

# HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 47<sup>th</sup> SESSION

## INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON THE HIGH COMMISSIONER REPORT ON VENEZUELA, 5-6 JULY 2021

### Michelle Bachelet – UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

The report [A/HRC/47/55](#) provides an overview of the latest developments on the rule of law and democratic space in Venezuela, as well as an assessment of the implementation of the previous recommendations issued by the OHCHR.

The OHCHR welcomes the **new initiatives announced by Venezuela**, including the police and justice reforms. The work of the **newly established Commissions** will guide the way towards meaningful and effective results in accordance with human rights standards. It is an opportunity to shift towards **stronger protection of human rights** and reinforce **oversight and accountability mechanisms**.

**Social protests** continued in Venezuela, as **access to basic services** remains challenging. Pre-existing socio-economic inequalities were further compounded by the **impact of unilateral sectoral sanctions** and the **COVID-19 pandemic**. The OHCHR continues to encourage efforts to explore **lifting these sanctions** and contribute to relieving the situation for the country's population.

**Healthcare workers** have repeatedly demonstrated for **adequate and safe work conditions** and **access to vaccinations**, citing insufficient personal protective equipment, unpaid salaries, and unsanitary conditions. According to estimates, **one fifth of the people killed by COVID-19** in the country were healthcare workers. **Vaccines** must be accessible to all.

It is urgent to continue advancing with **accountability mechanisms** for **killings in the context of protests** in recent years. The OHCHR welcomes progress made in the **fight against impunity**. The Attorney General has agreed that OHCHR will have **access to files of cases** of human rights violations.

**Conditions of detention** continue to raise concerns, even more in the context of the **pandemic**. Access to adequate food, water, sanitation and healthcare must be guaranteed to all, in accordance with the **Mandela rules**. The OHCHR has visited several **detention centres**, 26 so far. The plan to **reduce the number of prisoners** in pre-trial detention centres is another initiative to be welcomed.

The report notes continuing **concerns over due process**. The **rights to a fair trial** without undue delay, including unrestricted access to a legal defence of one's own choosing, the presumption of innocence, and an **independent, impartial and transparent tribunal** must be guaranteed. **Restrictions on civic space** still raise concerns. The report highlights the **stigmatization, criminalization** and **threats** against **dissenting voices**, particularly civil society, media and members of the opposition.

### Delegation of Venezuela – Speaking as the Country Concerned:

Venezuela condemns **country specific mandates**, which constitute a violation of the founding resolution of this Council. The government also **rejects the findings of the report** based of an **interventionist approach**. Several aspects of this reports constitute another proof of **selectivity**.

Venezuela will continue to **strengthen its cooperation with OHCHR** to strengthen human rights on the ground. The government allowed several **visits of officials** in detention centres, which is something not done by many members of this Council.

Venezuela continues to suffer **multilateral pressure from USA**, with direct impact on the enjoyment of human rights in Venezuela. The **financial blockade** continued during the **pandemic**, preventing the government to purchase medical equipment. The European Union continue to support sanctions imposed by the USA. Despite all this, Venezuela have been able to continue **upholding human rights**.



## INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE (Watch the full recording here: [PART 1](#); [PART 2](#))

The majority of States were concerned about the **situation of human rights** in Venezuela and deplored the **ongoing human rights violations** occurring in Venezuela, including **arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, extra judicial killings, torture, repression against human rights defenders, political opponents and media workers, threats against freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly, sexual violence, lack of accountability and lack of judicial independence** (European Union, Brazil on behalf of a group of 56 States<sup>1</sup>, Liechtenstein, Australia, Portugal, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, France, Ecuador, Spain, Japan, USA, Uruguay, Sweden, Austria, Belgium, Georgia, United Kingdom, Argentina, New Zealand, Colombia, Netherlands, Germany)

Many States expressed their **discontent with the report** and this meeting, expressing their disagreement with **State-targeted resolutions** and saying that this meeting was **non-objective, politicized and interfered** in internal affairs of Venezuela. **Human rights should not be politicized** and used for **double standards** (Nicaragua, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Syria, China, Iran, Lao, Sri Lanka, Belarus, Russia, Eritrea, Bolivia)

Several States deplored the **negative impact of Unilateral Coercive Sanctions** on Venezuela, which constitutes a **human rights violation**, especially during the COVID pandemic. **Sanctions should be lifted** (Nicaragua, Syria, China, Iran, Lao, Sri Lanka, Belarus, Eritrea, Bolivia).

Many States expressed their **support for the work of OHCHR** in Venezuela and demanded the opening of an **OHCHR field office in Venezuela** (European Union, Brazil on behalf of a group of 56 States, Luxembourg, Uruguay, Austria, Georgia, United Kingdom, Argentina, Netherlands).

With regards to the **elections** to be held later this year in Venezuela, several States underlined that **free, fair, and transparent elections** were the key solution for **democracy and human rights** to be strengthened in Venezuela (European Union, Brazil on behalf of a group of 56 States, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Spain, USA, Sweden, Austria, Belgium, United Kingdom, Argentina, Germany).

### Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (35 delegations)

Nicaragua, European Union, Brazil on behalf of a group of States, Liechtenstein, Cuba, Australia, Portugal, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, France, Ecuador, Spain, Japan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Syria, China, Iran, Lao, United States of America, Uruguay, Sweden, Austria, Sri Lanka, Belarus, Belgium, Georgia, United Kingdom, Russia, Eritrea, Argentina, New Zealand, Colombia, Netherlands, Germany, Bolivia.

### 10 NGOs took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue:

Fundación Latinoamericana por los Derechos Humanos y el Desarrollo Social, Freedom House, International Service for Human Rights, International Commission of Jurists, FIDH, World Organization Against Torture, Amnesty International, CIVICUS, Human Rights Watch, Center for Justice and International Law.

- Negative impact of **sanctions** on the human rights in Venezuela.
- **Impunity for crimes and human rights violations** committed by Venezuelan **police** during protests.
- **Criminalization, threats and harassment of human rights defenders, journalists and media.**
- **Lack of due process and judicial independence** in Venezuela. Lack of **accountability.**
- **Laws criminalizing** NGOs, human rights defenders and humanitarian workers in Venezuela.
- **Restrictions on civic space** and on **freedoms of expression** and peaceful assembly.

<sup>1</sup> (Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America)