

# URGENT ACTION

## VENEZUELAN PRISONERS FACE CRITICAL NEGLECT

Since February 2024, Juan Carlos Marrufo is enduring inhumane prison conditions in Venezuelan prison Rodeo I, having been held in politically motivated arbitrary detention since March 2019. As well as subjecting him to isolation and lack of drinking water, the authorities deny him medical testing and treatment. María Auxiliadora Delgado, married to Juan Carlos and also detained for over five years, requires immediate medical tests. Emirlendris Benitez, arbitrarily arrested in August 2018, suffers ailments resulting from the torture she was subjected to which require immediate surgery. We call on minister Celsa Bautista to ensure they receive medical attention immediately.

**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

Dear Minister Celsa Bautista,

For months authorities in Venezuela have withheld medical care for victims of politically arbitrary detention Emirlendris Benítez, María Auxiliadora Delgado and Juan Carlos Marrufo. Their safety and health cannot wait any longer and it is within your power to ensure they receive immediate medical care and that their lives are safeguarded.

Emirlendris Benítez is serving an unfair 30-year prison sentence at the INOF centre at Los Teques, Caracas, after being arbitrarily detained and subjected to torture in August 2018. María Auxiliadora is also in your custody at the same INOF centre, having been detained since March 2019 together with her husband, Juan Carlos Marrufo, who is equally in your custody at the recently re-established Rodeo I prison. All three are under your care and responsibility.

Specifically, Emirlendris requires immediate surgery to treat the conditions derived from the torture and gender-based violence she endured after her unfair arrest. María Auxiliadora awaits medical imaging and testing that are needed to prevent and treat a life-threatening condition.

Juan Carlos Marrufo, who was first arrested on 19 March 2019 by the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM) together with his wife, María Auxiliadora, was unexpectedly transferred to Rodeo I prison in February. The conditions in this prison are extremely alarming and could amount to torture and other ill treatment.

**Emirlendris Benítez, Juan Carlos Marrufo and María Auxiliadora Delgado should be immediately and unconditionally released. While they remain in your custody, their lives and health are yours to protect. We urge you to urgently grant them access to trusted and adequate medical care, including urgent testing and treatment.**

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Emirlendris Benitez is a Venezuelan mother, sister, and tradeswoman. 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. 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.

Juan Carlos Marrufo and María Auxiliadora Delgado were first arrested on 19 March 2019 by the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM). They are a married couple, holding dual Spanish and Italian nationalities, respectively. They had decided to undergo an in vitro fertilization treatment when they were arrested. Their only connection to criminal offenses seems to be limited to María Auxiliadora being the sister of a retired military officer with alleged ties to an attack on Nicolás Maduro. Not only are they victims of arbitrary detentions, but they have also been deprived of their plans of growing their family.

María Auxiliadora and Juan Carlos were held in custody of the DGCIM at their detention centre in Boleíta, Caracas, for the first few years of their detention. Since, María Auxiliadora was transferred to the INOF prison in Caracas on 10 April 2024, while Juan Carlos was transferred to the prison referred to as Rodeo I. Reports indicate that prison conditions at Rodeo I include solitary confinement for the first 30 days of custody -referred to as "period of reflection" for detainees-, family visitors being hooded, detainees having to sleep on concrete beds, attending their court date via video conference without the company of their lawyers, and having no access to drinking water or basic hygiene products, which may constitute torture.

Their detentions are not an isolated issue. They fall within a widespread and systematic use of arbitrary detentions -amongst other international crimes and human rights violations- used to target those considered critical of Nicolás Maduro's government and could therefore constitute crimes against humanity. Other victims of arbitrary detention include human rights defender and prisoner of conscience Javier Tarazona, detained since July 2021, and human rights defender Rocío San Miguel, who was forcibly disappeared for five days and continues to be detained since 9 February 2024. According to Foro Penal, a Venezuelan ONG, there have been over 15,800 politically motivated arbitrary detentions committed between 2014 and 2023.

Civil society organisations face systemic threats from the government in Venezuela. 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 had fled the country, representing over 25% of the country's total population.

Since 2020, four 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: 28 June 2024**

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), Juan Carlos Marrufo (he/him), María Auxiliadora Delgado (she/her)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr53/7761/2024/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr53/7761/2024/en/)