



DOSSIER

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN VENEZUELA

About Group 11abril.com

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Letter to Human Rights Watch from Group 11abril.com

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List of Venezuelan citizens assassinated, missing and illegally detained
(February 27th – March 10th, 2004)

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Letter to Human Rights Watch from Adriana Alegrett
(The sister of a political prisoner)

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Human rights violations in Venezuela:

José Manuel Vilas (Assassinated)

Pedro Martín

Pedro José Sánchez (Assassinated)

José Ricardo Di Guida

Verónica

Dorindo Burgo Árias

Gloriana Ramírez

Elinor Montes

Carlos Eduardo Izcaray

Diego Urdaneta

David Rubio

Miguel Ángel Pacheco

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**Reporters and Cameramen harassed, attacked, wounded
and illegally detained in Venezuela**

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Communiqué, Human Rights Watch
HRW: Existen evidencias incuestionables de violación de DDHH en Venezuela



ABOUT US

We are a group comprised of Venezuelan citizens, permanent residents of the United States of America, and American citizens who wish to promote a constitutional, democratic, peaceful and electoral solution to the political impasse in Venezuela. (Resolution 833 of the Organization of American States)

Our group is not affiliated with any political party in Venezuela or the United States. We are independent citizens with a profound commitment to democracy, freedom, peace and justice. We promote the respect of constitutional, civil, political and human rights in Venezuela.

The Group 11abril.com does not support neither, the inappropriate remarks and threats made by President Chávez against the government and the people of the United States, nor the anti-American sentiment the Chávez administration wishes to spread across Latin America. We support the efforts to integrate the Americas to ensure economic prosperity and peace in the Western Hemisphere.

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We have prepared the following dossier to report the violation of human rights of unarmed civilians during peaceful demonstrations in Venezuela.

The document complements a White Paper on Human Rights Violations prepared by the *Coordinadora Internacional Venezolana*, (CIV) in Washington. The paper "Violence and Impunity are Gaining Ground over Democracy in Venezuela", was published on September 24, 2003. For information, please write to: Washington@civw.org

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“Cursed be the soldier who turns his arms against the people”
Simón Bolívar





New York, 10 March 2004

Mr. Kenneth Roth
Executive Director, Human Rights Watch

Mrs. Joanne Mariner
Deputy Director - Americas Division, Human Rights Watch

Peter Bouckaert
Senior Emergencies Researcher for Human Rights Watch

We write to you on behalf of the Venezuelan people, to denounce the violation of civil and human rights by the Venezuelan Army National Guard, the Political Police (DISIP), the State Police and pro-government armed civilians.

We are members of the Group 11abril.com, a group comprised of Venezuelan and American citizens with no political affiliation. We are deeply concerned about the escalating violence in Venezuela and have decided to establish contact with international promoters of human rights to report the assassination, torture and illegal detention of unarmed and peaceful Venezuelan civilians.

The critical situation, currently developing in Venezuela, where people are dying and many are being illegally detained, is the consequence of the excessive use of force by the Venezuelan Army National Guard, the Political and Scientific Police (DISIP) and the State Police. National Guard (GN) troops have shot tear gas and plastic bullets - at point-blank range - at peaceful and unarmed civilians. Children, elderly and handicapped have been seriously injured as a result of plastic bullets shot indiscriminately and by the irresponsible use of tear gas in residential areas. Hundreds of Venezuelans have been illegally detained, some of them viciously tortured.

The Venezuelan government has the obligation to maintain civil order within the constitutional and international framework. We ask you to urge the government of Venezuela to respect what is stipulated in the International Bill of Human Rights, the American Convention, the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and Point 9 of the Agreement of the Forum for Negotiation and Agreements signed on May 29, 2003.



Fifteen peaceful and unarmed civilians have been murdered. Many Venezuelans have been brutally repressed by government authorities and pro-government armed groups. Over 350 Venezuelans have been illegally detained during the last few days. Furthermore, the head of the Venezuelan army announced, in a televised press conference, that they are ready to use heavy military equipment against unarmed civilians.

We kindly request your help to urge the government of Venezuela to condemn the violence generated by the use of excessive force against peaceful and unarmed protesters, to open an investigation to bring to justice those responsible for the death of innocent civilians, to respect the basic human rights of the Venezuelan people, and to guarantee the safety of those people illegally detained and imprisoned.

