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Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*

Summary

The present report is submitted to the Human Rights Council pursuant to its resolution 57/36. In the report, the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela sets out the findings of its investigation into gross human rights violations committed between the presidential election of 28 July 2024 and 31 August 2025.

* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.



Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	3
A. Background.....	3
B. Methodology and standard of proof.....	3
II. Context	4
III. Update on patterns of violations.....	5
A. Arbitrary detentions	5
B. Arbitrary deprivation of life.....	9
C. Enforced disappearances.....	11
D. Torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.....	12
E. Sexual and gender-based violence	14
IV. Restrictions on civic space	15
V. Conclusions and recommendations	16
A. Conclusions	16
B. Recommendations.....	17

I. Introduction

A. Background

1. Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 42/25, the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has a mandate to investigate gross violations of human rights such as extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, including sexual and gender-based violence, committed since 2014. In its resolution 57/36, the Council extended the mission's mandate for two years to enable it to continue investigating with a particular focus on the situation of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the lead-up to, during and after the 2024 presidential election, and on the violence by armed individuals known as *colectivos*.

2. In this report, the mission provides an update on the investigation of serious human rights violations that occurred between the eve of the 2024 presidential election and 31 August 2025. Detailed conclusions are set out in the conference room paper accompanying this report. The mission will submit an additional conference room paper on the Bolivarian National Guard in the weeks following this session.

3. In its 2024 report,¹ the mission referred to the reactivation of the most violent mechanisms of the State's repressive apparatus and the serious human rights violations and crimes that occurred after the rejection of the presidential election results announced by the National Electoral Council, which declared Nicolás Maduro the winner without publishing the election tally sheets. During the period covered by this report, the State policy to silence, discourage and quash opposition was steadily executed, combining different methods, especially at times of heightened political tension, such as the presidential inauguration and parliamentary and regional elections. In this context, repression increased and mainly took the form of arbitrary detentions and other gross violations of human rights.

B. Methodology and standard of proof

4. The mission conducts its investigations in accordance with established methodologies and best practices recognized by the United Nations, taking into account a gender perspective. The mission works according to the principles of independence, impartiality, objectivity, transparency, integrity and the "do no harm" principle.

5. The mission uses the standard of proof of "reasonable grounds to believe" to reach its conclusions. The standard is met when the mission assembles a reliable body of information, consistent with other material, based on which a reasonable and ordinarily prudent person would have reason to believe that a certain incident or pattern of conduct has occurred.²

6. The investigation has been seriously hampered by the liquidity and financial crisis facing the United Nations Secretariat, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which provides support for the mission's work. As in previous years, and in part due to the Office's recruitment procedures, the mission received fewer resources that had been allocated by the Council. Of the 11 posts assigned, the mission filled 8, of which only 3 were occupied for the full investigative period. The mission filled only two of the five assigned investigator posts and, for some months, had only one investigator; the gender adviser served for only three months in a temporary capacity; a legal adviser served for five months and a reporting officer for four months, extended by a further three months, in a temporary capacity.

7. Despite this context, the mission was able to fulfil its mandate by resizing its tasks and objectives. It conducted 237 remote or in-person interviews with victims, family members, witnesses and informants, analysed 364 pieces of evidence and received

¹ [A/HRC/57/57](#).

² *Commissions of Inquiry and Fact-Finding Missions on International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. Guidance and Practice* (United Nations publication, 2015), p. 70.

information from national and international civil society organizations, intergovernmental bodies and Governments. It analysed open-source information, official and judicial documents, independent forensic reports, videos, audio recordings and photographs. The Venezuelan authorities continued to refuse to cooperate with the mission, in contravention of the Council's resolutions.

8. In January 2025, the mission conducted a fact-finding visit to another country, in which it made direct contact with victims and their families, civil society organizations and diplomatic officials from various States. The mission issued three press releases.³

9. The focus of the present report should in no way be understood as seeking to minimize or ignore gross human rights violations that are not mentioned, nor should it be construed as suggesting that other violations have not occurred.

II. Context

10. Repression in the context of the 2024 post-election protests resulted in the deaths of 25 people and the detention of more than 2,220; it included enforced disappearances (some of short duration), torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and sexual and gender-based violence, as documented and investigated by the mission in the previous cycle. Although some detainees were released from prison during the period, the systematic arbitrary detention of opponents, or persons perceived as such, continued.

11. On 16 October 2024, changes took place in the military leadership. Among the most significant were the replacement of Major General Iván Hernández Dala, head of the Directorate General of Military Counter-Intelligence since 2014, by Major General Javier Marcano Táбата, and the assumption by Major General Alexis Rodríguez Cabello of the leadership of the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service, headed by Gustavo González López since 2019. Iván Hernández Dala was appointed president of Compañía Anónima Nacional Teléfonos de Venezuela (the national telecommunications company) on 20 November 2024; Gustavo González López became the strategic affairs and production control manager of Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A. on 19 October 2024. Major General Élio Ramón Estrada Paredes was confirmed as Commander-in-Chief of the Bolivarian National Guard, a position he has held since July 2023.⁴

12. Parliamentary and regional elections were held on 25 May 2025. Most of the political opposition did not participate, and the ruling alliance of the Simón Bolívar Great Patriotic Pole triumphed by a wide margin.⁵ The National Electoral Council, whose official website has been inactive since 28 July 2024, did not act in a transparent manner and failed to publish the electoral calendar or a breakdown of the election results.⁶ According to the National Electoral Council, turnout in these elections was 42.63 per cent, based on “active voters”.⁷ Opposition political forces, civil society organizations and analysts stated that turnout was between 12 per cent and 26 per cent.

13. In the May elections, a governor and a legislative council for “Guayana Esequiba State” were elected for the first time. The International Court of Justice had ordered the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to “refrain from conducting elections, or preparing to

³ See <https://www.ohchr.org/es/hr-bodies/hrc/ffmv/index>.

⁴ See Official Gazette, No. 42,738, 16 October 2024.

