

URGENT ACTION

ONE DEFENDER FREE, FOUR REMAIN IN PRISON

On 16 January 2025, Carlos Correa, a renowned human rights defender, was released after being arbitrarily detained on 7 January. His fate and whereabouts remained unknown for eight days. He should have never been detained nor criminalised for his work, as in the case of four other defenders currently arbitrarily detained for their activism in Venezuela: Javier Tarazona, Rocío San Miguel, Carlos Julio Rojas, and Kennedy Tejada. We demand Nicolás Maduro ensures their immediate and unconditional release and, while in state custody, protects their life and safety, right to not be subjected to torture, and fair trial guarantees.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

President of the Republic Nicolas Maduro
Palacio de Miraflores,
Av. Nte. 10, Caracas 1012,
Caracas, Venezuela

Mr Nicolás Maduro,

We take note of Carlos Correa's release and welcome the fact that he is no longer unfairly detained. However, the fact that he was arbitrarily detained for defending human rights in Venezuela, and that his fate and whereabouts were unknown for eight days, remain unchanged and highly alarming. Reports of him being subjected to criminal prosecution are also concerning and we demand all charges against him to be immediately dropped.

His release should be followed by the immediate release of all other detained human rights defenders. There are, at least, four other defenders who remain unfairly detained, including Javier Tarazona since 2 July 2021, Rocío San Miguel since 9 February 2024, Carlos Julio Rojas since 15 April 2024, and Kennedy Tejada since 2 August 2024.

Reports of the denial of adequate medical care for detainees are also unacceptable. For instance, Rocío San Miguel requires a complex surgery and rehabilitation for an injury sustained months ago while in your custody. She has a right to receive medical attention, treatment, and supervision by trusted doctors.

The harassment, threats and detention of human rights defenders and the attacks on civil society more broadly must cease immediately. Their role, in the midst of the ongoing humanitarian emergency and human rights crisis should be protected and celebrated.

As crimes under international law and grave human rights violations continue to be committed with impunity in the country, we remind authorities that they are being monitored and scrutinized individually and at a state level by international accountability mechanisms.

We call for the immediate and unconditional release of every human rights defender unfairly detained in Venezuela and, as long as they remain in your custody, for their rights to life and medical care, to not be subjected to torture, and to enjoy all fair trial guarantees to be fully protected.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Carlos Correa, director of Venezuelan NGO Espacio Público, was intercepted by hooded individuals dressed in black and taken to an unknown location on 7 January 2025 at around 17:00 hrs on the streets around downtown Caracas. This is a commonly used modus operandi by state security forces when arbitrarily detaining and forcefully disappearing those considered to be a threat to the government of Nicolás Maduro, including human rights defenders. His fate remained unknown until 15 January, when a public prosecutor informed Carlos' wife that he was indeed detained and had supposedly been brought before a judge on 9 January. The prosecutor denied her information on his location, under whose custody he was being held, nor the charges he's accused of. She was also denied information on Carlos' health and physical integrity. He was released in the early hours of 16 January.

As Amnesty International has repeatedly denounced, human rights defenders in Venezuela are at a constant risk of harassment, attacks and detention. Human rights defender, prisoner of conscience and director of local NGO Fundaredes, [Javier Tarazona](#), remains in detention and prosecuted for defending human rights since 2 July 2021. [Rocío San Miguel](#), a nationally and internationally renowned lawyer, professor and human rights defender, was arbitrarily detained on 9 February 2024, her whereabouts unknown until 15 February, and remains unfairly detained. Carlos Julio Rojas is a journalist and activist arbitrarily detained on 15 April 2024, allegedly by officers of the National Bolivarian Intelligence Service, who also remains unfairly detained for his activism. [Kennedy Tejada](#), a young lawyer and human rights activist member of renowned NGO Foro Penal, was arbitrarily detained in the state of Carabobo on 2 August 2024 when trying to offer free legal aid to other victims of arbitrary detention. As they all remain arbitrarily deprived of their freedom, they are also subjected to unfounded criminal proceedings, they suffer grave violations of their fair trial guarantees.

Nicolás Maduro's government's long-standing policy of repression to silence any form of real or perceived dissent reached a historic peak after the 28 July 2024 election, which saw over [2,000 people arbitrarily detained](#) for political reasons, many of them charged with seemingly unfounded counts of terrorism and incitement of hatred, including vulnerable groups such as [children and people living with disabilities](#). Within this policy of repression, the 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 2024, over [7.8 million](#) had fled Venezuela.

Nicolás Maduro's government is currently pursuing several initiatives to control and silence human rights and civil society organizations. The [bill adopted](#) in August 2024 titled 'Law for the audit, regularization, action and financing of non-governmental and related organizations', or so-called 'anti-NGO law', imposes strict controls that include handing over lists of members and personnel and their assets, lists of donors, and registration of financial movements. Non-compliance with registration requirements could lead to the closure of civil society organizations and possible criminal prosecutions. The bill's provisions are set to enter into force starting in February 2025.

Since 2020, reports from the UN independent international [fact-finding mission](#) on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (FFM) 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, concluding that some of these international crimes and human rights violations amount to crimes against humanity. Specifically in 2024, the FFM concluded that it has "reasonable grounds to believe that the crime of persecution on political grounds has been committed during the timeframe covered by its mandate".

Since November 2021, the Office of the [Prosecutor](#) of the [International Criminal Court](#) is conducting a criminal investigation into the situation in Venezuela, specifically regarding the "[c]rimes against humanity of deprivation of liberty or other serious deprivation of physical liberty (...); torture (...); rape and/or other forms of sexual violence of comparable severity (...); and politically motivated persecution against persons detained (...), which were committed since at least April 2017, by members of the State security forces, civil authorities and pro-government persons (or groups called "collectives").

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 15 July 2025

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Venezuelan defenders (they/them)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr53/8909/2025/en/>