Best regards,

Maritza Ramírez de Agena

María Gabriela Fabio

Jorge Combellas

Mobile: (908) 922.65.95

Home: (212) 371.06.79

Mobile: (646) 244.84.68

maritza@11abril.com

editor@11abril.com

jcombellas@11abril.com

This is a list containing the names of the people assassinated, missing, wounded and illegally detained and imprisoned by the government authorities in Venezuela from February 27 to March 3, 2004:

Venezuelans assassinated

1. William Jesús Álvarez Morales
2. Julia José Álvarez
3. Alberto Aumaitre
4. Bruno Biella
5. Evangelina Carrizo
6. Díctor Damas
7. Argenis Dugarte
8. Juan Carlos Lugo
9. José Guevara Reyes
10. José Luis Ricaurte
11. Nelsy Rodríguez Martínez
12. Pedro José Sánchez Robles
13. Juan Carlos Sojo
14. Yurmi Suárez
15. José Manuel Vilas Liñeira

Venezuelans missing¹

1. Marvin Carrasco
2. Julio César Gómez
3. Andrés Bastidas Guedes
4. Eduardo José Miranda
5. Omar Arturo Morales
6. Juan José Pérez
7. José Luis Rodríguez
8. Juan Ernesto Sánchez

(Sources: List of civilians assassinated during demonstrations (Feb-Mar, 2004) by Maruja Tarre, Nelson Rivera - Integrated Communications)

¹ José Miguel Vivanco, Executive Director of the Americas Division of Human Rights Watch, stated in a press conference on March 14, 2004, that there are no official records of missing persons during the demonstrations. The government should investigate allegations that state several civilians have disappeared during the protests organized by groups opposed to Chavez from February 27 to March 3 2004.

Venezuelans wounded and threatened by National Guardsmen, officers from the Political Police (DISIP), officers from the State Police and pro-government armed individuals:

26 February 2004

* Percy Guzmán – beaten and shot with a plastic bullet by a National Guardsman.

27 February 2004

* Armando Briquet – coordinator of the political party *Primero Justicia* was threatened at gun point by National Guardsmen.

* Pedro Alejandro Martín – Beaten with batons and shot – at point blank range – with a plastic bullet by a National Guardsman.

* Mario Luis Morón – Beaten on the head by National Guardsmen.

* Elinor Montes – Beaten by a National Guardswoman.

* Gonzalo Romero Reverón – Shot with a tear gas cartridge in one of his eyes by a National Guardsman. Surgery was required.

* Luis Manuel Fajardo – Beaten on his face with a baton by a National Guardsman. He suffered multiple bone fractures in his face.

* Alicia Belisario – Shot with a tear gas cartridge by a National Guardsman.

* Beatriz Gil – Shot with a plastic bullet – at point blank range – by a National Guardsman.

* Bernardo Sánchez – Shot with a plastic bullet – at point blank range – by a National Guardsman.

* Johan Sánchez – Shot with a plastic bullet – at point blank range – in the thorax by a National Guardsman.

* Andrés Pérez – Shot with a plastic bullet – at point blank range – in the back by a National Guardsman.

* Arelis Pinto – Shot with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen.

* Henry Uzcátegui – Shot with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen.

* Jesús Vargas – Shot with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen.

* Reina Espinoza – Shot with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen.

* Manuel Martínez – Shot with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen.

* Villasmil Díaz – Shot with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen.

* Nelly Ramírez – Shot with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen.

* Richard Mardo – Shot with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen.

* Edgar Nieves – Shot with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen. Required emergency surgery.

29 February 2004

- * Romni Flores – Beaten by National Guardsmen.
- * Héctor Briceño – Beaten by National Guardsmen.
- * Carmen Bonilla – Beaten by National Guardsmen.
- * José Gamboa – Beaten by National Guardsmen.
- * Grabitec Jexer – Beaten by National Guardsmen.
- * Anderson Rosendo – Beaten by National Guardsmen.
- * Jesús Patiño – Beaten by officers of the Political Police (DISIP).
- * Asdrúbal Rojas – Beaten and tortured with electricity by National Guardsmen.

1 March 2004

- * Adolfo Alejos – Beaten and threatened with death by National Guardsmen.
- * Enrique Durán – Shot with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen.
- * Reverend Ruperto Marín Mata – Beaten with batons by National Guardsmen.