⁵ According to the National Electoral Council, the ruling alliance received 82 per cent of the vote, winning 256 of the 285 seats in the National Assembly, 23 of the 24 governorships and 90 per cent of seats in the state legislative councils. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpV_TZrQIVs.

⁶ See Transparencia Venezuela en el Exilio, “Elecciones regionales y legislativas 2025 en Venezuela”, available at <https://transparenciave.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Elecciones-Regionales-y-Legislativas-2025-en-Venezuela.-Transparencia-Venezuela-en-el-exilio.pdf>.

⁷ An undefined category that seems to refer to voters who have participated in elections since 2020. This reduces the size of the electorate compared with the electoral register, giving a higher participation rate.

conduct elections, in the territory in dispute, which the Co-operative Republic of Guyana currently administers and over which it exercises control”.⁸

14. On 27 July 2025, the election of mayors and municipal councils took place in the country’s 335 municipalities. Most of the opposition again abstained from participating. According to the National Electoral Council, candidates from the ruling alliance were elected mayors in 285 municipalities (85 per cent) and voter turnout was 44 per cent, again based on “active voters”. The political opposition estimated the rate of abstention at 90 per cent. With the results of the 2025 elections, the ruling party has gained control of the political apparatus at all levels.

15. The authorities continued to use the pretext of dismantling of anti-government or anti-election conspiracies to justify dozens of arrests. In addition to opponents of the Government, or persons perceived as such, a significant number of foreign nationals were detained and accused of mercenary, terrorist or destabilizing activities.

16. On 6 May 2025, after almost 14 months of confinement, the persons who had been living in the residence of the Ambassador of Argentina in Caracas⁹ fled to the United States of America after an operation described as a rescue by the Secretary of State of that country. However, the Venezuelan authorities claimed that the departure of the individuals in question, who included the mother of María Corina Machado, was the result of a negotiation.¹⁰

17. On 1 August 2025, the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court decided that Prosecutor Karim Khan should recuse himself from the *Situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela I* case.¹¹ On 8 August 2025, Delcy Rodríguez, Executive Vice President of the Republic, visited the Deputy Prosecutor, who underlined the commitment of the Office of the Prosecutor to pursuing its ongoing investigation, begun in 2018, while assessing the progress made by the Government on complementarity.¹²

III. Update on patterns of violations

18. During the period covered by this report, the mission has investigated serious human rights violations, including deaths in State custody; mass arrests, with detainees subjected to prolonged incommunicado detention and solitary confinement; deprivation of liberty in clandestine locations; torture; and acts of sexual and gender-based violence. The investigation focused on violations perpetrated in connection with the presidential election, continuing the work begun at the end of the previous investigation cycle. The conference room paper accompanying this report details the mission’s investigations and includes an annex with 19 cases that illustrate the main violations.

A. Arbitrary detentions

19. The mission has confirmed that the arrests in connection with the 2024 post-election protests were part of a plan to silence the opposition, implemented progressively as the State perceived greater resistance. The growing number of popular demonstrations against the results announced by the National Electoral Council prompted the State to unleash a wave of mass arrests, which were either indiscriminate – occurring during or after the protests – or selective, within the framework of Operation Tun Tun.¹³ In the latter case, opponents or persons identified as such were arrested for having participated in a protest or having criticized the Government.

⁸ *Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 (Guyana v. Venezuela)*, order of 1 May 2025, para. 46.

⁹ A/HRC/57/57, para. 47.

¹⁰ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tJRyq2x-2g&t=19s>.

¹¹ *Situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela I*, Decision on the “Request for the Appeals Chamber to Conduct an Ex Officio Review of the Prosecutor’s Conflict of Interest in the Venezuela I Situation”, case No. ICC-02/18-118, 1 August 2025.

¹² See <https://x.com/IntlCrimCourt/status/1953814400973894003>.

¹³ See https://www.instagram.com/tvvnoticias/reel/C-Thh_6SfMN/.

20. The detainees were initially held in temporary detention centres. When these centres reached their capacity, the authorities opened investigation files based on real or fictitious criticism of the Government, particularly on social media or messaging networks, reports from regime-affiliated groups (“cooperating patriots”) or participation in protests. The authorities acknowledged that they had detained more than 2,220 people in this way. The mission recorded the detention of at least 218 children and adolescents.

21. The justice system, through its four terrorism courts, organized collective hearings, which the defendants – in one case, 103 people – attended remotely from temporary detention centres; cases were based on fabricated investigation files and pre-established charges. The courts automatically ordered pretrial detention in prisons fitted out for this purpose, including those of Tocorón, Aragua State and Tocuyito, Carabobo State, and other detention centres, such as those of Yare, La Crisálida and El Rodeo.

22. Between January and August 2025, the mission documented 200 detentions. The State’s repressive machinery was particularly active around the time of the presidential inauguration on 10 January, when the mission documented 84 detentions (67 men and 17 women), and during the 25 May elections, when it documented 42 detentions (34 men and 8 women). Thirteen further detentions (11 men and 2 women) were documented during the intervening period, while 61 detentions (43 men and 18 women) were documented between June and August.

23. The mission investigated 44 cases of detention, in all of which it found reasonable grounds to believe that the detentions had been arbitrary. Arbitrariness is determined by the manner in which the arrests were made; the lack of factual or legal basis for the detention; undue restrictions of the civil liberties and political rights of opponents or critics of the Government; delays in bringing detainees before a judge; and serious violations of due process guarantees.

24. The modus operandi of the security forces who carried out the arrests was generally the same as described by the mission in its previous reports. Arrests are made by unidentified individuals, often hooded, who do not show arrest warrants or explain the reasons for the arrest. In several cases, officers used disproportionate force when making arrests, removing people from their homes and placing them in unmarked vehicles. After being taken to a detention centre, detainees were unable to communicate with relatives or lawyers and were not informed of the charges against them. Several persons were photographed with incriminating evidence that, according to the sources consulted, they had not possessed at the time of their arrest, and they were questioned in the absence of legal counsel.

