

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

AI Index: AMR 53/001/2004 (Public)  
News Service No: 036  
18 February 2004

### **Venezuela: President Chávez must recognize and respect legitimate human rights work**

Amnesty International said today that President Hugo Chávez must respect the right of non-governmental human rights organizations to carry out their legitimate work, such work is underpinned by international human rights treaties which the Venezuelan Government has willingly pledged to uphold.

"In the current climate in Venezuela, random and unsubstantiated allegations against human rights organizations such as COFAVIC, PROVEA and Red de Apoyo, suggesting that their legitimate human rights activities are intended to fuel political turmoil could expose members of these organizations to serious dangers, including threats and intimidation", added Amnesty International.

Amnesty International said today it was also concerned that President Chávez did not appear to be familiar with the universal principle that all individuals and groups all over the world are free to collaborate and to exchange information and expertise for the purpose of protecting and defending universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Amnesty International said it was deeply worried that slurs and attacks against human rights organizations could further destabilize the already difficult situation in Venezuela. Non-governmental human rights organizations have and do play a crucial role in upholding the rule of law in Venezuela. Most recently such organizations contributed to developing the new constitution and legal reforms, they have also defended the rights of the poor and most marginalised sectors of society and attested the break in constitutional order of the attempted coup of 2002.

The Venezuelan President should retract allegations against human rights organizations and recognize the important contribution these organizations have made, over several decades, in seeking to establish a country in which the rights and dignity of individuals from all sectors of society are converted from myth into reality.