2 March 2004

- * Marcos Sánchez – Shot with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen.
- * Fanny Viloría – Shot with a tear gas cartridge and beaten with batons by officers from the Aragua State Police.
- * Florencio González – Shot with a tear gas cartridge and beaten with batons by officers from the Aragua State Police.
- * Rotman Irausquín – Shot with a tear gas cartridge and beaten with batons by officers from the Aragua State Police.
- * Edgar Jiménez – Shot with a tear gas cartridge and beaten with batons by officers from the Aragua State Police.
- * César Quintana – Shot with a tear gas cartridge and beaten with batons by officers from the Aragua State Police.
- * Miguel Reverón – Shot with a tear gas cartridge and beaten with batons by officers from the Aragua State Police.
- * Alison Hernández – Shot with a tear gas cartridge and beaten with batons by officers from the Aragua State Police.
- * Eric Tabares – Shot with a tear gas cartridge and beaten with batons by officers from the Aragua State Police.
- * Hevert Eduardo Vela – Shot by pro-government individuals, reportedly from the group Tupamaros.
- * José Luis Ricaurte – Shot by pro-government individuals, reportedly from the group Tupamaros. He died on March 8th, 2004 as a result of his injuries.

3 March 2004

- * Eliécer Zirit – Beaten by pro-government armed individuals.

4 March 2004

- * Aníbal Suárez – Lost one of his eyes as a result of an injury caused by a plastic bullet shot by a National Guardsman.

Illegal detentions and imprisonments carried out by government agents.²

Metropolitan Area:

Edgard Acosta, Humberto Agudo, Rodrigo Luis Alegrett Salazar (Tortured), Adolfo Alejos, Richard Álvarez, David Alejandro Amundarain Mañe (Senior student in high school – a National Guardsman broke his ear), Juan Carlos Asuaje, Onofrio Anesse, Gerardo Ayala Páez (15 years old), Gonzalo Ayala Páez, Richard Barrio Pestana, Carlos Barrios Freites, Orlando Batista Torres, César Bello, Daniel Blanco, Domingo Bottome, Fredy Briceño, Henry Briceño, Dorindo Burgo Arias, Luis Alfredo Cáceres, Ángel Cacique, Jesús Campos Rauseau, Ilson Carrero, Lorenzo Carrieri, Carlos Chacón Lanz, César Chacón, Félix Clavijo, Alejandro Colmenares Ochoa, Juan Francisco Conde, Bruno Dales, Gustavo de los Santos, José Ricardo Di Guida De Sola (Tortured, 20 years old), José Dorante, Orlando Duque, Jorge Espósito Miranda, Nelson Estarada, Italo Ferrara (14 years old), Bruno Gallo, Adelino García, Oscar Giménez, Macario González, Wilmer González, Andrés Juliá, Lisette Gutiérrez, Miguel Gutiérrez, Alejandro Helmeyer Tinoco, Victor Hugo (17 years old), Ángel Keint Daviott Materano, José la Rosa Angola, Adrián Lázaro, Jorge López, Jesús López, Jorge Enrique López, Tomás Lozada, Adan Lozano Duarte, Andrés Ignacio Machado Nuñez, Oliver Márquez, Antonio Márquez Olmer, Belsis Martínez, Carlos Melo, Juan Cristobal Mendoza, David Meneses, Justo Mendoza, José Ramón Merlo, Jorge Esposito Miranda, Ayari Molina, Santiago Monteverde, José Manuel Mora, Mario Luis Morón, Ángel Muñoz, Luis Navas, Francisco Otazo, Roger Padilla, Eduardo Paiva, Jesús Patiño, Eliécer Patiño, Jonathan Pati (shot in left leg), José Rafael Peralta Medina, Luis Guillermo Pérez Amoroso, Freddy Pineda, Miguel Plá, Heber Gustavo Prado, Mariela Ramírez, Alfredo Ramos, Roberto Rasquín, Jesús Rodríguez, Ronald Rojas, Asdrubal Rojas (18 years old), Estela Romero, Leonardo Ronei, Ricardo Sanabria, John Segovia, Pedro Sequera, Bautista José Torres, Nelly Torres, Yalibeth Trejo, Diego Urdaneta (Tortured), José Valenzuela, María Vargas, Marcos Vargas, Pedro Manuel Vásquez, María Gabriela Ventosilla, Otto Villalta, Marcos Julio Vivas, Jhonny Zerpa, Daniel Zerpa.

Anzoátegui State:

Gabriel Seobanes.

Aragua State:

Freddy Solórzano.

Bolívar State:

Percy Guzmán, Arcadio Guzmán, Carlos Guillén.

² HRW has confirmed that the majority of the detainees have been released by the authorities. José Miguel Vivanco, Executive Director, Human Rights Watch reported that three judges have been fired for granting provisional release from detention to opposition protestors: “The firing of judges handling politically sensitive cases reflects a dangerous politicization of justice in Venezuela.” HRW Press conference March 14, 2004.



Carabobo State:

Marcos Acosta, Alejandro Alguilar, Ronny Flores, César Hernández, Ulises Machado, Luis Mariño, Oswaldo Pinto, Pablo Rodríguez, Julio Vivas.