25. Systematic violations of due process guarantees continued, especially during initial court appearances. These hearings were not public, although the mission documented the presence of family members in some cases involving children and adolescents. Most were held using WhatsApp or other digital platforms, sometimes at night or in the early hours of the morning, with defendants in detention centres or courthouses in different parts of the country being presented before judges, prosecutors and public defenders in Caracas. They were unable to see, hear, understand or question the justice officials; nor could they interact, before or during the hearing, with the public defenders that were imposed on them.

26. In these conditions, detainees were charged, generally with terrorism offences, incitement to hatred and incitement to commit an offence. Children and adolescents were threatened by the officers guarding them so that they would not complain about the conditions of detention in which they were being held. When they did so, as in the case of three adolescent girls who claimed to have been subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, the courts did not accept their complaints and no investigations were opened.

27. In all but one of the cases investigated by the mission – that of Carlos Correa – the defendants were prevented from appointing lawyers of their choice during the proceedings, either because of a court decision or because detention centre personnel hindered the appointment process. This restriction has had a serious impact on the rights of accused persons as, in several cases, public defenders failed to communicate with them or their families. In addition, access to judicial files was denied.

1. Incommunicado detention

28. During this investigation cycle, the mission has observed the alarming use of incommunicado detention from the moment of arrest. In other cases, incommunicado detention was imposed during imprisonment, usually as a punishment.

29. In 26 investigated cases, the mission found reasonable grounds to believe that incommunicado detention lasted for weeks or even months. This may, depending on the circumstances, be characterized as prolonged incommunicado detention, which is proscribed under international standards as amounting to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.¹⁴ In 15 of these cases, the incommunicado detention lasted for more than six months.

2. Detentions of foreign nationals

30. The authorities provided fragmented and unclear information on the foreign nationals detained during this period, who they accused of being mercenaries or of being involved in terrorism or international conspiracies. Based on official sources, the mission estimates that between 120 and 150 foreign nationals could be in detention. Of these, it has been able to document 84 cases (81 men and 3 women).

31. These numbers reveal a pattern that the mission had not previously observed. It has been documented that most of the arrests were made by the Bolivarian National Guard, the Directorate General of Military Counter-Intelligence and the Identification, Migration and Foreign Nationals Service in locations near the border with Colombia. In the case of the French and United States national Lucas Hunter, the mission has reasonable grounds to believe that he was captured on Colombian territory near the border with Zulia State.

32. According to the information obtained by the mission, the detained foreigners had entered the country for different reasons, such as tourism or personal, family or work visits. The risk of arbitrary detention has prompted several countries to recommend that their nationals refrain from travelling to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.¹⁵

33. Prolonged incommunicado detention was imposed on all foreign detainees, lasting up to six months in some cases, during which they were denied access to consular assistance from their respective States.¹⁶ This situation is in contravention of the obligations established in the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and other standards of international law.¹⁷

3. Releases from prison

34. Since 15 November 2024, persons detained in connection with the post-election protests, including children and adolescents, have been released in groups. According to official data from the Public Prosecution Service, as of March 2025, 2,006 people had been released from prison, although the organization Foro Penal had only recorded 1,399 releases (1,209 men and 190 women).

35. Releases of detained persons were accompanied by precautionary measures, such as the prohibition on their making statements about their cases and the requirement to regularly appear before a court in Caracas – an extremely burdensome measure for those who do not

¹⁴ Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 35 (2014), paras. 35 and 56; and CED/C/11, para. 5.

¹⁵ See <https://cancilleria.gob.ar/es/actualidad/noticias/alerta-consular-se-reitera-los-ciudadanos-argentinos-la-recomendacion-de-no>, <https://ve.usembassy.gov/reissued-may-12-2025-to-emphasize-the-extreme-danger-to-u-s-citizens-living-in-or-traveling-to-venezuela/>, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/conseils-aux-voyageurs/conseils-par-pays-destination/venezuela> and <https://www.nederlandwereldwijd.nl/reisadvies/venezuela>.

¹⁶ The mission has documented that the Venezuelan authorities ignored communications from 13 States.

¹⁷ Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 35 (2014), para. 58; Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *The Right to Information on Consular Assistance in the Framework of the Guarantees of the Due Process of Law*, advisory opinion No. OC-16/99 of 1 October 1999, Series A, No. 16; and International Court of Justice, *Avena and Other Mexican Nationals (Mexico v. United States of America)*, judgment, *I.C.J. Reports 2004*, p. 12.

live in the capital. These measures were applied in a general manner, without regard for the individual circumstances of each case.

36. The mission has documented that, in some cases, persons being released from prison were required to sign statements denying that they had suffered rights violations during their detention. Most of these individuals did not receive release orders, but were informed of their release verbally and in inexact terms by guards, prosecutors or public defenders. In some cases, the release orders did not indicate the precautionary measures to be complied with, with the result that the persons concerned do not know the precise scope of the restrictions placed upon them. The courts do not provide released prisoners with information or access to their files.

37. The mission has documented the release of 19 foreign nationals, mostly from the United States. So far in 2025, 17 United States nationals have been released: 6 on 31 January; 1 in May; and 10 on 18 July as part of a negotiated agreement.

38. On 18 July 2025, under an agreement between the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, El Salvador and the United States, 252 persons who were being held in high security prisons in El Salvador, including those who had been deported from the United States, were handed over to the Venezuelan Government. For its part, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela undertook to release 80 people. As of 24 July 2025, human rights organizations had recorded the release pursuant to this agreement of 71 persons, most of whom had been detained during the 2024 post-election protests. A further 13 individuals, not covered by the agreement, were released from prison on 24 August 2025.

39. As of December 2024, all but three children and adolescents had been released from prison, according to information from Foro Penal. Another two were detained at the time of the presidential inauguration, one of whom was released on 11 June 2025. At the time of writing, therefore, there are four children and adolescents who remain in detention in connection with the electoral protests. The mission has documented that at least 143 children and adolescents have been subjected to precautionary measures similar to those imposed on adults, without considering their age or best interests.

