

# URGENT ACTION

## COUNCILMAN DIES IN CUSTODY OF INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

**Fernando Albán, councilman for Primero Justicia, an opposition party in Venezuela, died while in custody of the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) on Monday 8 October. His body fell from the tenth floor of the headquarters of the SEBIN in Caracas, although the circumstances around his death are unclear.**

On 8 October, Venezuelan authorities reported that **Fernando Albán**, councilman for Primero Justicia, an opposition party, committed suicide by jumping off the tenth floor of the headquarters of the SEBIN, where he had been detained since 5 October. Statements made by the Attorney General, Tarek William Saab, and the Minister for Internal Affairs and Justice, Néstor Reverol, offered contradictory versions of the circumstances surrounding Fernando Albán's death.

Fernando Albán was detained on Friday 5 October, when he arrived at Caracas' airport. According to the Ministry of Interior, Peace and Justice, he was detained by the SEBIN on "suspicion of being connected to the attempted attack of government officials during a public event in August 2018". His whereabouts were unknown for the following hours after his detention. When he was found dead on 8 October, he had not yet been brought before a judge to determine the legality of his detention, despite the expiration of the 48 hours legal term.

According to Albán's lawyer, there are several indications that make his suicide improbable, including the restrictions of movement while been under SEBIN's custody, since the prison cells are located in the basement and authorities have not given any information on how he would have accessed the tenth floor.

Venezuelan authorities stated that Albán committed suicide without any investigation on the circumstances of his death. His death risks to remain unclear if a prompt, thorough and independent investigation is not carried out immediately. Amnesty International has documented several cases of politically motivated arbitrary detentions of people perceived as critic to the government politics, among which there were several claims of torture and other ill-treatments while in custody of SEBIN.

### **Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language to the Venezuelan authorities:**

- Demanding a prompt, thorough and independent investigation into the facts and cause of the death of Fernando Albán, including the possibility of torture;
- Demanding that the investigation complies with human rights law and standards, including full access to information for Alban's family.
- Demanding them to protect the right to life and personal integrity of anybody held in state custody and the right to a fair trial.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 NOVEMBER TO:**

#### Attorney General

Mr Tarek William Saab  
Fiscalía General de la República  
Avenida México, Manduca a Pelelojo  
La Candelaria  
Caracas, Venezuela  
Twitter: @TarekWilliamSaab  
Email: [ministeriopublico@mp.gob.ve](mailto:ministeriopublico@mp.gob.ve)  
**Salutation: Dear Attorney General**

#### Ombudsperson

Mr Alfredo Ruiz  
Defensoría del Pueblo  
Av. Urdaneta, Centro Financiero Latino,  
Piso 26, Los Anaucos, Caracas  
Venezuela  
Twitter: @Defensoria\_Vzla  
Fax: +58 (0212) 5077025  
**Salutation: Dear Ombudsman**

#### **And copies to:**

[Amnesty International Venezuela](#)  
AIVEN, Torre Phelps, Piso 17  
Plaza Venezuela  
Caracas, Venezuela  
Twitter: @amnistia  
Email: [info@aiven.org](mailto:info@aiven.org)

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Fernando Albán's detention occurred after the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution that gives the Office of High Commissioner of Human Rights the mandate to report on Venezuela in the three upcoming sessions of the Council. Additionally, on 26 September 2018, six American states referred the situation of Venezuela to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court alleging the commission of crimes against humanity, such as torture and arbitrary detentions.

The National Bolivarian Intelligence Service (SEBIN) is an armed force dependent of the Executive, and it is under the Vice Presidency command. As an intelligence service, its primary task is "the neutralization of real or potential threats to the Venezuelan state". Although the arrest and custody of people in pre-trial detention are not among its functions, SEBIN has had cells for several years in several places.

In addition, SEBIN reports directly to the Vice-President of the Republic of Venezuela and is, therefore, not governed by the Organic Regulation of the Ministry of People's Power for Prison Services.

Amnesty International has documented several cases of politically motivated arbitrary detentions of people perceived as critic to the government politics, activist or politicians. Among these cases Amnesty International received several claims of torture and other ill-treatments while in custody of SEBIN. Such cases included beatings, drownings, electric shocks, sexual violence, among others. Additionally, SEBIN officials frequently ignore legal procedures and court orders regarding due process and detention.

Name: Fernando Albán

Gender: Male

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