Falcón State:

Jesús Barón, Víctor Hugo Castillo, Edgar Castro, Crispulo Chávez, Mario Chirinos, Karelis Chirinos, Alexander Dávila, Ronny Díaz, Luis Fernández, Jaime González, Julio Graterol, Renny González, Abraham Moreno, David Mosquera, Leonardo Nelo, Wilfredo Prieto, Felipe Ramírez, Edgar Rodríguez, Pedro León Rodríguez, César Reyes, Jorge Luis Ruiz, Alexis Sánchez, Juan Carlos Sánchez, Douglas Vargas, Issac Zabala.

Guárico State:

José Díaz, Juvenal Mendoza, Jhonny Seguak (Secretary General of the political party *Bandera Roja*, who was taken from his house)

Lara State:

César Bello, Jesús Ramón Campos, Jose Caravallo, Alfredo Ramos, Orlando Duque Rivera, Nelson de la Rosa, Fernando de la Rosa, Francisca de la Rosa, Macario González, Eduardo Lapi, Leopoldo López, José Gabriel Revilla, Ysmely Torrens de Pulido, Jesús Enrique Rodríguez Tortorella, José Eliezer Valenzuela, María Eugenia Vargas.

Mérida State:

Tulio Febres, Jesús Marcano, Ronald Molina, Jesús Vera.

Monagas State:

Jesús Gamboa, Yuber Espinoza, Luis García, Oscar García, Enrique Narváes, Luis Rincones, Ronny Rincones.

Nueva Esparta State:

José Da Silva, William López, Ramón Narváes, Alexis pereira, Luis Pérez, (Political party AD), Ruperto Marín Mata,

Sucre State:

Miguel Ángel Pacheco

Táchira State:

Wilmer Becerra, Oscar Cárdenas, Carlos Herrera, Ramón López, César Peñaloza, David Rubio, Emiliano Rubio, Antonio Noguera, Lenín Mora, Armando Useche.
Detained on charges of civil rebellion on June 2002: William Forero, Omar Guillén, Jorge Hinojosa, Saúl Lozano, José Neira Celis, Elsy de Peña, Jacobo Supelano, Wilfrido Tovar.



Trujillo State:

Fernando Lama, Javier Milla (Seriously injured), José Rivas Damiani, Oswel Torres, Hermes Valera.

Vargas State:

Edgar Acosta, Ilson Carrero, Mauricio Ceballos, Bruno Dales, Albimar Escalona, Nelson Estarada, Bruno Gallo, Rosines García, Carmen González, Poco González, Wendy González, Lisette Gutiérrez, Miguel Gutiérrez, Reinaldo Hernández, Belsis Martínez, Ayari Molina, Eduardo Paiva, Estela Romero, Marcos Vargas, Otto Villalta.

Zulia State:

Dairú Acosta, Romer Barrios, Daniny Beitia, Juan García, Willians García, Linden González, Yovanny Gómez, Lexiss Hernández, Freddy Manzano, Yovanny Milano, Lilia Rangel, Alirio Rogríguez, Jorge Rote, Juan Carlos Zambrano.

Note: In Zulia State there are approximately 200 people who have been illegally detained and imprisoned – Waiting for information.

(Sources: List of civilians tortured and detained during demonstrations (Feb-Mar, 2004) by Maruja Tarre, Nelson Rivera – Integrated Communications, Newspapers *Diario La Nación del Táchira* and *El Universal*)

Contact: Maritza Ramírez de Agena

Group 11abril.com

Human Rights Committee

Mobile: (908) 922.65.95

maritza@11abril.com



Rodrigo Luis Alegrett Salazar
Political prisoner

New York, 10 March 2004

Mr. Kenneth Roth
Executive Director, Human Rights Watch

Mrs. Joanne Mariner
Deputy Director, Americas Division

Peter Bouckaert
Senior Emergencies Researcher for Human Rights

The following testimony reveals a situation now common to many Venezuelan families, the violation of constitutional and human rights in our country.

My brother, Rodrigo Luis Alegrett Salazar (21 years old), a student of architecture at the *Universidad Santa María* in Caracas, was illegally detained on Sunday 29 February 2004, after participating in peaceful demonstrations that day. He was arrested by National Guardsmen at the *Plaza Altamira* subway station on his way home. Rodrigo also participated in the rally organized on 27 February to protest against the National Electoral Council (CNE) ruling to place under scrutiny almost one million signatures collected to petition a presidential recall referendum. My brother also participated in civil demonstrations on the 28th and 29th of February.

