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Venezuela: Attacking American Convention on Human Rights jeopardizes everybody's welfare

By rejecting a ruling by the Inter American Court of Human Rights and calling on the government to reject the American Convention on Human Rights, the Venezuelan Supreme Court is sending a dangerous message that human rights are optional, said Amnesty International today.

Amnesty International's statement came after the publication of a ruling by the Venezuelan Supreme Court in which it rejects a decision handed down by the Inter American Court in August 2008, calling for the reinstatement and compensation of three judges sacked in 2003.

"The Venezuelan Supreme Court's decision is surprising and disappointing," said Kerrie Howard, Americas Deputy Director at Amnesty International. "The Court should not see this sentence as a criticism but as an opportunity to consolidate protection and respect for human rights."

Despite the Supreme Court ruling, Venezuela retains an international obligation to abide by the American Convention and the rulings of the Inter American Court.

The American Convention on Human Rights, which dates from 1969, is one of the earliest commitments by a region to uphold of human rights within its countries regardless of the government in place. It is one of the cornerstones of the Inter American system of human rights, alongside the Commission and the Court.

"The system was set up at the initiative of American countries themselves in their historic struggle against human rights violations, impunity and past repression. The Inter American system has played a fundamental role in the improvement of human rights conditions in the region for over 40 years," said Kerrie Howard.

"Rejecting human rights bodies and conventions will not only damage Venezuela's credibility before the international community but also damage a system that has contributed to improving the human rights of many men, women and children across the region," said Kerrie Howard.