4. Extortion-related detentions and detentions of family members

40. A pattern identified by the mission in previous reports, and which has also been highlighted by civil society, relates to extortion-related detentions by different security forces.¹⁸ The allegations refer to the practice of forcing people to pay money to be released without charge or to avoid arrest; it has occurred, for example, when individuals attempting to pass a police checkpoint were told that their names appeared on a list. According to information received from affected persons, their relatives and diplomatic sources, the amounts demanded ranged from US\$ 1,000 to US\$ 50,000. In one investigated case, relatives of a detainee paid US\$ 3,500 to a senior official of the Directorate General of Military Counter-Intelligence to secure his release.

41. Sexual extortion against women was also documented: women were asked to have sex in exchange for not being arrested or for better conditions of detention. This subject is addressed in greater detail in paragraphs 78 to 84 below, on sexual and gender-based violence.

42. Detentions of family members as a form of reprisal or as means to the capture of opponents or persons perceived as such – a pattern identified by the mission in its first report – continued during this period. The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that the spouse of a social activist was subjected to this practice: the security forces detained her in order to arrest her partner, who was tricked into going to meet her. Another case investigated was that of Rafael Tudares Bracho, son-in-law of Edmundo González, who was arrested three days before the presidential inauguration while taking his children to school.¹⁹

¹⁸ See Transparencia Venezuela en el Exilio, “The Faces of Extortion in Venezuela 2024”, available at <https://transparenciave.org/economias-ilicitas/las-caras-de-la-extorsion-en-venezuela-2024/>.

¹⁹ See <https://x.com/MarianaGTudares/status/1937267164681015420>.

B. Arbitrary deprivation of life

1. Deaths in the context of the post-election protests

43. The mission has confirmed that 25 persons, including a sergeant of the Bolivarian National Guard, were killed during the post-election protests. On 11 November 2024, the Public Prosecution Service acknowledged a list of 28 deceased.²⁰ That list did not include three persons considered by the mission to be victims, but did include another six persons, including a second officer of the Bolivarian National Guard. In the light of the information obtained, and that disclosed by the Public Prosecution Service, the mission has reasonable grounds to believe that the deaths of these six persons were not the result of post-election violence. Three of them died in traffic accidents, including the second officer of the Bolivarian National Guard, who was struck by a drunk driver;²¹ another was killed by a man who had been threatening his neighbours over a land deal.²²

44. The mission has deepened its investigation into the deaths of 14 of the 25 deceased: 7 were fatally wounded in Maracay, Aragua State, on 29 July 2024;²³ 2 were killed the same day in protests near a shopping centre in El Valle, Capital District;²⁴ and 5 were killed in protests that took place on 29 July 2024 in San Francisco, Zulia State²⁵ and Antímano, Capital District²⁶ and 30 July 2024 in Valencia, Carabobo State,²⁷ Carora, Lara State²⁸ and Guarenas, Miranda State.²⁹

45. The State has maintained its position that the deaths during the protests are attributable not to the security forces but to the political opposition and were caused by its activists (“*comanditos*”) or criminals or criminal gangs hired by it.³⁰ The mission’s investigation has revealed no such connections.

46. The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that State security forces were involved in 6 of the aforementioned 14 deaths. For a further six deaths, there are several indications that point in the same direction. Of the remaining two deaths, the mission has reasonable grounds to believe that one was caused by a shot fired from a headquarters of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) where its supporters had congregated. The mission does not have sufficient evidence to establish, in accordance with its standard of proof, who was responsible for the other death, that of the Bolivarian National Guard officer.

47. Six of the seven persons killed during the protest in Maracay were demonstrators and one was a sergeant of the Bolivarian National Guard. The protest took place in an area located between the San Jacinto obelisk roundabout and the headquarters of the Ninety-ninth Special Forces Brigade of the army. Based on testimony from victims, witnesses and relatives of the deceased, corroborated by video footage, an independent forensic report and open-source information, the mission found reasonable grounds to believe that members of the Bolivarian National Guard and the army fired upon demonstrators from the Brigade headquarters and its vicinity.

48. The protest, initially peaceful, turned violent when riot police used tear gas. In response, groups of demonstrators threw stones, Molotov cocktails and other projectiles, which provoked the indiscriminate use of potentially lethal force, seemingly without valid justification. All of the victims who sustained fatal injuries were wounded in the same

²⁰ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYemt3r-kzM>.

²¹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGVtWNjG6H0> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwQ3-elYnb4>.

²² See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYemt3r-kzM> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGVtWNjG6H0>.

²³ Anthony Moya, José Antonio Torrents, Gabriel Ramos, Andrés Ramírez, Rancés Yzarra, Jesús Tovar and Jesús Medina.

²⁴ Olinger Montañó and Anthony García Cañizales.

²⁵ Isaias Fuenmayor.

²⁶ Aníbal Romero.

²⁷ Víctor Bustos.

²⁸ Walter Páez.

²⁹ Carlos Porras.

³⁰ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGVtWNjG6H0> and <https://diariolajornada.com/?p=210975>.

geographical area, around the Brigade headquarters, and in the same time frame, from 5.30 p.m. They were shot in vital parts of their bodies (abdomen, head, neck, thorax). At least one of the shots was fired from a distance of no more than 10 metres. Within 15 days of the incident, the Attorney General announced the arrest of a suspect in connection with the death of the Bolivarian National Guard sergeant. The Public Prosecution Service opened an investigation into the other six deaths, but its progress and findings are unknown.

49. Regarding the other protests, the mission has documented and corroborated that members of the Bolivarian National Guard, the Directorate of Strategic and Tactical Action of the Bolivarian National Police and the Carabobo state police discharged firearms in the direction of the demonstrators. In the case of the two victims in El Valle, the mission analysed video evidence showing the moment in which they fell to the ground, injured, after a nine-second burst of gunfire was heard in the area in which the Bolivarian National Guard was operating and from which the demonstrators were fleeing. Neither of the victims was doing anything to endanger the lives or the safety of other persons.