Rodrigo was arrested by the National Guard together with several other people. They were locked up in a National Guard truck where they were beaten before being taken to the Palace of Justice. My brother was deprived of means of communication until the next day, in a clear violation of his rights.



On 1 March, my brother's case was given to the judge Migdalia María Añez. Additionally a prosecutor was assigned to the case, who promptly charged my brother and five other young men with obstruction of public pedestrian and vehicular travel, public incitement to commit offenses, civil disobedience, carriage of illegal explosive substances (they did have legal fireworks on them at the time) and resisting arrest. The trial did not follow the standard procedures and the prosecutor failed to prove the charges against my brother; nonetheless my brother and the other five young men were found guilty of all charges, convicted and sentenced to serve time in prison. They are currently at the *retén de La Planta* in the city of Caracas.

In jail, my brother and the other political prisoners have been beaten with batons on several occasions, tortured with electricity, threatened and mistreated. They have been taken outdoors at night, given cold showers and covered with itching powder. All the possessions they had with them, at the time of the arrest, have been stolen.

My family and I are taking the necessary actions to appeal and to denounce the violation of the human rights of my brother and other political prisoners in Venezuela.

By understanding the illegal nature of the arrest, trial and conviction of my brother and hundreds of other unarmed protesters, we can conclude that we are witnessing, firsthand, political persecution in Venezuela. People have indeed participated in peaceful rallies to protest against an unconstitutional decision made by the Venezuelan electoral authorities; however, innocent people have been illegally detained, tortured and charged with crimes they have not committed.

The rallies are legal public demonstrations as stipulated in the constitution of Venezuela, specifically on articles 61 and 68 of the constitution. My brother is not a criminal, as the government officials would have you believe.

The mental and physical scarring inflicted on my brother will remain forever. My family and I demand justice. We demand that our brother is freed for his human and constitutional rights have been flagrantly violated by the Venezuelan government.

We want to denounce before the international community what is happening in Venezuela. There are political prisoners in Venezuela and they have been abused and tortured.

On behalf of my brother and my family, thanks for your help and support.

Best regards,

Adriana Alegrett Salazar

Venezuelan ID number: 13.993151

Attorney at Law (*Universidad Católica Andrés Bello*)

Former member of the Court of Justice of the Andean Community

Student of the International Affairs Masters program - *Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar*

(Translated by Maritza Ramírez de Agena)

José Manuel Vilas Liñeira



José Manuel was assassinated by National Guardsmen on 1 March 2004. José was walking back home after a demonstration when National Guardsmen who were following him shot him, in cold blood. José Manuel received two bullets in his back which destroyed his internal organs and the lower part of his spinal column.

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Pedro Martín (25 years old)



Pedro Martín participated in the rally on 27 February 2004, organized to protest against the decision of the Venezuelan electoral authorities to place under scrutiny almost one million signatures collected to petition the presidential recall referendum.

Pedro was kneeling down on the ground with his hands up in the air, when National Guardsmen approached him, beat him and shot him - at point blank range - with a plastic bullet. Pedro was arrested and was not allowed to receive medical attention for the wounds the National Guardsmen inflicted on him. He was sent to a hospital after four hours of enduring pain to the point of which he nearly collapsed.



Pedro José Sánchez

Pedro died on 4 March 2004, he was shot in the gluteus on the morning of the 4th of March, by National Guardsmen. Pedro had been protesting in the Municipality Carlos Arvelo in Carabobo State.

After being shot by a National Guardsman, Pedro was taken to the National Guard Headquarters in the area, instead of being taken to a hospital to receive medical attention. Pedro died as consequence of being deprived of medical attention.

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José Ricardo Di Guida



José Ricardo, a 20 year old man, was shot in the back with a tear gas cartridge.

*

Verónica



Shot with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen in Caurimare, Caracas

Dorindo Burgo Árias

Reverend Burgo became a Venezuelan citizen on September 24 1992. He belongs to the order "Hermanos Maristas". On February 29th, Reverend Burgo participated in a demonstration in Altamira, Caracas. He was locked in a truck together with other people where they were beaten with batons and helmets. Reverend Burgo and the other arrested unarmed protesters were taken to the detention center 51 in Paraiso, Caracas. To be released, Reverend Burgo was requested to sign a release form stating that he was not mistreated verbally or physically by the authorities. Initially, Reverend Burgo explained he could not sign the form, because he was indeed mistreated verbally and physically. The official recommended he signed the form. Reverend Burgo decided to sign the release form and explained, based on the electoral authorities ruling on the signatures collected to petition a presidential recall referendum, a signature on a piece of paper, in Venezuela, does not mean much these days.

