



VENEZUELA: VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DURING PROTESTS DEMAND JUSTICE

CARLOS VILLAMIZAR – ILL-TREATED BY POLICE

Carlos Eduardo Villamizar Guerrero, a 20-year-old student, was knocked to the ground, beaten and detained by members of the National Police on the 6th of October 2014, in San Cristóbal municipality, Táchira State. According to his statement, he was with a group of students on a public road. According to the Police and the Public Prosecution Service, he was blocking a road and was armed with a mortar (rocket launcher) when he was detained. Carlos Villamizar denies the allegation. The only evidence against him in the Public Prosecution Service files consists of the statement of the law enforcement officers who detained him.

Carlos Villamizar's family told Amnesty International a few days after the incident, that a member of the National Police on a motorcycle had knocked Carlos Villamizar down while he was standing with a group of students in the street. While he was on the ground, other officers kicked and beat him with their helmets. They also tried to hit him with a metal rod, but he managed to protect himself with his hands. Carlos Villamizar was also beaten while he was being taken by members of the National Police to the centre where he was detained for five days.

Carlos Villamizar's injuries were clearly visible and recorded in the report of the medical forensic examination that was carried out on the day he was detained ("injuries and abrasions on the left arm, face... and both hands"), to which Amnesty International has had access. Despite this, the judge ordered that he be held in pre-trial detention until the 8th of October and failed to order an investigation into possible torture or other ill-treatment. Carlos Villamizar was too afraid to make a complaint when he appeared before the judge.

On the 11th of October, Carlos Villamizar lost consciousness while held in the police station and had to be taken to hospital where doctors recorded multiple injuries to his head and spinal column (multiple injuries, cranial trauma, trauma to the spinal cord and lower motor neurone damage).

At the time of writing, Carlos Villamizar was under house arrest awaiting trial on charges of public incitement, illegally making explosive substances or devices and firebombs and obstructing a public highway and means of transport. He was still receiving treatment for his injuries.

Carlos Villamizar's mother lodged a formal complaint about the ill-treatment of her son with the Attorney for Fundamental Rights in Táchira on 10 October 2014. According to the information received by Amnesty International, the case is currently under investigation.

Carlos Villamizar was detained and ill-treated during pro and anti-government protests in Venezuela. Although most of the protests took place between February and July 2014, social discontent and smaller protests continued in the following months in a number of states, including Táchira. Amnesty International received tens of reports of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment carried out by law enforcement officials in the context of these protests. These violations were reported to have been inflicted on detainees 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.¹ In November 2014, the UN Committee against Torture

¹ 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:*

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.

Amnesty International has been able to determine that in most cases, victims and their relatives have expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to get justice and are afraid of reporting abuses because they fear possible reprisals. In several cases, the victims live in the same neighbourhoods as the alleged abusers, who remain on active service, and have been the targets of intimidation and harassment. Even in those cases where victims and their families have been granted protection, the measures in accordance with their wishes have not always been implemented.

ACT NOW!

Write to the Venezuelan authorities urging them to:

- Carry out a thorough, independent and impartial investigation into Carlos Villamizar's complaint of ill-treatment, ensure that those responsible are brought to justice and ensure that he receives comprehensive and appropriate reparations.
- Ensure that protests are allowed to take place and that law enforcement officials use force only when strictly necessary and never against peaceful protesters, in line with the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.

Please send your appeals to:

Vicepresident of the Republic

Sr. Jorge Arreaza
Vicepresidencia de la República
Esq. Carmelitas, Avenida Urdaneta,
Caracas, Venezuela.
Email: vicepresidencia@venezuela.gov.ve
ciudadano@vicepresidencia.gov.ve
Salutation: Dear Vice-president

Attorney General of the Republic

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

Minister of the Interior, Justice and Peace

Almirante en Jefa Carmen Teresa Meléndez Rivas
Ministerio del Poder Popular para las
Relaciones Interiores, Justicia y Paz.
Edificio Sede del Ministerio, Avenida México
Caracas, Venezuela
Email: mijcudecon@gmail.com
Fax: +58 212 506-1558
Salutation: Dear Minister

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Index: AMR 53/013/2015
March 2015