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Venezuela: freedom of expression in danger

The Venezuelan authorities have a duty to guarantee the freedom of expression, including to their opponents, said Amnesty International today, in the light of the possible closure of Radio Caracas Televisión.

Radio Caracas Televisión is at risk of closure after it was announced that its broadcasting rights concession will not be renewed.

According to Amnesty International, this is the latest in a series of measures that have increasingly restricted the right to freedom of expression in Venezuela. Other measures include: threats to journalists, attacks on journalists (including two murders in the last year), criminal proceedings against social communicators and the promulgation of legislation that will restrict the freedom of expression.

"Restrictions to the freedom of expression affect the enjoyment and defence of human rights such as the right to life, education, health, physical integrity, housing and the freedom of association, all rights protected by the Venezuelan constitution. Without freedom of expression, people in Venezuela will have less scope to denounce abuses and violations and to obtain redress and to participate in the development of proposals on key issues for the country," said Amnesty International.

"The media's job is to reflect opinions and points of view on the various situations and problems that afflict the population. If the government restricts this freedom, it threatens one of the corner-stones of society."

"It is imperative that the Venezuelan authorities protect the right to freedom of expression, particularly at times of political polarisation, send a clear message indicating their rejection of any attacks on journalists and investigate these attacks."

"The challenges of the 21st century, including poverty, marginalisation and guaranteeing security, require leaders that can provide responses founded on human rights values that unite people and promote the welfare of all."

General Information

The right to freedom of expression is recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations and the American Convention on Human Rights of the Organisation of American States, and includes "the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (Universal Declaration on Human Rights, article 19).

According to the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, states should not exert pressure with the aim of influencing the information disseminated by social communicators or interfere with their independent dissemination of such information.

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