*

Gloriana Ramírez



Shot with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen

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Elinor Montes



Elinor Montes was beaten by members of the National Guard. The attack was televised. While Elinor was beaten, a National Guardsman laughed and told Elinor that she had been beaten by a woman, as if to justify the aggression and state there had been no use of excessive force against her.

Carlos Eduardo Izcaray



Carlos was passing by Altamira, when National Guardsmen arrested him and locked him in a truck where he was brutally beaten around the head, neck and back. Carlos, a musician with the Venezuelan Symphonic Orchestra, was taken to a detention center in Paraiso, Caracas. While held prisoner, Carlos was tortured with electricity and was deprived of legal advice during his imprisonment. Carlos tried to explain he was a simple spectator and even gave his personal information to the National Guardsmen for them to verify his story. The National Guardsmen threatened to kill him if he dared to denounce the officials, reminding him they know where he lives and where he works. You may contact Carlos's father: Felipe Izcaray at fizcaray@aol.com

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Diego Urdaneta



Diego was beaten and arrested by National Guardsmen on March 1st. He and his wife were visiting some friends in Altamira, Caracas, around 10:00 pm when National Guardsmen forced him into a truck where he was beaten with batons and rifle butts. After being viciously attacked, Diego was thrown out of the vehicle and left alone on an isolated highway where someone rescued him and called his family. You may contact Diego at: durdaneta@yahoo.com



David Rubio

David is the coordinator of the civil association *Queremos Elegir*, in the city of San Cristobal, Táchira State. David was arrested by the Colonel Gabriel Oviedo Colmenares, Commander-In-Chief of the Táchira State Police.

On February 29th, 2004, David was driving home accompanied by Emiliano Rubio, Wilmer Becerra and Oscar Cárdenas, when his car was intercepted by the State Police. They were charged with obstruction of public pedestrian and vehicular travel.

David's lawyer, Ottoniel Agelvis Morales has stated that the State Police fabricated the charges and have not followed proper procedures, clearly violating the civil rights of David Rubio and those who accompanied him the day of the arrest.

During the hearing, the judge assigned to the case, ignored the contradictions between the officials who arrested David and the persons who accompanied him on February 29th, and completely disregarded the irregularities committed by the police officers during the arrest and illegal imprisonment. The judge dictated that David and his friends shall be imprisoned until the trial is over.

You may contact Bettina Rubio (David Rubio's wife) at: 011-58-414-7046622
Ottoniel Agelvis (David Rubio's lawyer) at: 011-58-414-7102775

*

Miguel Ángel Pacheco

Miguel, a student at the *Universidad de Oriente*, was illegally detained in the city of Cumaná and was found in the city of Puerto Ordaz, after being tortured by the authorities. During his detention some of Miguel's nails were removed. When Miguel was finally released, he had lacerations from being bound and beaten. He was dehydrated and disorientated. During his detention Miguel was given drugs, he is waiting for the report of the forensic doctors who performed the tests to know exactly what kind of drug was used to torture him.

Contact: Maritza Ramírez de Agena

Human Rights Committee

Mobile: (908) 922.65.95

maritza@11abril.com



Reporters and Cameramen Harassed, Attacked Wounded and Illegally Detained in Venezuela

(February 27th - March 3rd, 2004)

27 February 2004

Carlos Montenegro, a cameraman for the broadcasting corporation *Televén*, was shot in the left leg, by a man in uniform, during the rally organized by the groups opposed to President Chavez in Avenue Andrés Bello, Caracas.

Luis Vladimir Gallardo, a reporter for the Newspaper *El Impulso*, was shot – at point blank range – with plastic bullets by National Guardsmen. Vladimir also suffered symptoms of asphyxia as result of the excessive tear gas used by the National Guard.

Berenice Gómez, a reporter for the Newspaper *Ultimas Noticias*, was intercepted by pro-government individuals who took the motorcycle she was using as a transportation vehicle, and then received a death threat by her capturers.

Edixxon González, attacked by pro-government individuals at the doors of the Municipal Police Station in the city of El Tigre, Anzoátegui State.

Marlon Guzmán, attacked similar to that suffered by Edixxon González.

28 February 2004

Felipe Izquierdo, a cameraman for the US Spanish language broadcaster Univision, was shot in a leg, while covering the demonstrations in the East side of Caracas¹.

29 February 2004

Tito Díaz, a reporter for the Newspaper *Diario Avance de los Teques*, was injured by plastic bullets shot by National Guardsmen to protesters in the city of San Antonio de los Altos.

