

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: AMR 53/013/2002 (Public)
News Service No: 140
9 August 2002

Venezuela: Political violence puts rights in jeopardy

The Metropolitan Police response to the renewed outbreak of political violence which followed a controversial Supreme Court ruling in Venezuela may have breached international human rights standards and must be investigated promptly and independently, Amnesty International said today.

Nine people were injured - the majority with gunshot wounds - in violent disturbances in Caracas after the Supreme Court decided not to put on trial four military officers accused of orchestrating an uprising against President Hugo Chávez in April this year. Pro-Chávez protesters clashed with police outside the court, which was protected by members of the metropolitan police and troops backed by armoured vehicles and at least one tank. Three policemen were also reportedly wounded. More violent incidents have taken place in the past two weeks, with at least 18 civilians -- including children -- wounded in clashes with police on 31 July.

Amnesty International is calling for all law enforcement officials to abide by international standards on the use of force and firearms when policing demonstrations and maintaining public order. The organization is also urging the authorities to ensure full respect of the rights of any persons detained in connection with the disturbances.

"Human rights cannot -- and must not -- be disregarded even in times of political polarization and crisis," Amnesty International stressed.

Background

In April 2002, Amnesty International called for an investigation into the human rights violations -- including the deaths of 11 civilians -- during the uprising against the government of President Chávez.

Amnesty International is calling on both government supporters and opponents to ensure that respect for human rights and the rule of law are central to all attempts to resolve the deepening political crisis.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>