



STATE TERRORISM IN VENEZUELA

Fear as a political
instrument to materialize
electoral fraud



VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM
MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

PERSECU

In the wake of a tumultuous presidential election, the Venezuelan government has unleashed a wave of intensified political persecution, undoubtedly in response to the spontaneous mobilizations and social unrest caused by the **National Electoral Council's electoral fraud on the night of**

JULY 28.

The massification of repression and political persecution is **Nicolás Maduro's** means of demobilizing and disempowering Venezuelan citizens.

According to our sources, arbitrary detentions in post-election Venezuela increased by more than **2,200** in less than a week.



Photo by: Rodolfo Churión




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This increase has been seen across the civilian population, regardless of political militancy, gender, or age.

It is worth noting that 8% of the arbitrary detainees are minors.

In other words, this represents an indiscriminate and violent persecution.

With short-term detentions winding down, we have identified a new pattern of repression from the regime: the de facto denial of the right to defense in Venezuela. **We have received complaints from all over the country that show the following pattern:**

-  *Detainees are denied access to trusted lawyers.*
-  *Massive and telematic hearings are carried out.*
-  *Public defenders are imposed on them.*



Most of the detainees are charged with pre-qualified crimes by the Attorney General of the Republic at a press conference, without individualization of the facts.

Furthermore, the authorities do not provide information on the status of detainees nor allow them to contact their families, leaving said families in the dark on the whereabouts of their imprisoned loved ones.

The post-election growth of repression and arbitrary detentions not only constitutes a serious violation of human rights and the freedom of expression, but also introduces a new dimension of political persecution in Venezuela. This political persecution seems to be moving from systematic persecution, **focused on political agents and mobilizers**, to massive persecution on a scale larger than that of recent years.



We have reason to believe that in Venezuela, state-led terrorism is being wielded as retaliation for the regime's loss of legal and popular legitimacy, as evidenced by the July 28 election.

The state's implemented methodologies aim at social control and encourage widespread terror; the analogy of **"the revolving door"**, a method in which some political prisoners are released and others are captured, results in an **"exemplary effect"** to terrorize society.

The individual testimonies of torture center survivors—which have great probative legal value—have also a social dimension that transcends the physical consequences of state terrorism.



Fear is a post-traumatic phenomenon experienced not only by the immediate victims of tragedy—observers are often traumatized alongside the person directly affected.



FEAR AND TERROR LIVE TODAY IN OVER TWO THOUSAND VENEZUELAN HOMES

Parastatal groups have likewise taken measures to spread fear, having recently painted doors in the 23 de Enero neighborhood with a black "X." With support for Chavismo waning in this popular Caraqueño vecindario, it has been turned into another fear-mongering platform by those looking to retighten Chavismo's grip.

Frightened residents testify that this door-painting practice is increasingly used by armed Chavistas to intimidate and repress communities in the wake of the July 28 election.



Another case that shook the nation and spread fear was the murder of the young **Ángel Mora**, who died after repressive forces brutally beat him. He was attending a demonstration on July 29 in Guanare, Portuguesa, in response to the National Electoral Council's corrupt ruling. Even younger was 15-year-old **Isaías Fuenmayor**, who was shot and killed in San Francisco, Zulia, during post-election demonstrations on the same day.



It is also important to note the case of former deputy **Williams Dávila**, 73, who was hospitalized in serious condition after being arbitrarily detained and disappeared while accompanying a vigil for the relatives of political prisoners in Chacao on August 8. According to his son, the family learned from unofficial sources that their father was being held in Helicoide, the largest torture center in Latin America, located in Caracas.



The arrest and disappearance of 24-year-old lawyer **Kennedy Tejeda** was another case that shocked the country. According to his employer, Foro Penal, Tejeda went to ask the GNB command of Montalbán, Carabobo State, about the alleged arrests of some of their employees. He wanted to provide free legal assistance.



The Foro Penal team was able to confirm that upon asking, Kennedy was arrested and transferred to the DGCIM of Carabobo without specific reasons.



Responding to the widespread protests that erupted after the National Electoral Council (CNE) announced their results, Tarek William Saab, Attorney General of the Republic of Venezuela, accused demonstrators of using tomato sauce to simulate murders.

"They even simulated criminal acts, and they will be arrested for that. They fall on the ground, they pour tomato sauce on the person on the ground, something that has never been seen before, from the theater."

Saab made this statement at a press conference on Wednesday, July 31. However, at a press conference on August 12, Saab had to acknowledge the deaths of 25 citizen protestors; he blamed the "comanditos," which are organized citizen groups that formed the opposition platform Democratic Unity during the electoral campaign.



