

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AT RISK

Rocío San Miguel, a Venezuelan human rights defender, has suffered intimidation and could be facing arbitrary arrest. She has accused high-ranking members of the Armed Forces of breaching the constitution. Her safety and her freedom could be at risk.

Rocío San Miguel is the president of the Caracas-based organization, Citizen Control (Control Ciudadano). She has criticised members of the military for allegedly breaching the constitution by siding with the ruling political party.

On 6 and 7 May, Rocío San Miguel used national media to speak against several military officers. On 7 and 8 May unknown men called Rocío San Miguel to offer her sensitive information about military activities. Rocío San Miguel believes that these may have been attempts to involve her in a criminal offense.

Two unidentified men followed her on 7 May, in an unmarked grey car while she was driving through the outskirts of Caracas accompanied by her 11-year-old daughter. The unknown men passed Rocío San Miguel's car, turned around and waited for her. The men stared at her as she drove past.

On 8 May a trusted source of Rocío San Miguel told her that an arrest warrant against her had been presented before a judge, but that the judge had refused to proceed with it. On 13 May another source told her that her arrest was imminent. She could be accused of attempting to subvert the constitutional order.

At least five high-profile critics of President Hugo Chávez have been arrested since August 2009 on what appear to be politically motivated grounds. One of them remains in pre-trial detention.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of human rights defender Rocío San Miguel;
- Urging the authorities to provide Rocío San Miguel with effective protection in strict accordance with her wishes;
- Urging the authorities to carry out a full and impartial investigation into these incidents;
- Calling on the authorities to stop misusing the justice system to harass those who dissent with the government;
- Reminding the authorities of their commitment to support the legitimate work of human rights defenders as set out in the 1996 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 JUNE 2010 TO:

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Sr. Tareck El Aissami
Ministerio del Poder Popular para
Relaciones Interiores y Justicia
Av. Urdaneta, Edif. sede MIJ, Piso 1,
Carmelitas, Caracas, Venezuela

Fax: +58 212 506 1685/1369/1788

**Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado
Señor Ministro**

Attorney General

Dra. Luisa Ortega Díaz
Fiscalía General de la República
Avda. México, Manduca a Pelelojo,
Edif. Sede Fiscalía General de la
República, La Candelaria, Caracas,
Venezuela

Email: mp@fiscalia.gov.ve

Fax: +58 212 509 7264/7345

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimada
Señora Fiscal General**

And copies to:

Control Ciudadano
CCCT, Oficina 19, nivel 1, Chuao,
Caracas, Venezuela

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Rocío San Miguel survived an attempt on her life on 1 July 2008 but the authorities have not informed her of any results in the investigation. At that time she was campaigning against a government-backed bill to reform the intelligence services.

The Venezuelan government appears to have heightened the use of legislative and administrative measures to silence or harass critics. At least three individuals seen as opposed to President Hugo Chávez were arrested and charged in March 2010 alone.

Opposition congressman Wilmer Azuaje was arrested on 25 March. He was accused of reportedly insulting and hitting a woman police officer. He has since then been released but faces prosecution.

Guillermo Zuloaga, owner of TV station Globovisión, was also arrested on 25 March and charged with disseminating false information and insulting the President in statements that he made during a recent Inter American Press Association meeting in Aruba. He has since been released but also faces prosecution.

Oswaldo Álvarez Paz, former governor of the western state of Zulia, was arrested on 22 March after he said in an interview that Venezuela had become a haven for drug trafficking and citing accusations by a Spanish court that the government supports armed opposition groups. He was conditionally released on 13 May but the case against him continues.

In December 2009, Judge María Lourdes Afiuni was arrested and charged with complicity in the case of a former male banker who has gone missing after she conditionally released him. María Lourdes Afiuni remains in pre-trial detention.

Opposition member Richard Blanco was arrested in August 2009 and charged with inciting of violence and injuring a police officer during a demonstration. Richard Blanco was released on 6 April but still faces trial.

On 24 February 2010, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights argued that in Venezuela “the punitive power of the State is being used to intimidate or punish people on account of their political opinions” and that “conditions do not exist for human rights defenders and journalists to be able to freely carry out their work.”

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