

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### Venezuela must protect human rights defenders and end impunity for past human rights violations

#### *Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Venezuela*

Human rights defenders in Venezuela continue to face intimidation and harassment as they carry out their legitimate activities. Many states made recommendations to guarantee freedom of expression and assembly and to ensure a free and enabling environment for civil society.<sup>1</sup> Although Venezuela accepted most of the recommendations on freedom of expression, recent events demonstrate continuing challenges, for example recently CNN was removed from the cable television. Amnesty International is also deeply concerned about Venezuela's rejection of all the recommendations about human rights defenders and the need to guarantee their protection.

The political crisis and the scarcity of basic goods, such as food and medicine, have led to peaceful protests. These have been met with the use of force by the security forces leading to serious human rights violations, including arbitrary detentions. While Venezuela accepted many of the recommendations regarding these concerns,<sup>2</sup> it rejected important recommendations to end arbitrary detention, including to release prisoner of conscience Leopoldo Lopez in line with the recommendation issued by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in Opinion No. 26/2014.<sup>3</sup>

Amnesty International welcomes Venezuela's accept of recommendations to end impunity for serious human rights violations through prompt and effective investigations and ensuring access to justice and reparations for the victims.<sup>4</sup> Venezuela has the second highest murder rates per 100.000 inhabitants,<sup>5</sup> however, measures taken to address these crimes breach Venezuela's human rights obligations.<sup>6</sup>

Several states raised concerns about the lack of independence of the judiciary<sup>7</sup> and Amnesty International welcomes Venezuela's acceptance of several of these and urges the government to stop misusing the judicial system to harass government critics.

Amnesty International regrets Venezuela's rejection of recommendations to allow access for international human rights monitors,<sup>8</sup> as well as recommendations to reverse its decision to denounce the American Convention on Human Rights.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*, A/HRC/34/6 recommendations 133.26 (Georgia), 133.181 (Italy), 133.183 (Latvia), 133.184 (Mexico), 133.185 (Netherlands), 133.186 (New Zealand), 133.187 (Germany), 133.189 (Brazil), 133.190 (Chile), 133.191 (Costa Rica), 133.192 (Czech Republic), 133.193 (Estonia), 133.194 (Georgia), 133.202 (Switzerland), 133.203 (Canada), 133.204 (Belgium), 133.206 (France).

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/34/6 recommendations 133.115 (Sweden), 133.124 (Republic of Korea), 133.125 (Spain), 133.133 (New Zealand), 133.135 (Brazil), 133.188 (United States of America), 133.212 (Sweden).

<sup>3</sup> A/HRC/34/6 recommendation 133.136 (Canada).

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/34/6, 133.168 (Cuba), 133.169 (Angola), 133.174 (Uruguay).

<sup>5</sup> According to the Venezuelan Observatory of Violence. Amnesty International Annual Report 2016/2017. Venezuela, p. 396.

<sup>6</sup> A/HRC/34/6, recommendations 133.115 (Sweden), 133.118 (Argentina), 133.119 (Ghana), 133.121 (Italy), 133.52 (Egypt), 133.67 (Bangladesh), 133.172 (Angola), 133.23 (Spain), 133.140 (Malaysia), 133.171 (Ethiopia),

<sup>7</sup> A/HRC/34/6, recommendations 133.133 (New Zealand), 133.156 (Netherlands), 133.157 (Germany), 133.158 (Republic of Korea), 133.159 (Spain), 133.162 (Brazil), 133.163 (Canada), 133.164 (Costa Rica), 133.165 (Czech Republic), 133.166 (France), 133.167 (Holy See), 133.173 (Guatemala).

## Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Venezuela on 16 March 2017 during its 34<sup>th</sup> session. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered an oral statement. Amnesty International also contributed to the information basis of the review through its submission on Venezuela: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr53/4616/2016/en/>

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<sup>8</sup> A/HRC/34/6, recommendations 133.78 (Japan), 133.79 (Costa Rica), 133.80 (Finland), 133.95 (Iceland), 133.96 (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), 133.97 (Argentina).

<sup>9</sup> A/HRC/34/6, recommendations 133.98 (Uruguay) 133.99 (Brazil), 133.100 (Georgia).