Lastly, it is important to note the threats of arrest from the Bolivarian National Police. A 25-page document entitled **"Leaders Wanted: Guarimberos at the National Level"** has been circulating communications networks, and contains the photographs, names, surnames, ID numbers, and locations of 164 people under the heading "Wanted, Reward"; many of these individuals are political activists and regional opposition leaders.



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**STATE
TERRORISM
IN THE
DIGITAL
AGE**

Arrests streamed live

Digital communities have been shocked to observe live—through social media broadcasts—arbitrary arrests, as in the case of the Vente Venezuela political party leader **María Oropeza**, who streamed the moment in which DGCIM officers broke into her home and took her. She was detained without a court order, as was **Koddy Campos**, who shared live on August 9 the attempt to raid his home and arrest him without a judicial warrant. Journalist Vladimir Villegas joined the live broadcast, which lasted more than 30 minutes until the officers left the scene.



TikToker arrests

Less than two weeks after the election, news surfaced that agents of the Bolivarian National Guard and the DGCIM were responsible for arresting various TikTokers. According to local media, the police reports stated that these members conspired against the government. There are also complaints that the police are illegally confiscating cell phones without legitimate grounds and without court orders.



Applications to expose anti-government protesters

The "VenApp" application promoted by the Venezuelan government would be used to encourage the population to report anti-government protesters. On July 30, Nicolás Maduro promised to open a VenApp extension where Venezuelans could download the data of those deemed "criminals." This would likely result in the doxxing and further repression of many protesters.



In an open letter signed by dozens of human rights organizations, Human Rights Watch warned: "The government has intensified its measures of digital surveillance and censorship, using tools such as the VenApp messaging application to report on dissident activities, video surveillance to monitor protests, and drone surveillance to create widespread fear."

Positioning the hashtag #TunTun for two nights in a row

State intelligence services and government officials have also used social networks and digital platforms to sow terror in society, as in the case of "Con el Mazo Dando," a television program led by Diosdado Cabello. "CMD" has been dedicated to threatening, accusing, and incriminating the perceived opponents of the Maduro regime.



In 2017, the term "Tun Tun" was first coined and used by Diosdado Cabello on CMD to propose the mass arrests of "terrorists". The operation was subsequently carried out, and protestors and political opponents were detained en masse.

While not a formal strategy at the time of its inception, Tun Tun has grown more institutionalized; Maduro himself made reference to the operation in August of this year.

Dissemination of videos by the intelligence services to terrorize the population

The DGCIM continues to publish chillingly-edited videos of arrests; the original video of María Oropeza's arrest was put to music by Freddy Krueger and edited to both mock her and terrify viewers. María Oropeza is still missing after her forced disappearance.

Closure of news and social media applications

On August 9, Nicolás Maduro ordered the temporary closure of the social network X (formerly Twitter) and the messaging application Signal; he also asked that citizens uninstall the messaging application WhatsApp. Three days later, the president of the National Assembly of Venezuela, Jorge Rodríguez, confirmed that the authorities were discussing a package of reforms to regulate the use of social networks across the country.

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AMÉRICA LATINA >

Nicolás Maduro mantiene el bloqueo de la red social X en Venezuela

El cierre de la plataforma limita la comunicación y el acceso a información crucial, según observadores y miembros de la oposición que utilizan el medio para difundir sus mensajes

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Rodríguez stated, "Venezuela must regulate the operation of social networks. We are going to approve the requested package of laws to take care of and defend our population against expressions of hate, terrorism, and the dissemination of fascist ideas."

The systematic attack on the freedoms of expression, opinion and information has dramatically accelerated. In the last two weeks, these attacks have: spawned policies in favor of self-censorship; contributed to the deletion of content on social networks; led to the automatic deletion of messages within applications, voice memos, and images; deactivated "restricted" and "hidden" chat options; and promoted other "protective" measures including the unjustified police-led confiscation of mobile devices.

Finally, it is important to mention that **the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued a press release on August 15 condemning the practices of state terrorism in Venezuela.** The Commission concluded that the terrorist practices of the State, perpetrated and carried out by the current regime, are not only aimed at persecuting specific sectors, but also at creating a climate of fear and intimidation among the Venezuelan population. They insisted that "Venezuela should immediately cease all practices in violation of human rights and reestablish democratic order and the rule of law."

CIDH y RELE condenan prácticas de terrorismo de estado en Venezuela

15 de agosto de 2024

Washington D.C. - La Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (CIDH) y su Relatoría Especial para la Libertad de Expresión (RELE) condenan prácticas de violencia institucional en el marco del proceso electoral en Venezuela, incluyendo represión violenta, detenciones arbitrarias y persecución política. El régimen en el poder está sembrando terror como herramienta para silenciar a la ciudadanía y perpetuar el régimen autoritario oficialista en el poder. Venezuela debe cesar las prácticas violatorias de derechos humanos inmediatamente, restablecer el orden democrático y el Estado de derecho.

Datos de Contacto

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