50. In the case of Aníbal Romero, whose death in the parish of Antímano has been denied by the authorities, the analysed footage shows the moment he was struck by a bullet in the abdomen. This footage shows that Mr. Romero posed no threat to anyone's life or personal safety when he was shot. The shot was fired from a location where, as has been documented, that the Directorate of Strategic and Tactical Action of the Bolivarian National Police was firing at demonstrators. Regarding the deaths of Carlos Porras and the teenager Isaías Fuenmayor, the mission has documented that officers of the Bolivarian National Guard and the Carabobo state police fired long guns, and in one case handguns, in the direction of the protests.³¹ In the case of Víctor Bustos, a member of unidentified security forces fired on demonstrators.

51. Walter Páez is the only victim whose death the mission has reasonable grounds to believe was caused by a non-State actor. Mr. Páez died from abdominal sepsis after undergoing surgery for a gunshot wound sustained during a protest outside the PSUV local headquarters in Carora. The mission's investigation has revealed that he participated in a demonstration that turned violent, with protesters throwing sticks, stones, Molotov cocktails and other projectiles and even setting fire to the PSUV premises.

52. According to the information gathered, PSUV supporters responded to the protest with gunshots fired from inside the headquarters. In its investigation, the Scientific, Criminal and Forensic Investigation Unit found spent bullet casings only inside the building. Bullet impacts were found outside the headquarters, at the scene of the protest. The mission has also obtained an image of a civilian carrying a handgun inside the PSUV headquarters during these events. Based on this evidence, the mission has reasonable grounds to believe that Mr. Páez was killed by a gunshot fired from the PSUV headquarters. The mission has received information that officers of the Scientific, Criminal and Forensic Investigation Unit were pressured not to blame anyone associated with PSUV.

2. Deaths of persons in State custody

53. The mission has investigated the deaths of five persons in State custody.³² Four of them were arrested in the context of the 2024 post-election protests: two in the course of the demonstrations and two in their homes in the context of Operation Tun Tun.³³ The fifth person was arrested on 9 January 2025 near a protest against the presidential inauguration.

54. According to official information, two of these persons, Jesús Álvarez and Lindomar Bustamante, died by hanging in the Tocuyito and Tocarón prisons, respectively. The mission has obtained information that both victims were subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment during their detention, including interrogations with beatings, food and water

³¹ See <https://www.instagram.com/p/C-I8g9nxUC3/>.

³² According to the Venezuelan Prisons Observatory, 22 persons detained for being critics or opponents of the Government or perceived as such have died in State custody since 2015. See <https://oveprisiones.com/149-muertos-bajo-custodia-del-estado-en-2024-el-sistema-penitenciario-se-consolida-como-herramienta-de-represion-tortura-y-muerte/>.

³³ A/HRC/57/57, paras. 29 and 60.

restrictions, denial of medical care and deprivation of specific medications and solitary confinement in punishment cells. Mr. Bustamante died the day after completing a 15-day period of solitary confinement in one of these cells. In the case of Mr. Álvarez, the mission was informed that the victim did not have any marks on his neck but rather a suture on his head and a bruised cheekbone. The autopsy report was not shared with his family.

55. The other three deaths occurred as a result of the irreversible deterioration of the detainees' health. In the first case, documented by the mission, Osgual González was admitted to the Tocuyito detention centre in good health. When his health deteriorated, his family requested his transfer to a medical centre, but were only able to have him be provided with painkillers. According to reports, the detainee died after an inconclusive diagnosis, and one of the conditions for releasing his body was that the family not make any statements.³⁴

56. Reinaldo Araujo was arrested on his way to a medical appointment while driving near a demonstration on 9 January 2025. After he was placed in detention in a National Bolivarian Police station in Trujillo State, detention centre personnel, the Public Prosecution Service and the Public Defender's Office were informed that he suffered from a viral respiratory illness that presented a high risk due to his severe obesity and the sequelae of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). All of these officials and authorities were requested to provide Mr. Araujo with special care, which he never received. The detainee died a month and a half after his arrest, having been admitted to hospital because he could not breathe without the aid of an oxygen mask.

57. Jesús Martínez began to develop skin infections on his limbs 15 days into his detention in a Bolivarian National Police station in Anzoátegui State. The detainee and his family requested the authorities to ensure that he received special care, given that he had underlying illnesses, including type 2 diabetes. After almost two months of incessant requests, the detainee was admitted to a hospital where it was indicated that both his legs would have to be amputated because his infections had developed into necrotizing fasciitis. He subsequently died of septic shock. A report by an independent team of forensic physicians who reviewed the case history stated that in the patient's circumstances, he required strict glucose control, proper diet and medication, daily monitoring of his lesions and the prompt treatment of minor cuts or injuries, none of which he received.

58. The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that, in the latter two cases, the officials of the detention centres concerned, upon becoming aware of the condition of the detainees, failed to act with due diligence to prevent the deterioration of their health and to avert their deaths.³⁵

59. The State has not provided information that sheds light on any of the five deaths. Nor have the families of the deceased received a full and frank explanation from the authorities regarding the circumstances of each death. On the contrary, it had been documented that some of the families were forced to hold strictly private burials under the surveillance of the Scientific, Criminal and Forensic Investigation Unit. The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that the authorities have not fulfilled their obligation to conduct impartial, thorough and transparent investigations to determine the possible responsibility of the officials involved.

C. Enforced disappearances

60. The mission has reached reasonable grounds to believe that there have been 12 cases of enforced disappearance (six men, two women and four children and adolescents). In 2 cases, the disappearance lasted for several months; in the other 10, for days or hours. According to a broad interpretation of the legal definition of enforced disappearance, the number of cases would stand at 13.

