

URGENT ACTION

WOMAN DETAINEE'S LIFE AND INTEGRITY AT RISK

Emirlendris Benítez is a 42 year-old mother and tradeswoman who in August 2018 was arbitrarily detained and subjected to torture in Venezuela. She faces an unjust 30-year prison sentence in inhumane detention conditions and her need for urgent medical care has been repeatedly denied by penitentiary authorities based on procedural issues. The severe consequences of the torture she was subjected to and a period of incommunicado detention are now putting her integrity and life at risk. We call for Emirlendris' release, and while in custody, for authorities to guarantee the adequate and trusted medical care she urgently needs.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Celsa Bautista Ontiveros
Minister of Penitentiary Affairs
Ministerio del Poder Popular para Asuntos Penitenciarios,
Avenida Venezuela, Edificio Platinum,
Urbanización El Rosal, Municipio Chacao,
Caracas
Venezuela
Twitter: @CelsaBautistaO

Dear Mrs. Bautista Ontiveros,

I am gravely concerned over the deteriorating health of Emirlendris Benítez, who is currently imprisoned at the INOF centre at Los Teques, Caracas, Venezuela. Not only is Emirlendris a victim of arbitrary detention, torture, and an unfair trial, but she now must see her right to health repeatedly denied.

Emirlendris Benítez's life and integrity are at risk because of the grave human rights violations she's suffered since her arrest in August 2018, including arbitrary detention, torture, gender-based violence, discrimination, unfair trial, and inhuman detention conditions. She can wait no longer for penitentiary authorities to guarantee she gets the treatment she urgently needs.

I call upon you to promptly grant the request filed by Emirlendris' lawyers and to ensure she receives immediate, adequate, and trusted medical care. Emirlendris Benítez should be immediately released and the torture and other grave human rights violations she's suffered fully investigated and punished.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Emirlendris Benitez is a Venezuelan mother, sister, and tradeswomen. Since her arrest in August 2018, she has been a victim of countless human rights violations; including arbitrary detention, torture, gender-based violence, discrimination, unfair trial, and inhuman detention conditions. She is an example of the Venezuelan government's terrifying policy of repression. Although she had not undertaken any form of political activism, she was incriminated in a political case and was not allowed to exercise her right to a fair trial.

On 5 August 2018, Emirlendris was arbitrarily detained on fabricated grounds. Authorities falsely linked her to acts of violence committed against high-profile political leaders in Venezuela; an accusation for which there is no evidence and which she has consistently stated that she had no part in.

In custody, she was subjected to torture while pregnant. A few weeks after her arrest, she was forcibly transferred to a medical facility and her pregnancy was terminated without her knowledge or consent. The torture she was subjected to left her needing the long-term use of a wheelchair for mobility. In 2022, she was sentenced to a 30-year prison sentence by a partial and politically motivated court.

The prison conditions she is currently enduring are so dire that her family has to provide her with her basic needs, including water, food and medication. This is further complicated by the humanitarian emergency that is currently crippling Venezuela, as it severely limits their own access to food, medicines, and transportation (she is imprisoned approximately 30 km away from Caracas, where her family lives).

In the last few weeks, authorities at her detention centre have delayed her transfer to a medical center based on bureaucratic justifications that are unacceptable given her critical condition. She has experienced multiple episodes of fainting and endured sudden rises in blood pressure, despite not having a history of hypertension.

Emirlendris should have never been detained, as it is believed the charges are politically motivated. Furthermore, the draconian sentence against her should be revoked and she must be immediately released.

Nicolás Maduro's government has continually harassed, prosecuted, and censored activists and civil society organizations working to protect the rights of Venezuelans amidst a complex humanitarian emergency and a deep human rights crisis that is making Venezuelans flee in unprecedented numbers in search of safety and protection. By March 2023, over 7.24 million had fled the country.

Since 2020, three reports from the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have thoroughly documented hundreds of cases of extrajudicial executions; enforced disappearances; arbitrary detentions; and torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment committed in the country since 2014; as well as the ways in which the justice system serves as a tool for the government's policy of repression, and concluded that these grave human rights violations may amount to crimes against humanity.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 22 AUGUST 2023

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Emirlendris Benítez (she/her/hers)

Link to previous UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr53/6668/2023/en/>