

URGENT ACTION

FEW RELEASES, HUNDREDS REMAIN DETAINED

Venezuelan 16-year-old Samantha Hernández was conditionally released on 18 May 2026. Her sister, Aranza Hernández, was 19-years-old at the time of her arbitrary detention on 20 November 2025 and remains unfairly detained. Approximately 500-600 people continue arbitrarily detained for political reasons, including Emirlendris Benítez and Juan Carlos Marrufo, who are in urgent need of medical assistance. The fate and whereabouts of some presumed detainees remain unknown, like Jorgen Guanares. We call on the Attorney General to ensure the immediate release of all those arbitrarily detained and, while in custody, to disclose their fate and whereabouts and guarantee adequate medical care.

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

Larry Devoe
Attorney General

Edificio Ministerio Público, PB, Av. Urdaneta, esquinas de Ánimas a Platanal
Caracas, Venezuela

Mr Attorney General,

I condemn the Venezuelan authorities' continued refusal to release all those arbitrarily detained in Venezuela. This refusal turns all-the-more cruel after the repeated announcements made by the president of the National Assembly, Jorge Rodríguez, regarding the release of hundreds of arbitrary detainees. Once again, the countries' authorities show an appalling disregard for the hopes and the suffering of victims and their loved ones, who relentlessly demand the release of their family members despite widespread cruelty and systemic injustice.

It is deeply unsettling to note the tacit acknowledgement by high-ranking government authorities of the fact that hundreds are being held unfairly in state custody, yet they do not act decisively to put an end to this situation, despite having the power to do so. The release of every victim of arbitrary detention is urgent and necessary, like that of teenager Samantha Hernández's on 18 May and a few others in the following days.

I regret to remind the Venezuelan authorities that arbitrary detention is a serious human rights violation, often compounded by other acts prohibited by international law being committed in Venezuela, including enforced disappearance and torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. This is the case, for instance, of Jorgen Guanares, whose fate and whereabouts have been unknown since August 2024, and of Emirlendris Benítez and Juan Carlos Marrufo, who are currently being denied adequate medical care despite suffering an urgent need for it.

Families, communities and civil society organizations are being forced to deal with the uncertainty of not knowing what could happen to those detained, which could even include death in custody, like in the shocking and widely condemned case of Victor Hugo Quero Navas. The resilience and strength demonstrated by his mother, Carman Navas -who passed away just few days after learning the fate of her son- was met with resounding national and international solidarity, but also with persistent impunity.

I call on you to ensure the immediate release all those arbitrarily detained. While in custody of the state, every detainee must see their life protected, their fate and whereabouts known, as well as all fair trial guarantees, such as naming their lawyer of choice, receiving adequate medical care, and being granted family visits.

Your sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Venezuelan government's long-standing policy of repression to silence any form of real or perceived dissent has continuously used politically motivated arbitrary detentions to persecute people in Venezuela. Throughout many years, authorities have implemented a so-called 'revolving door' of detentions, whereby releases are usually followed by new detentions. Similarly, those released are kept subjected to arbitrary criminal proceedings and restrictions to their liberty, perpetuating fear, revictimization, and human rights violations. This practice reached a historic peak after the 28 July 2024 election, which saw over [2,000 people arbitrarily detained](#) for political reasons, many of them charged with seemingly unfounded counts of terrorism and incitement of hatred, including vulnerable groups such as [children and people living with disabilities](#).

Between December 2025 and May 2026, Venezuelan authorities have slowly and sporadically released a few hundred victims of politically motivated arbitrary detention, most on conditional release and maintaining the criminal investigations or charges against them. On 3 January, [USA's military action](#) in Venezuela led to the capture of Nicolás Maduro and Cilia Flores, and the swearing in of Delcy Rodríguez as acting president of Venezuela. A few days later, National Assembly president, Jorge Rodríguez, announced that a "significant number" of people detained will be released. Again in May, he announced the release of "three hundred" detainees. As of 25 May, at least 457 people remained arbitrarily detained for political reasons, according to Venezuelan NGO Foro Penal, with other local NGOs -like Justicia, Encuentro y Perdón- raising that figure to over 600.

Within this policy of repression, the 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 May 2025, [7.9 million](#) had fled Venezuela.

Since 2020, reports from the UN independent international [fact-finding mission](#) on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (FFM) 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, establishing that some of these international crimes and human rights violations amount to crimes against humanity. Specifically in 2024, the FFM concluded that it has "reasonable grounds to believe that the crime of persecution on political grounds has been committed during the timeframe covered by its mandate". Its conclusions were once again reiterated in its 2025 reporting.

Since November 2021, the Office of the [Prosecutor](#) of the [International Criminal Court](#) is conducting a criminal investigation into the situation in Venezuela, specifically regarding the "[c]rimes against humanity of deprivation of liberty or other serious deprivation of physical liberty (...); torture (...); rape and/or other forms of sexual violence of comparable severity (...); and politically motivated persecution against persons detained (...), which were committed since at least April 2017, by members of the State security forces, civil authorities and pro-government persons (or groups called "collectives").

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 August 2026

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Persons detained for political reasons (they, them, their)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr53/0884/2026/en/