1 March 2004

Johny Figarella, a reporter for the broadcasting corporation *Globovisión*, was shot in the chest with a tear gas cartridge. The cartridge was shot by a National Guardsman while Johny covered a demonstration in Caurimare, Caracas. Fortunately Johny carried a bullet proof vest at the time of the aggression.

Henry Delgado, a photographer for the Newspaper *El Nacional*; while Henry covered a demonstration in Terrazas del Ávila, Caracas, a National Guardsman took his camera. After being deprived of his camera, Henry was chased down and beaten by pro-government individuals.²

¹ Izquierdo said the shot emanated from the opposition march in Mariperez, Caracas.

² IFE – International Exchange for Freedom of Speech

Edgar López, a reporter for Newspaper *El Nacional*, was deprived of his notes and beaten by a National Guardsmen.

Janeth Carrasquilla, a reporter for the broadcasting corporation *Globovisión*, was hit in the head with a sharp object. Janeth's wound required several stitches.

Juan Barreto, a reporter for the French News Agency AFP, was shot in the hand and the thorax. Fortunately Juan was saved by a bullet proof vest.³

Billy Castro, a reporter for Newspaper *El Impacto*, was beaten by pro-government individuals while covering the taking of the Chamber of Commerce in the town of Anaco.

Willimar Rodríguez, a reporter for the Newspaper *El Impacto*, was attacked by pro-government individuals in the city of El Tigre, Anzoátegui State.

Reyna Díaz, a reporter for the Newspaper *El Tiempo*, attacked by pro-government individuals in the city of El Tigre, Anzoátegui State, while covering the demonstrations organized to protest against the decision of the electoral authorities to send to an appeals process close to one million signatures collected to petition a presidential recall referendum.

María Gabriela Gómez, a reporter for the TV Channel *Telecaribe*, was attacked by pro-government individuals at the interchange of Lecherías, Anzoátegui State.

Omar González Moreno, the anchorman of the TV program *Mar de Fondo*, was harassed and attacked by pro-government individuals in the city of Puerto La Cruz, Anzoátegui State.

Alirio Rodríguez, a professor of Communications in the *Universidad Cecilio Acosta* in the city of Maracaibo, was illegally detained by the National Guard while accompanying students in a civil demonstration.

Dainu Acosta, a professor of Communications in the *Universidad Cecilio Acosta* in the city of Maracaibo, was illegally detained by the National Guard while accompanying students in a civil demonstration. Acosta and Rodríguez were both in the same demonstration.

Roberto Rasquín, a reporter for the radio program *Producto FM*, was illegally detained during a demonstration in Caracas. His family has denounced that Roberto has been viciously beaten.

³ Barreto said a young man in the opposition march shot him with a 9mm handgun (Military weapon)

Carlos Angola, a reporter for the broadcasting corporation Globovision and his crew were forced to escape from Baruta, when pro-government individuals attacked their vehicle with stones, wooden and metal sticks.

2 March 2004

Juan Carlos Aguirre, a reporter for the TV Channel CTM, was deprived of his equipment and gas mask by National Guardsmen in Altamira, Caracas. Juan Carlos and the rest of his TV crew were insulted and attacked by the National Guardsmen, who also shot a tear gas bomb to the press representatives. Juan Carlos was viciously hit in the head, the wound required several stitches.⁴

Alejandro Marcano, a cameraman for the TV Channel CTM, was deprived of his camera and gas mask by National Guardsmen in Altamira, Caracas. He was cornered by the National Guardsmen and as result of the struggle to protect his camera suffered injuries to one of his hands.⁴

Paula Andrea Jiménez, a reporter for the broadcasting corporation Televen, was harassed and threaten by unidentified individuals believed to be officers from the State Police. Paula and her TV crew had caught individuals, wearing ski masks and bullet proof vests, on tape shooting indiscriminately in a middle class residential area in Caracas. The suspects carried special fire arms. The TV crew's vehicle was intercepted by the armed group and threatened at gun point. After beating the cameraman, the individuals stole the tape containing the images of the shooting.

Franklin Molina, a cameraman for the broadcasting corporation Televen, was deprived of his camera and beaten by individuals believed to be officers from the State Police.

Carlos Ramírez, a reporter for the Newspaper La Calle, was harassed and beaten by pro-government individuals who took his equipment, which they destroyed.

3 March 2004

Carlos Colmenares, a cameraman for the broadcasting corporation Radio Caracas Televisión, was shot in his ankle while covering demonstrations in Plaza Altamira, Caracas. This is the second time Carlos has been shot while doing his work, the first time was during the massacre of April 11, 2002.

