

URGENT ACTION

PRISON BANS VISITS: SAFETY FEARS FOR INMATES

Relatives of prisoners held in Yare prison, near Caracas, have not been allowed to visit their loved ones for over a week. They are concerned for the safety of the inmates after reports of violence and killings inside the facility.

According to reports, visits to prisoners have been prohibited after up to four inmates were killed in disturbances on the premises which started on 10 June. No official statement has been issued by the authorities regarding the situation. The lack of visits is also a concern as many inmates rely on relatives to provide food.

In August 2012 a riot at Yare prison, which is severely overcrowded, led to the deaths of 26 and 43 people injured. Since 2006 the Inter-American Court on Human Rights has been monitoring the situation in Yare prison and has issued provisional measures. These measures call on the state to ensure the safety of inmates and remove all weapons, including fire arms.

In 2011, the Venezuelan government set up the Ministry of Prison Services to address the prison situation. During 2012 the Minister announced a series of initiatives such as the construction of new prisons and setting up activities for inmates.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to ensure the safety of inmates, to promptly inform their relatives and the public regarding the situation inside the prison; and allow visits as soon as safely possible;
- Calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the circumstances and make the findings public;
- Calling on the authorities to put in place measures to ensure that every prison in the country complies with basic standards with regard to the infrastructure, staffing and resources that are required for there to be a properly functioning prison system.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 02 AUGUST 2013 TO:

Minister of Prison Services

Iris Varela
Ministerio del Poder Popular para el
Servicio Penitenciario
Av. Venezuela, Urb. El Rosal, Edif.
Platinum, Municipio Chacao, Área
Metropolitana Venezuela
Fax: 58 212 9531458

Salutation: Señora Ministra/

Dear Minister

Attorney General of the Republic

Dra. Luisa Ortega Díaz
Fiscalía General de la República
Edificio Sede Principal del Ministerio
Público,
Esquinas de Misericordia a Pele El Ojo
Avenida México, Caracas, Venezuela
Email: ministeriopublico@mp.gob.ve
Fax: +58 212 578 3239

**Salutation: Dra. Fiscal / Dear
Prosecutor**

And copies to:

Observatorio Venezolano de Prisiones
Av. Lecuna entre esquinas Cipreses a
Hoyo N.60
Centro Empresarial Cipreses, PH-E
Municipio Libertador
Caracas
Venezuela
Email: ovpsiddhh2002@gmail.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

PRISON BANS VISITS: SAFETY FEARS FOR INMATES

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The situation of prisoners in Venezuela is critical, as overcrowding and violence in prison facilities are rife. According to 2012 data, the country had just over 30 prisons designed to house 16,539 detainees. However the prison population in 2012 stood at 48,262. According to reports, drugs and weapons, including firearms and ammunition, are easily available to inmates. Inmates are collectively held, irrespective of their judicial situation (whether indicted or convicted) or seriousness of the crime. Much of the control inside prisons is reported to be in the hands of gang leaders ("pranes"). Several protests, including hunger strikes and self-harm strikes are staged on a regular basis by inmates demanding improvements to their conditions of detention, or to protest the slowness of trial proceedings.

In 2012, there were two major riots in two different prisons, leading to 17 and 26 deaths respectively. According to data collected by the Observatorio Venezolano de Prisiones (Venezuelan Prisons Monitor, an NGO) in total, 591 people were killed across Venezuelan prisons in 2012. The most recent riot took place in January 2013, in Uribana prison, which led to at least 58 deaths. Prison staff and relatives have also been the victims of violence.

Name: Prisoners at Yare prison, Caracas
Gender m/f: m

UA: 159/13 Index: AMR 53/010/2013 Issue Date: 21 June 2013