities have played an essential role in implementing the State policy of suppressing the opposition, a pattern identified by the mission since its first report. Their deliberate actions have facilitated the commission of gross violations and their subsequent cover-up. In doing so, these authorities have failed to comply with their constitutional and international obligations.

⁴⁶ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sf0Zd7Pu7f8>; <https://avn.info.ve/an-solicita-al-cne-aplicacion-de-ley-simon-bolivar-a-postulados-a-elecciones-del-27a/> and <https://x.com/Rebeca911/status/1909346488507060272> (in Spanish).

⁴⁷ See https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/expression/media_center/preleases/2024/328.asp and Communication OL VEN 7/2024 of 2 October 2024 from the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression *et al.*

⁴⁸ A/HRC/57/57.

B. Recommendations

94. In its five previous reports since 2020, the mission has made at least 145 recommendations to the Venezuelan State. Most of these recommendations focused on accountability, that is, on the State's obligation to investigate gross human rights violations and crimes so that victims can obtain justice, truth, and reparation. Another significant part of the recommendations concerned measures aimed at preventing the recurrence of gross human rights violations. Not only has the State failed to comply with these recommendations, but it has also intensified its repression by continuing to systematically commit gross violations and international crimes for more than a decade.

95. The mission urges the authorities of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to comply with all the recommendations addressed to them and calls on the Human Rights Council and the international community to continue to pursue the necessary measures to combat impunity in Venezuela and to prevent further violations.

96. The mission recommends paying particular attention to the rights of victims, both within the country and abroad, as well as to the protection of human rights organisations, ensuring that they have access to the necessary resources to continue serving Venezuelan society.

97. The mission reiterates the importance of the accountability efforts initiated at the international level, under the principle of universal jurisdiction and before the International Criminal Court, urging that, within the framework of their internal procedures, they advance move swiftly. In this regard, the mission remains willing to cooperate with all accountability processes. The mission also recommends that the members of this Council whose nationals have been or are victims of the gross human rights violations reported in this document implement the necessary accountability measures within their own jurisdictions.
