

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION PARTY HEADQUARTERS RAIDED

The headquarters of opposition party **Voluntad Popular (Popular Will)** were raided three times by security forces on 17 February. The raids appear to be an attempt to intimidate party members following their participation in recent anti-government protests.

Voluntad Popular (Popular Will) has denounced how officials of the Directorate of Military Intelligence and the National Guard entered their headquarters on three occasions on 17 February without producing a search warrant. Party members claim the officials were armed and broke into their offices without identifying themselves, causing damage to private property and intimidating their staff. They reported that the military seized the office's security cameras, servers and other computer equipment. The officials also took with them Leonardo José Contreras, the bodyguard of David Smolansky, Mayor of El Hatillo municipality in Caracas, the capital.

Voluntad Popular believes that the security forces intended to detain Carlos Vecchio, national political coordinator of the party, who earlier that day gave a press conference confirming a call for a mass anti-government demonstration on 18 February. The demonstration was initially called by Leopoldo Lopez, leader of Voluntad Popular, who according to reports had an arrest warrant issued against him on 13 February for his alleged responsibility for violence that occurred during and after student demonstrations in the last two weeks.

During these recent protests three people were killed in Caracas, the capital, and scores were injured nationwide following clashes between the protesters, security forces and armed civilians.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern at the raids of Voluntad Popular's office, stating that it appears to be an attempt to intimidate the opposition party because of their participation in anti-government protests;
- Calling on the authorities to either charge those detained with a recognisable offence or release them immediately, to respect the right of all those charged with an offence to due process and to order a full and impartial investigation into the incident;
- Urging them to ensure that the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly are respected without discrimination, and to publicly condemn any act of violence or abuse that seeks to intimidate or silence those exercising their legitimate right to participate in these events.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 APRIL 2014 TO:

President of Venezuela

Nicolás Maduro Moros
Final Avenida Urdaneta, Esq. De Bolero
Palacio de Miraflores
Caracas, Distrito Capital
Venezuela
Twitter: @NicolásMaduro
Salutation: **Señor Presidente /**
Dear President

Attorney General of the Republic

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

And copies to:

Amnistía Internacional Venezuela
Av la Salle, Torre Phelps, piso 17,
Oficina 17A
Plaza Venezuela
Los Caobos, Caracas 1050
Venezuela
Fax: +58 212 793 1318 ext. 116
Email: info@aiven.org

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International has welcomed the message of non-violence sent by both the President of the Republic and opposition leaders ahead of the mass mobilization planned for 18 February. This is especially relevant following violent outbreaks that occurred during and after pro and anti-government demonstrations on 12 February to mark Venezuelan's Day of Youth, where three people were killed in Caracas, the capital, and scores were injured nationwide. Since 4 February several student demonstrations took place across Venezuela, during which there has been reported human rights violations and abuses.

Reports were received of excessive use of force by the security forces, including the use of fire arms, as well as clashes between protesters and security forces and violence against protesters by armed civilians, allegedly perpetrated with the consent of the security forces. For more information, see UA 29/14, *Three protestors killed, others injured* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR53/002/2014/en>).

Amnesty International has been calling on the demonstrators to exercise their right to freedom of expression, assembly and association in a peaceful manner and it is urging the authorities to ensure that everyone can participate in protests without fear of being abused, detained or even killed.

The authorities must ensure that incidents occurring during pro and anti-government demonstrations in recent weeks do not go unpunished and will be investigated in a thorough and impartial manner regardless of the political ideologies of those in question.

Name: members of Voluntad Popular
Gender m/f: both

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