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## **Venezuela: Human rights and rule of law must be upheld in times of crisis**

*It is vital that the crisis unfolding does not undermine the rule of law and that fundamental human rights are guaranteed, Amnesty International said today after the tragic events in Venezuela yesterday shocked the world.*

*The organization vigorously condemns the killing of at least 11 protestors and injuring of over 100 others in the mass demonstration against Hugo Chávez's presidency yesterday. Supporters of the ousted President were allegedly responsible for some of the killings while others demonstrators were reportedly shot by members of the National Guard.*

*"The killing and injuring of protestors is a gross violation of human rights and must be thoroughly investigated by the authorities to ensure that all those responsible are brought to justice," Amnesty International said. "It is vital that yesterday's events are fully clarified to establish the chain of command responsibility that led to the deaths and injuries of so many people."*

*"It is also imperative that constitutional safeguards and fundamental human rights are not violated in the search for those responsible," the organization added.*

*After removing their support for ex-president Chávez, and demanding his resignation and that of his government, the Armed Forces established and military-civilian government, with leader of the business association, Fedecamaras, Pedro Carmona, as the interim president of the country." This government must publicly commit itself to to protect human rights and other constitutional guarantees," said Amnesty International.*

### **Background**

*Hugo Chávez, an ex-army paratrooper, was reelected president in 2000 on a radical populist platform with a landslide victory. However, in the last year his popularity began to slide and opposition to his political agenda increased.*

*On 9 April 2002 unions and the business associations, Fedecamaras, called a national strike, which on 11 April was made indefinite. A mass demonstration calling for Chávez's resignation was called for 12 April. According to reports over 150,000 demonstrators took part. During the protest, a group of gunmen, identified as members of Chávez's political movement, reportedly opened fire on demonstrators. Nearer the Presidential palace civilian gunmen reportedly shot at protestors and members of the National Guard, *Guardia Nacional*, reportedly also opened fire on demonstrators. Ex-president Chávez has been accused of ordering the violence.*

*The armed forces reportedly withdrew support for Hugo Chávez in response to the violence and the apparent intention of the ex-president to order the security forces to take further steps to disperse the demonstration. Hugo Chávez was taken by the heads of the armed forces to the military barracks, *Fuerte Tiuna*, where he reportedly signed his resignation and dismissed his government, including the Vice-president. Reports indicate he is being held in the barracks.*

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