

URGENT ACTION

PROTECT VENEZUELAN DEFENDERS

On 13 October 2025, Yendri Velásquez and Luis Peche, Venezuelan human rights defenders, suffered an armed attack in Bogotá. More than three months later, they continue to depend on temporary and limited protection measures provided by the National Protection Unit (UNP in Spanish) and the Mayor's Office of Bogotá, despite UNP's vowing to implement comprehensive and stable protection measures after the attack. We urge the Colombian authorities to ensure full and effective protection for Yendri and Luis.

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

Augusto Rodríguez Ballesteros
Director
Unidad Nacional de Protección
Carrera 44 No. 20-21
Bogotá, D.C.
Colombia

Dear Mr. Director,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the situation of Yendri Omar Velásquez Rodríguez and Luis Alejandro Peche Arteaga, Venezuelan human rights defenders who were attacked on 13 October 2025 in Bogotá. Upon entering Colombia, Mr. Velásquez requested international protection due to serious human rights violations committed by the Venezuelan authorities against him, and having fled that country to avoid further repression. While Mr. Peche has dual nationality as Venezuelan and Colombian, he has also been at risk for his advocacy regarding the human rights situation in Venezuela and his political activism. The lack of international protection, despite their requests to Colombian authorities, caused Mr. Velásquez difficulties to access basic services as healthcare and a place to live, increasing his risks.

While in Bogotá, Mr. Velásquez and Mr. Peche continued exercising their right to defend human rights, until they were attacked by unidentified armed assailants on 13 October. They sustained multiple gunshot wounds and required urgent medical care. Since then, the Colombian authorities—through the Mayor's Office of Bogotá, the National Protection Unit (UNP), and the National Police—have granted them temporary protection measures in response to the evident risks they face.

It has been clear, since the beginning, that the UNP is the public entity most responsible for providing protection to Mr. Velásquez and Mr. Peche. Amnesty International, of which Mr. Velásquez is part of, has been informed that the administrative process to assess their risk and determine stable protection measures has begun. However, more than three months after the attack, both Mr. Velásquez and Mr. Peche remain under temporary measures that are insufficient to address their situation and may be lifted at any time.

I urge you to advance promptly with the risk assessment process for Mr. Velásquez and Mr. Peche, and to provide them with comprehensive, stable, and individualized protection measures. These measures must be concerted with them and fully address their specific circumstances, including their status as Venezuelan human rights defenders living in exile in Colombia.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Venezuelans have faced a severe human rights crisis for more than a decade. During this period, Amnesty International has documented grave human rights violations and international law crimes—including crimes against humanity—committed by Venezuelan authorities and causing an ongoing humanitarian emergency that has forced over 25% of the population to flee the country. Since the July 2024 presidential elections, repression against human rights defenders, political dissidents and people perceived as dissidents has intensified, leading to at least 2,200 politically motivated arbitrary detentions in just a few days, some amounting to [enforced disappearances](#), and systematic use of arbitrary criminal proceedings based on unfounded accusations of “terrorism” and other charges.

As of 19 January 2026, at least 777 individuals remain arbitrarily detained for political reasons, according to Venezuelan NGO Foro Penal. Amongst them, the Colombian national Danner Barajas, who was arbitrarily detained on 7 November 2024 and subjected to enforced disappearance for months. He is currently being held in Rodeo I prison in Venezuela.

Colombia has become the principal destination for Venezuelans looking for international protection, with approximately 2.9 million people currently residing in the country according to Migración Colombia (immigration authority) as of November 2025. Although Colombian authorities have adopted measures to regularize their migration status, significant barriers and obstacles persist throughout these processes. Moreover, the authorities continue to fall short in recognizing that those fleeing Venezuela need, and are entitled to, international protection, due to the serious risks to their life, security, and freedom if they return.

Despite not being the primary pathway to remain in Colombia, the country’s asylum and refugee status determination system is severely backlogged and unable to adequately fulfil the State’s protection obligations. Applicants face prolonged waiting periods and restrictions on access to essential rights—such as the ability to work while waiting for a decision—among other obstacles. In this context, Venezuelan human rights defenders living in exile, who are among those at greatest risk and in greatest need of international protection, continue striving to exercise their right to defend human rights.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 April 2026.

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

NAME: Yendri Velásquez [he / him] and Luis Peche [he / him]

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: N/A