³⁴ See <https://elpitazo.net/regiones/familiares-sepultan-al-presos-politico-osgual-gonzalez-en-lara-bajo-custodia-de-la-pnb/>.

³⁵ Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36 (2018), para. 25.

61. Regarding the 84 cases of detention of foreign nationals, judicial and political secrecy and silence means that the mission has been able to confirm only 2 cases in which there was either no hearing within six months of the arrest or the hearing took place more than three months after the arrest. In the remaining 82 cases, it has not been possible to confirm whether the detained person was brought before a court within the legal deadline of 48 hours. More information is needed to determine whether these are cases of enforced disappearance.

62. In many cases, these persons were held incommunicado, without any contact with the outside world, from the moment of their arrest. Despite search efforts by their families and States of nationality, their fate, whereabouts and legal status remain unknown at the time of completion of this report.

63. The judicial system has an important responsibility to guarantee respect for the life, liberty and integrity of detained persons. However, the mission confirmed that, during the period covered by this report, some judges did not fulfil that responsibility. The systematic blocking and rejection of the timely receipt, processing and/or application of the remedy of habeas corpus is one example. During the period before and after the 2024 presidential election, the mission documented at least 22 cases in which habeas corpus petitions were not accepted. As of 31 August 2025, habeas corpus petitions had not been accepted or processed in at least 28 cases.

64. The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that habeas corpus has been deprived of its effectiveness as a remedy to protect potential victims of violations of the rights to life, liberty and integrity – rights that are infringed by enforced disappearance³⁶ – and that deliberate obstruction by justice officials has contributed to the commission of this serious violation.

D. Torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment

65. The mission continued to document cases of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment related to the 2024 electoral crisis. These occurred, in particular, in temporary detention centres and premises of the military, security forces and intelligence services. Act of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment were also perpetrated in prisons and clandestine places of detention. Investigations revealed that State security forces continue to use the methods described in previous reports to inflict severe suffering on victims in order to extract information or to humiliate or punish them. Most of the persons detained after 28 July 2024 who were subjected to these punishments reported that they had been beaten for being “*guarimberas*” (protesters) and “terrorists” and so that they would admit to their political dissidence.

66. On 20 August 2024, a Voluntad Popular activist who had worked with the opposition on logistical tasks on the day of the presidential election was detained by agents of the Directorate General of Military Counter-Intelligence and taken to one of its facilities, where he was dealt repeated blows, with wooden rods and metal bars, to the stomach, hands and back. The person was coerced into disclosing information about the leaders of his party. The beating left marks corroborated by the mission. Another political activist, who was detained twice, on 15 and 31 July 2024, was given electric shocks to his feet while officers of the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service interrogated him to find out the location of members of the opposition and the identity of those responsible for the safekeeping of election tally sheets. The mission obtained information that the security forces beat, kicked, punched, struck with bats and suffocated with plastic bags the people they were interrogating, including children and adolescents.

67. The mission documented acts of sexual torture, including forced nudity, threats of sexual violence and the application of electric shocks to the genitals. This violence was directed particularly against women, girls and adolescents. The mission documented acts of

³⁶ Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Habeas corpus in emergency situations (arts. 27 (2), 25 (1) and 7 (6) American Convention on Human Rights), advisory opinion No. OC-8/87 of 30 January 1987, Series A, No. 8, para. 35.

violence, based on perceived sexual orientation, against men who were assumed to be homosexual.

68. The mission continued to document acts of psychological torture, as described in previous reports, which were used as an interrogation method to pressure detainees into disclosing information and included threats to harm them or their family members. A remote forensic assessment, conducted in accordance with the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), of a person who had been detained in a clandestine detention centre revealed the serious psychological after-effects of such methods. This person was interrogated while blindfolded and restrained using “the octopus”.³⁷ The forensic report highlighted the deep sense of vulnerability, despair and helplessness that this produced, as the person felt constantly threatened, with no safe space.

69. The mission has documented other forms of punishment against detained opponents or persons perceived as such, with the same intent to cause them severe suffering. These include the denial of food, water and medical care. In at least two documented cases, detainees who demanded better conditions were confined in punishment cells known among inmates as *tigritos* – narrow cubicles without light or ventilation. It has been reported that such cells exist in the Tocarón and Tocuyito prisons, although the mission has previously identified similar punishment spaces in other prisons. In Tocarón there is a cell called “Adolfo’s bed”, which is similar to the *tigrito*; in Tocuyito, “Saturno” is the name given a room measuring approximately 2 by 2 metres with a crossbeam from which detainees are suspended by the wrists. One released prisoner reported that, as an additional punishment, detainees were beaten while hanging there.

70. The mission has documented cases of solitary confinement of detainees, including in punishment cells, for more than 15 consecutive days, which constitutes prolonged solitary confinement and is prohibited under international standards as it may amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.³⁸ In one case, a detainee was placed in solitary confinement in a punishment cell on three separate occasions, once for 21 days. In addition, the detainee reported that others were forced to sleep naked and were woken in the early hours of the morning by having buckets of cold water thrown over them.

71. The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that at least seven persons who suffered any of the situations described above were victims of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

72. In August 2024, the Tocarón and Tocuyito detention centres were hastily refurbished to receive most of the persons who were deprived of liberty in connection with the post-election protests. Over the following months, these people were also sent to other facilities, including San Francisco de Yare, El Rodeo I and the La Crisálida women’s centre (all in Miranda State).

73. The mission has received information about the provision of food that is spoiled or infested with insects and unhygienic eating utensils that have caused detainees to fall ill.³⁹ It has been reported that families are prohibited from delivering nutritious food. Some detainees have suffered significant weight loss of up to 20 kg. Detainees with chronic illnesses have not had access to the diets required by their health condition. Reductions in meal frequency

³⁷ A metal device with several chains described by the mission in previous reports. See the conference room paper entitled “Detailed findings of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela”, para. 285, available on the Council’s website (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session45/list-reports>).

³⁸ United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), rules 43 and 44.

