



## VENEZUELA: VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DURING PROTESTS DEMAND JUSTICE

### LUIS ALBERTO GUTIÉRREZ – BEATEN FOR TAKING PART IN A PROTEST

“That was no kick, I’m sure you did it yourself, walking into a post or you fell and hit yourself on the pavement... or one of your little friends hit you with a bottle... That’s what happens when you go playing with barricades”.



Luis Alberto Gutiérrez Prieto, a 26-year-old student, left home with his brother and some friends on 19 February to take part in a protest in San Antonio de los Altos, Miranda State.

Luis Alberto told Amnesty International that he was looking on as members of the National Guard were hitting and insulting other demonstrators when, without warning, he was kicked in the face and then made to kneel in the street for two hours.

Luis Alberto sustained in three fractures as a result of the kick in the face: on the left-hand side of his face, the bridge of his nose and the socket of his right eye. He told Amnesty International: “One of the guards made fun of me, asking me what had happened to me when he knew full well what had happened. I just said that I had been kicked.”

The officers tied Luis Alberto’s and other detainees’ hands using the detainees’ shoelaces and then put them into a van. A guard in the van showed them a tear-gas grenade and said: “See this grenade? This is what you’re going to get when we put you, soaked through, in a cell. Then you’ll know what choking feels like”.

Luis Alberto was taken to a public hospital the following afternoon. However, the seriousness of his injuries meant he had to be transferred to a private clinic where he underwent surgery on his face.

Luis Alberto’s lawyer expressed concern that a year after the incident, the authorities had still not started an investigation into the ill-treatment of Luis Alberto and that, therefore, none of his attackers had been charged or punished. During a preliminary hearing on 22 February 2014, Luis Alberto’s lawyers had requested that the judge order an investigation into his ill-treatment. However, despite Luis Alberto’s clearly visible injuries, the judge refused the request. Luis Alberto’s lawyers submitted the case, together with another request for an investigation, to the Public Prosecution Service. However, at the time of writing they had received no response.

At least 43 people died and 878 were injured during the pro and anti-government protests that took place between February and July 2014. Amnesty International has documented many cases in which law enforcement officials used excessive force in the context of these protests. The victims included demonstrators, passers by and people living in the neighbourhoods where protests were taking place.

The information obtained indicates that law enforcement officials frequently saw dispersing protests, including peaceful protests, as a priority and used force to do so, often without attempting to negotiate with the demonstrators or giving a clear prior warning.<sup>1</sup>

Amnesty International has received tens of reports of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment carried out by law enforcement officials. These violations were reported to have been inflicted on detainees at the time of arrest, during transfer to the detention centre and while in detention. Detainees appear to have been subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment in order to punish them for their participation, or alleged participation, in the protests. In November 2014, the UN Committee against Torture expressed its concern about the torture and other ill-treatment that occurred in the context of the demonstrations that took place between February and July 2014. It called on the Venezuelan authorities to ensure access to justice for the victims.

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the February to July 2014 events, see the following Amnesty International reports: Venezuela: Human rights at risk amid protests (Index: AMR 53/009/2014), available at <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR53/009/2014/en>; and Venezuela: Briefing to the UN Committee Against Torture, 53rd session, November 2014 (Index: AMR 53/020/2014), available at <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR53/020/2014/en>.

## ACT NOW!

Write to the Venezuelan authorities urging them to carry out a thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the beating and ill-treatment of Luis Alberto Gutiérrez Prieto, ensure that those responsible are brought to justice and ensure that he receives comprehensive and appropriate reparations.

### Send your appeals to:

#### **Vicepresident of the Republic**

Sr. Jorge Arreaza

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Email: [vicepresidencia@venezuela.gov.ve](mailto:vicepresidencia@venezuela.gov.ve)

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Salutation: Dear Vice-president

#### **Attorney General of the Republic**

Dra. Luisa Ortega Díaz

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Salutation: Dear Attorney General

#### **Minister of the Interior, Justice and Peace**

Gral. Gustavo González López

Ministerio del Poder Popular para las  
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Salutation: Dear Minister

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