Francisco Marcano, a cameraman for the TV Channel CTM, was deprived of his camera and gas mask by National Guardsmen in Altamira, Caracas. He was cornered by the National Guardsmen, beaten and then shot at with a tear gas bomb.

⁴ IFEX – International Exchange for Freedom of Speech



Anahi Cruz, a reporter for the broadcasting corporation Radio Caracas Televisión, was physically abused by police officers in motorcycles, one of whom stepped on her foot.

Nubia Reyna, a reporter for Intopress, was attacked by pro-government individuals who intended to deprive her of her digital camera.

Rafael Delgado, a photographer for the Newspaper El Tiempo, was threatened to be detained by military officers, if he did not destroy the film.

Ana Marchese, a reporter for the Newspaper Correo del Caroní, was shot in the back by officers of the State Police with a tear gas cartridge.⁵

(Source: The Venezuelan Press Workers Union)

Contact: Maritza Ramírez de Agena

Group 11abril.com

Human Rights Committee

Mobile: (908) 922.65.95

maritza@11abril.com

⁵ IFEX – International Exchange for Freedom of Speech



COMMUNIQUÉ

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Venezuela Investigate Charges of Abuses Against Protestors

(Washington D.C., March 5, 2004) — The Venezuelan government should conduct a thorough investigation into allegations that state security forces have beaten and abused detained protestors this week, Human Rights Watch said today. The investigation should also examine the circumstances of killings that occurred during confrontations between protestors and police.

“Given how volatile the political climate in Venezuela is right now, it’s critical that government security forces exercise appropriate restraint in responding to protests,” said José Miguel Vivanco, executive director of the Americas Division of Human Rights Watch. “The government needs to investigate these allegations of brutality to ensure that members of the police and the National Guard haven’t stepped over the line.”

There have been reports of at least nine protestors killed and dozens of people injured—including several journalists—during confrontations with the National Guard over the past week. Under international standards, the intentional use of lethal force by law enforcement officials is permissible only when strictly unavoidable to protect life.

There have also been numerous allegations of beatings and ill-treatment of civilians detained by the guard and by police. In Zulia State, for example, members of the National Guard detained 23 students and two professors who participated in a protest march on Monday. One of the professors reported to Human Rights Watch that he and five students were beaten by the guard members who detained them. The detainees were released the following day after a judge threw out charges against them.

There have also been reports of acts of vandalism committed by some demonstrators, as well as attacks on the pro-government press.

A commission appointed by the Supreme Court is reported to have summarily fired three judges in Caracas this week after they exercised their authority to grant provisional release from detention to opposition protestors.

“The firing of judges handling politically sensitive cases reflects a dangerous politicization of justice in Venezuela,” said Vivanco.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Existen evidencias incuestionables de violación de DDHH en Venezuela



La organización humanitaria estadounidense Human Rights Watch (HRW) asegura que existen "evidencias incuestionables" de violaciones a los derechos humanos en Venezuela, en los disturbios opositores que dejaron nueve muertos hace dos semanas, informó su directivo José Miguel Vivanco.

"Indudablemente que se han producido graves violaciones de derechos humanos. Hay testimonios y evidencias incuestionables de torturas, malos tratos de todo orden, palizas y vejaciones de numerosos detenidos cuyos autores son efectivos de la (militarizada) Guardia Nacional".

El directivo acusó a "agentes del Estado (venezolano)" de las nueve muertes ocurridas en los disturbios, registrados del 27 de febrero al 4 de marzo en Caracas y otras ciudades del país. Vivanco señaló que HRW ha recibido testimonios de que opositores detenidos durante los disturbios "han sufrido torturas eléctricas, quemaduras, tratos crueles e inhumanos".

Aclaró que la mayoría de los detenidos fueron puestos en libertad por las autoridades y negó que se registraran "desapariciones forzadas" en las protestas, tal como denuncian opositores. El directivo señaló que las denuncias de violaciones de derechos humanos no convierten al gobierno de Chávez en un "Estado antidemocrático", sino que -dijo- demuestra que "En Venezuela existe una democracia en peligro, en grave riesgo, que sobrevive a pulso, pero una democracia donde todos pueden expresar sus puntos de vista".

Asimismo, Vivanco calificó de "gravísimas" las agresiones cometidas contra decenas de periodistas por fuerzas de seguridad y opositores en las protestas. "Hemos constatado casos (de agresiones) contra periodistas de medios cercanos al gobierno y de la oposición"

El 5 de marzo, la organización humanitaria instó a Chávez a investigar la violencia registrada en los disturbios, que dejaron también 108 heridos según la policía.