

URGENT ACTION

VENEZUELAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AND HER FAMILY ARRESTED

Rocío San Miguel, a well-known human rights defender, was arbitrarily detained on 9 February 2024 at the airport in Caracas, Venezuela. She is forcibly disappeared, resembling a widely documented pattern. The Attorney General's Office publicly acknowledged her detention but has denied information on her whereabouts. Her lawyers have requested information at detention centres in Caracas and have so far received no response. Her daughter and other family members were also detained. Rocío San Miguel has had no access to family members or legal representation. She is detained for defending human rights in Venezuela. Amnesty International calls on Nicolás Maduro to release her immediately and unconditionally and to guarantee her personal integrity.

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

President Nicolas Maduro

Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela,
Edificio Palacio de Miraflores,
Avenida Urdaneta,
Caracas, Venezuela
Twitter: @NicolasMaduro

President Nicolás Maduro,

I write to you greatly concerned over the arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance of Rocío San Miguel, her daughter and other relatives of hers. The denial of information on her whereabouts, as well as the lack of access to her family and legal representation, is reminiscent of a widely documented pattern of enforced disappearances in the first days following arbitrary detention, which could constitute a crime under international law. Rocío, who holds Venezuelan and Spanish nationalities, is a brave and renowned human rights defender and lawyer, currently the president of the NGO Control Ciudadano (Citizen Control).

Rocío was detained at approximately 5:00 in the morning on Friday 9 February at the Simón Bolívar international airport, which serves the city of Caracas. Since then, her whereabouts have been unknown and her family and lawyers have not been able to have contact with her. Rocío is also at high risk of being subjected to torture or other ill-treatment.

The Venezuelan authorities have an obligation to ensure her protection as a human rights defender, as declared by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights when granting her precautionary measures in 2012. Despite this, Rocío has been attacked, harassed, and arbitrarily detained for her work defending human rights in Venezuela.

We demand the immediate and unconditional release of Rocío San Miguel, as well as a definitive stop to the policy of repression against those considered as opposing the government. While she is unjustly detained, authorities must guarantee access to her family and legal representatives of her choosing. We also demand the freedom of her family members who have been unjustly detained.

Sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Rocío San Miguel is a nationally and internationally renowned lawyer, professor and human rights defender from Venezuela. She is the current president of Control Ciudadano, an NGO that is recognized for its investigations and monitoring of human rights issues linked to public security and the work of the armed forces. In the context of the arbitrary detention and forced disappearance of Rocío San Miguel, several people from her family environment were also detained, including her daughter, Miranda Díaz San Miguel, two brothers, Miguel Ángel San Miguel Sosa and Alberto San Miguel Quigosos, Miranda's father, Víctor Díaz Paruta, and her former partner, Alejandro González Canales.

For years, Amnesty International has denounced the use of politically motivated arbitrary detentions as part of a policy of repression implemented by the government of Nicolás Maduro against people who may be considered critical towards the government. These arbitrary detentions are part of a widespread and systematic attack against the population of Venezuela and could constitute crimes against humanity. In addition to politically motivated arbitrary detentions, short and long-term forced disappearances have also been part of the Venezuelan government's policy of repression. This practice has been documented and denounced by the UN Working Group on Forced or Involuntary Disappearances, as well as by the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela.

Human rights defenders are at a constant risk of harassment, attacks and arbitrary detention. Human rights defender, prisoner of conscience and director of local NGO Fundaredes, Javier Tarazona, remains in detained since July 2021 and is facing unfair criminal charges solely for defending human rights in Venezuela. We call for his immediate and unconditional release.

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 November 2023, over 7.72 million people have fled massive human rights violations in Venezuela, representing over 25% of the total population of 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: 8 April 2024
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Rocío San Miguel (she/her)