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Venezuela: Medical concern for Iván Simonovis

Amnesty International is concerned for the health of Iván Simonovis, an ex senior police officer imprisoned for his involvement in the deaths of protesters during the 2002 failed coup against President Chávez. For several years he was held in a tiny cell without natural light and fresh air. His health has been seriously compromised and he needs specialist medical attention urgently.

Iván Simonovis was in charge of public security in Caracas at the time of the failed coup against President Hugo Chávez on 11 April 2002. On that day two groups of protesters clashed in the centre of Caracas. Twenty people died from gunshot wounds and over 60 people were injured. Iván Simonovis and other police officers were arrested in 2004 and sentenced in 2009 for their role in the deaths of three people and the injuring of 26 others. Simonovis and other two top officials were sentenced to the maximum term of 30 years in prison for complicity in the events. Lower ranking officials accused of directly perpetrating the killings received sentences ranging from 30 years to three years.

From the time of his arrest in 2004, to his removal to Ramo Verde Military Prison in February 2013, Iván Simonovis was held at the headquarters of the Bolivarian Intelligence Service in Caracas (Servicios Bolivarianos de Inteligencia Nacional). The two square metres cell in which he was detained was not designed to hold people in detention for a long time. It had no toilet, so he had to use a bucket when he was locked in the cell at night. During the day he was allowed access to a narrow corridor and communal toilets, but neither his room nor the corridor had any natural light or fresh air. This situation has caused him an acute vitamin D deficiency and a serious deterioration of his health. According to a medical examination conducted in December 2012, and reviewed by Amnesty International, Mr Simonovis presents a series of conditions that include severe osteoporosis, particularly on his spine and femur, with a significant risk of fracture, and deterioration of several of his vertebrae. He urgently needs appropriate medication, physiotherapy and careful handling.

Recommendations

Amnesty International is concerned that Iván Simonovis' health is seriously compromised. The authorities must take immediate steps to give Iván Simonovis the specialist medical attention he needs, which should include transferring him to hospital for a current review of his health including reviewing the results of any previous treatment and for the medical recommendations made at such a review to be implemented. If treatment cannot be given in prison he should be transferred to an appropriate place to allow for treatment.



Call to action

Please write to Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro urging him to provide Iván Simonovis with the medical attention he urgently needs. Use the information and recommendations provided above or the template letter provided below.

"Dear Mr President,

I writing to call your attention to the serious situation of Mr Iván Simonovis, currently detained at the Centro Nacional de Procesados Militares en Ramo Verde, in Los Teques, Miranda state, to serve the rest of his sentence to 30 years imprisonment for his role in the events of 11 April 2002 in Caracas.

From the moment of his arrest in November 2004 until February 2013, Iván Simonovis was detained on the premises of the Servicios Bolivarianos de Inteligencia Nacional, in Caracas, for over 8 years. During his detention there he had no access to fresh air and sunlight. According to a medical examination conducted in December 2012, and reviewed by Amnesty International, Mr Simonovis presents a series of conditions that include severe osteoporosis, particularly on his spine and femur, with a significant risk to of fracture of his left femur, and a deterioration of several of his vertebrae. This situation requires him to receive adequate medication, exposure to sun and fresh air, careful physical activity to avoid fractures, and physiotherapy to rehabilitate him.

For this reason, I call on you to ensure that Mr Simonovis has access as soon as possible to adequate treatment and avoid possible consequences, such as fractures and further worsening of his health. He should be transferred to a hospital for a review of his current situation and assess any change in his situation since the last medical review in December 2012. If treatment cannot be given in prison, he should be transferred to an appropriate place to allow for treatment.

Yours sincerely,
[your name]"

Address

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