

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Venezuela: Will the witch hunt continue?**

The arrest of the mayor of Caracas, Antonio Ledezma yesterday is very worrying. Given the current climate in Venezuela one can only assume that the authorities are not interested in prioritising nor protecting human rights but rather silencing voices that are critical of the government.

“In a fair and just society, in which the human rights of all people should be protected, it is unacceptable that people are being arbitrarily detained without any admissible evidence that they have committed a crime. In the last year people have been arbitrarily detained for simply being in opposition, or having a critical view of the government. The detention of the mayor of Caracas is yet another case to add to the list of arrests that are apparently politically motivated.

In the last week Amnesty International has also learnt of the detention of judge Alí Fabricio Paredes, which seems to be the consequence of a sentence he handed down in a high profile case which did not please the executive powers. At the same time, the lawyer Tadeo Arriechi has been detained simply for doing his job, working to defend a company accused of destabilising the economy.

As long as the Venezuelan authorities are not taking human right seriously, nor understanding that a fair legal system must allow space for dissenting views, the country will continue on a downward spiral that will, above all else, negatively affect the most vulnerable in society.