³⁹ See <https://www.elnacional.com/venezuela/familiares-de-detenido-en-tocuyito-están-muriendo-de-hambre/>; Comité de Familiares y Amigos por la Libertad de los Presos Políticos, “Prisión injusta, celdas inhumanas. Informe sobre las condiciones carcelarias de los presos políticos en Venezuela”, December 2024; <https://www.infobae.com/venezuela/2025/02/20/las-familias-de-los-presos-politicos-detenido-tras-el-fraude-de-nicolas-maduro-pidieron-la-revision-de-los-casos/>, and <https://www.infobae.com/venezuela/2024/11/24/las-terribles-condiciones-a-las-que-están-sometidos-los-presos-politicos-venezolanos-en-la-carcel-rodeo-i/>.

and portion size, as punitive measures against opponents and persons perceived as such, have also been reported.⁴⁰

74. The mission has received information that in Tocarón and Tocuyito the drinking water was yellow, had an earthy taste as it came from wells, was unfit for human consumption and caused diarrhoea.⁴¹ A released prisoner reported that only one litre of water per day was provided for two people, and they had to use it for drinking, personal hygiene and sanitation. At El Rodeo I, prisoners were only given three glasses of water a day at the beginning of their detention. Water rationing was also used as a punitive measure against opponents and persons perceived as such.

75. The cells at Tocarón measure approximately 3 by 2 metres and hold up to 6 prisoners at a time. The conditions in temporary detention centres were even more extreme: at the headquarters of the Bolivarian National Police in Los Guayos, Carabobo State, 14 people were held in a cell measuring 5 by 5 metres for 20 days.

76. Detainees did not receive timely or specialist medical care when needed, nor were they provided with specific medications. These issues are illustrated in paragraphs 53 to 59 above, on deaths of persons in State custody, and paragraphs 78 to 84 below, on sexual and gender-based violence.

77. The mission has concluded that in 21 cases there are reasonable grounds to believe that the conditions of detention exceeded the threshold of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

E. Sexual and gender-based violence

78. The mission has confirmed an increase in cases of sexual and gender-based violence against women, girls, adolescents and men deprived of their liberty following the presidential election – a pattern identified in the 2024 report. Testimony and information were received from victims, relatives, witnesses and organizations on, inter alia, coercive transactional sex, invasive searches with forced nudity, reproductive violence and possible acts of sexual slavery and/or forced prostitution. The mission documented 22 of these cases, in six of the country's states, committed by State officials in coercive environments such as detention centres.

79. According to testimony collected by the mission, at least one woman and five adolescents (between 15 and 17 years old) were subjected to sexual exploitation in the form of coercive transactional sex. A woman who was detained for four months in a Bolivarian National Guard facility told the mission that she had witnessed an act of sexual violence against another female detainee. She also reported that male sergeants demanded sex from women prisoners in exchange for access to telephone calls.

80. According to the account of a man held in Tocarón between August and November 2024, the guards selected inmates at night and offered them benefits in exchange for sex. The witness reported that this practice went on in a corridor on the first floor of the B wing. Another witness reported that, in another facility, women deprived of liberty after the 2024 post-election protests were repeatedly subjected to sexual violence by the male guards, who also shared with male detainees a “price list” for the sexual services of female prisoners. Some of these cases, with additional information, could be considered forced prostitution.

81. According to information from a psychological and medical team that collected testimony from 18 released prisoners (15 men and 3 women) and 2 family members, half of them reported having been subjected to forced nudity at the beginning of their detention. Two men reported having been subjected to electric shocks on their genitals to extract a confession. The mission received information about the lack of medical care and the denial of access to medication for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, either because

⁴⁰ A/HRC/58/48/Add.1, para. 87.

⁴¹ See Comité de Familiares y Amigos por la Libertad de los Presos Políticos, “Prisión injusta, celdas inhumanas. Informe sobre las condiciones carcelarias de los presos políticos en Venezuela”, December 2024.

they were opponents or were perceived as such, or as a form of discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

82. The mission has documented cases of reproductive violence, including lack of access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and to menstrual hygiene products and violations of the rights of pregnant and breastfeeding women. Neither of the two pregnant women who were arrested received the required gynaecological and obstetric care. One of them, carrying an 11-week, high-risk pregnancy at the time of her arrest, was denied antenatal check-ups and ultrasound scans while in detention. Another woman, detained on 2 August 2024 by the Bolivarian National Guard, was separated from her breastfeeding baby and was only allowed to breastfeed occasionally and at her guards' discretion. These guards demanded sexual favours in exchange for allowing her to feed her baby regularly.

83. The mission continued to document invasive searches during visits to detention centres, especially targeting women, who are generally the authorized visitors in most prisons. According to the testimony collected, female guards were the main perpetrators of these acts, which took place in El Rodeo I, Yare III, military facilities and Bolivarian National Police stations. The most serious cases consisted in searches with forced nudity, sometimes with physical contact, and vaginal inspection – a pattern identified by the mission in previous reports. This treatment was suffered mainly by young women, but also by girls, including one who was forced by two female officers to show her genitals as a condition for the visit. Another girl, who was menstruating, was subjected to touching and forced to remove her sanitary towel during an inspection. In another case, a commissioner of the Bolivarian National Police did not allow the mother of a detained teenager to get dressed until she had been observed naked by other male police officers.

84. The similarities identified in the *modus operandi*, the profile of the victims and the perpetrators and the places where the acts were committed in the documented cases corroborate the existence, in places of deprivation of liberty, of a pattern of sexual and gender-based violence against women, girls, adolescents and men, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, who are opponents and persons perceived as such.

