



Public Statement

Venezuela appears before the Committee against Torture

5 November 2014

Tomorrow, for the first time in 10 years, Venezuela will appear before the UN Committee against Torture which will scrutinize the state's compliance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Convention against Torture).

The Committee's assessment of Venezuela could not come at a better time. Over the past months, during protests both for and against the government, there has been compelling evidence of the excessive use of force by security forces, and dozens of protesters have reported torture or other ill-treatment.

These disturbing reports come less than a year after the Special Law to Prevent and Punish Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment entered into force in Venezuela.

Important measures have been taken in the last few years to combat torture. For example, torture and other ill-treatment is now prohibited in law and efforts have been made to reform the police. However, Venezuela is far from living up to its international obligations.

The undersigned organisations have submitted information to the Committee Against Torture, including evidence on how, over the past decade, various state security bodies have continued to commit torture and other ill-treatment, and how in the majority of cases the perpetrators have not been brought to justice or the victims given access to remedy. Victims of torture and other ill-treatment, and human rights defenders have frequently been harassed.

The information sent to the Committee also highlights, for example, violations of the rights of those deprived of their liberty, the failure to implement the Organic Law on the Rights of Women to a Life Free from Violence; and the lack of protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, such as refugees, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual and Intersex people (LGBTI) or Indigenous Peoples.

From the 6 to 7 November, the Government of Venezuela will have the chance to send a clear public message that it rejects any act of torture or other ill-treatment and that it will take measures to put an end to impunity.

The serious allegations received over the last 10 years clearly show that the State must continue and deepen its reform of the armed forces in order to live up to international standards on the use of force and the treatment of imprisoned people. It must also reinforce safeguards to guarantee the right of physical and psychological integrity to all people who are arrested and imprisoned, in particular to all people subjected to arrest and detention in conditions that constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in police detention centres.

Venezuela must demonstrate its commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights, not only by undertaking measures to put an end to torture and other ill-treatment, but also by taking up the recommendations of international and regional human rights bodies, and opening itself up to scrutiny.

The undersigned organisations are calling on Venezuela to extend an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture. The fight against impunity in Venezuela should be tested before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to ensure that any person whose rights have been violated, and has not had adequate redress in the national justice system, can reach out to the regional justice system to guarantee their right to truth, justice and reparation.

Amnistía Internacional

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Comité de Familiares de las Víctimas de los Sucesos de Febrero-Marzo de 1989 (COFAVIC)

El Consejo Internacional de Rehabilitación de Víctimas de Tortura (IRCT)

Foro por la Vida

Nueva Esparta en Movimiento

Observatorio Venezolano de los Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres

Observatorio Venezolano de Prisiones (OVP)

Organización Mundial Contra la Tortura (OMCT)

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