

## HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 54th SESSION

### Interactive dialogue with the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on a written report

25 September 2023

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Marta Valinas, Chair of the Fact-finding Mission on Venezuela**, highlighted the key findings of its report. The report examined 43 new cases involving human rights violations affecting 72 victims. These cases included arbitrary detentions of human rights defenders, journalists, trade union leaders, and government critics. Instances of enforced disappearances and sexual and gender-based violence persist. The Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) also found that the Venezuelan State has continued its policy of repression, targeting various groups, including trade unionists, journalists, and political leaders. Media freedom has been severely restricted, and the democratic and civic space continues to shrink. The FFM expressed concern about the independence of the People's Ombudsperson, indicating that selective repression of civil society and political leaders continues to rise, particularly in anticipation of the 2024 presidential elections. The FFM's report also highlighted the establishment of the Directorate of Strategic and Tactical Action within the Bolivarian Police Force. The FFM considered it a de facto continuation of the disbanded Specialized Action Forces and expressed concerns about its alleged involvement in multiple assassinations and detentions. Finally, the FFM's report underscored that Venezuela's repressive state machinery persists, fostering an atmosphere of fear and self-censorship among the population.

**Venezuela (Country concerned)** opposed the imposition of the mandate, alleging political motives aimed at maximizing media and political pressure on the country. The country argued that the FFM manipulated human rights as a pretext for political interference, citing the mission's overreach in various aspects of Venezuela's internal affairs. Furthermore, Venezuela accused the Mission of falsifying data and intentionally feeding anti-Venezuelan narratives in the media. It also claimed that there was a financial interest behind the Mission, involving countries that politically opposed Venezuela, and it denounced the allocation of resources to the Mission instead of supporting the work of the High Commissioner in Venezuela. In conclusion, Venezuela expressed its firm rejection of the Mission and emphasized its commitment to promoting and defending human rights through dialogue and cooperation, rather than punitive measures.

#### Interactive dialogue

While many states and state organizations such as the **EU, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Paraguay, Australia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain, and Northern Ireland, Ecuador, Uruguay, Peru, Switzerland, Georgia, and the United States of America**, recognized Venezuela's cooperation with the mandate, they also condemned Venezuelan authorities for continuing to take actions that undermine democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Several countries called upon Venezuela to ensure freedom of expression, opinion, peaceful assembly, and association, as well as to strengthen civil society and protect the population from gender-based violence. Many countries mentioned it is crucial to guarantee free and fair elections to guarantee a peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis. They called upon the Venezuelan authorities to cooperate with and fully implement all recommendations by the UN's human rights mechanisms, notably the OHCHR, the ICC, and relevant bodies, inter alia by granting the FFM access to Venezuela. The **EU** stressed the need to end impunity, to hold perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses accountable through effective and impartial investigations, and to release immediately all political prisoners. **Ukraine** reiterated its grave concern about Venezuela's failure to join the international community in rejecting the Russian aggression against Ukraine. **Canada** deplored the targeted repression of political opposition leaders, persecution of independent media, and union leaders, and the use of lethal force by the police against

civilians, particularly young men living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. **Chile** urged accountability and **Ecuador** called upon the country to revise its regulatory frameworks that curtail and criminalize acts of human rights defenders, journalists, and members of the opposition.

**Burundi, Egypt, Cambodia, Algeria, and Sri Lanka** expressed that country-specific mandates without the consent of the state are unproductive and not helpful in achieving substantive results in human rights. They also mentioned the importance of eliminating double standards and politicization of the HRC. **Brazil and Argentina** favored strengthening dialogue between Venezuela and the mechanisms of the HRC, emphasizing the importance of transparent elections in Venezuela. They also opposed the use of UCMs, which have had a significant negative impact on the humanitarian situation. **Bolivia, Nicaragua, the DPRK, Cuba, Lao People's Democratic Republic, China, the Russian Federation, Zimbabwe, Belarus, Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Syrian Arab Republic, and Eritrea** opposed politicized mandates that lack the consent of the country, considering them ineffective and unhelpful in improving the human rights situation on the ground. They commended the country's progress in respecting human rights and cooperating with HRC mechanisms. They expressed concern about the negative impact of UCMs affecting its economic development and urged their cessation. They denounced the use of politically motivated mandates, emphasizing the importance of promoting genuine dialogue and cooperation. The **Russian Federation** expressed that the sanctions imposed by the West are strategies aimed at destabilizing countries and interfering in their internal affairs under the pretext of human rights. **Algeria, Yemen, and Sudan** called for increased capacity-building and technical assistance for Venezuela. **Türkiye** called for constructive dialogue and rejected UCMs.

**Some NGOs** expressed their concern about the government's policy of repression and persecution aimed at controlling its population, silencing dissent, and suppressing political opposition and human rights defenders. Several NGOs expressed that civil society faces ongoing threats, including criminalization, regressive legislative measures, and stigmatization. One NGO denounced the shrinking of civic space and restricted political participation of university students. It requested the FFM to document attacks on universities and university students. Another NGO condemned the Prosecutor's Office in Venezuela for its lack of independence and impartiality, as well as the widespread practice of arbitrary detentions and prosecutions. Two NGOs urged the Council to stop creating parallel mechanisms such as the FFM that hinder the work of the Office of the High Commissioner in Venezuela. They emphasized the need to support the positive results achieved over the past four years through technical assistance and cooperation.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (46 country delegations):

*Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), European Union, Belgium (on behalf of a group of countries), Canada (on behalf of a group of countries), Portugal, Chile, Austria, Paraguay, Ecuador, Czechia, Germany, Switzerland, Ireland, Georgia, United States of America, China, Brazil, Zimbabwe, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Argentina, Uruguay, Australia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Spain, Belarus, Greece, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Iran (Islamic Republic of), Syrian Arab Republic, Burundi, Türkiye, Sudan, Egypt, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Ukraine, Eritrea, Peru, Algeria, Niger.*

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (10):

International Association of Democratic Lawyers, Fundación Latinoamericana por los Derechos Humanos y el Desarrollo Social, Freedom House, Aula Abierta, International Commission of Jurists, Amnesty International, International Federation for Human Rights Leagues, Human Rights Watch.

To watch the full meeting refer to [UN Web TV](#).