IV. Restrictions on civic space

85. The mission has documented 18 arrests of journalists in the performance of their work, between August 2024 and August 2025, for being actual or perceived opponents of the Government. As of the date of this report, 11 journalists (10 men and 1 woman) remain in detention. Between January and June 2025, the association Espacio Público recorded 144 attacks on freedom of expression, including 44 incidents linked to the digital environment.⁴²

86. The State has moved forward with the adoption and implementation of laws that restrict or have the potential to restrict the participation of civil society in public life. The Act on the Control, Regularization, Operations and Financing of Non-Governmental and Non-Profit Organizations entered into force on 15 November 2024.⁴³ This law is a mechanism for political control of non-governmental organizations through mandatory registration, disproportionate administrative sanctions and broadly discretionary governmental powers. Some organizations have been visited by State security forces, and not administrative officials, to verify the registration process. Only a few organizations have succeeded in completing the process. Others have decided to suspend their operations or move them out of the country.⁴⁴

⁴² See <https://espaciopublico.org/libertad-expresion-junio-2025-venezuela/>.

⁴³ Official Gazette No. 6.855, special edition, 15 November 2024.

⁴⁴ In 2023, the mission expressed concern that the Act, at that time still a bill, was clearly designed to restrict and not facilitate the exercise of the right to freedom of association. See, *inter alia*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/01/venezuela-draft-ngo-law-reaching-point-no-return-closure-civic-space>; the OHCHR conference room paper on the situation of human rights in Ukraine (16 February–31 July 2020), para. 98, available on the Council's website (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session45/list-reports>); and A/HRC/57/57, para. 102.

87. The mission has obtained information about irregularities in the registration process, including unequal treatment, the imposition of extralegal requirements, the failure to provide organizations with proof of having begun the process and the denial of registration without written justification. The political nature of the process has made it difficult for organizations to find professionals willing to audit financial information. In addition, cases of bribery have been reported in registry offices.

88. The Liberator Simón Bolívar Organic Act against the Imperialist Blockade and in Defence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela entered into force on 29 November 2024.⁴⁵ This law is worrisome because of the vagueness of its language and the possibility that severe administrative and criminal justice measures and penalties (including imprisonment of up to 30 years, disqualification from public office for up to 60 years, the denial of alternatives to imprisonment and the confiscation of property) may be imposed on the basis of a discretionary interpretation of its provisions. Its ambiguous wording and broadness mean that it could become a tool to persecute civil society organizations that cooperate with international bodies, including the Human Rights Council. The mission, to date, is not aware that the law has been applied, although high-ranking State authorities publicly called for it to be used to disqualify candidates in the 25 May 2025 elections.⁴⁶

89. The bill on fascism, neo-fascism and similar expressions, whose lack of precision the mission noted in its previous report, has not yet been adopted. International human rights bodies and mechanisms continued to voice concern about the risks posed by its ambiguous provisions, particularly for the freedoms of expression and association.⁴⁷ If the bill is adopted, there is a risk that the reports of human rights organizations will be considered unlawful, which will dissuade them from participating in multilateral forums such as the Human Rights Council. This would reduce the flow of independent information used by international mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the situation in the country.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

90. Having deepened its investigation into the events surrounding the 2024 election and subsequent elections, the mission is able to conclude that serious human rights violations and international crimes were committed and that the State policy of silencing, discouraging and stifling opposition to the Government continues to be systematically implemented. Various events during 2025 have clearly shown how this policy is maintained and how, adapting to the circumstances, it combines different methods of persecution and repression at times of heightened political tension.

91. All of this confirms the mission's conclusion, in its previous report, that some of the violations documented before and after the 2024 presidential election, including arbitrary detentions, torture and sexual violence, as well as other violations committed in connection with them, taken as a whole, constitute the crime against humanity of persecution on political grounds. This crime continued to be committed against persons who are critical of the Government and real or perceived political opponents.⁴⁸

92. In the course of its investigation, the mission has recorded acts of great cruelty and disregard for victims, resulting in loss of life due to lack of timely medical care, and acts of sexual violence against female detainees, including adolescent girls. Some violations transcended national borders, such as the detention of foreign nationals from 29 sovereign

⁴⁵ Official Gazette No. 6,859, special edition, 29 November 2024.

⁴⁶ See <https://avn.info.ve/an-solicita-al-cne-aplicacion-de-ley-simon-bolivar-a-postulados-a-elecciones-del-27a/> and <https://x.com/Rebeca911/status/1909346488507060272>.

⁴⁷ See https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/expressions/media_center/preleases/2024/328.asp and communication VEN 8/2024, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments>.

⁴⁸ See A/HRC/57/57.

States. The authorities continue to adopt and apply laws that prevent, restrict or dissuade free and independent participation in the civic and democratic space.

93. The findings of the investigation during this period give the mission reasonable grounds to believe that the authorities of the justice system are making an essential contribution in implementing the State policy of quashing opposition to the Government, identified by the mission since its first report. Their deliberate actions have facilitated the commission and concealment of grave violations. These authorities have therefore failed to comply with their constitutional and international obligations.

B. Recommendations

94. In its five previous reports, since 2020, the mission has made at least 145 recommendations to the Venezuelan State. Most of these recommendations referred to accountability – in other words, the State’s obligation to investigate serious human rights violations and crimes so that victims can obtain justice, truth and redress. Another significant aspect related to measures to prevent the repetition of serious violations. Not only has the State failed to comply with these recommendations, it has intensified the repression, so that the systematic commission of serious violations and international crimes has continued for more than a decade.

95. The mission urges the authorities of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to comply with all the recommendations addressed to them and calls upon the Human Rights Council and the international community to continue to pursue the measures necessary to combat impunity and prevent further violations.

96. The mission recommends that special attention be paid to the rights of victims, both within the country and abroad, and to the protection of human rights organizations by ensuring that they have the resources necessary to continue serving Venezuelan society.

97. The mission again reiterates the importance of accountability efforts at the international level, both under the principle of universal jurisdiction and before the International Criminal Court, and calls for these efforts to advance more swiftly in the framework of internal procedures. The mission remains willing to cooperate with all accountability processes. Furthermore, it recommends that members of the Council whose nationals have fallen victim to the serious human rights violations described in this report take appropriate accountability measures in their own jurisdictions.
