

URGENT ACTION

VENEZUELAN DETAINEES NEED IMMEDIATE CARE

On 20 December 2023, Guillermo Zárraga was conditionally released after over three years of arbitrary detention in Venezuela. Three other victims of arbitrary detention continue suffering the authorities' neglect of their right to health and safety. Emirlendris Benítez is a mother and tradeswoman arbitrarily detained in August 2018 and subjected to torture. Juan Carlos Marrufo and María Auxiliadora Delgado are a married couple detained since March 2019. All are unfairly held by authorities under the responsibility of president Nicolas Maduro. We call on him to ensure their unconditional release and, while in custody, ensure they receive adequate medical attention immediately.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

President Nicolas Maduro

Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela,
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Caracas, Venezuela
Email: correo@presidencia.gob.ve
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Dear Mr Nicolas Maduro,

The continued neglect of the health and safety of those imprisoned in Venezuela is alarming. Emirlendris Benítez, Juan Carlos Marrufo and María Auxiliadora Delgado are currently unfairly detained for political reasons in Venezuelan detention centers; the INOF centre in the case of Emirlendris, and the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence centre in Boleíta, in the case of Juan Carlos and María Auxiliadora. All three are suffering from severe health conditions that need urgent medical attention, which has been repeatedly and unduly denied by authorities under your command.

Emirlendris Benítez's is a victim of arbitrary detention, torture, gender-based violence, discrimination, unfair trial, and inhumane prison conditions. While she endures these unacceptable conditions, she requires urgent surgery to treat grave health conditions resulting from the grave human rights violations she's suffered since her arrest in August 2018.

María Auxiliadora Delgado and Juan Carlos Delgado require urgent medical tests to assess concerning health conditions that put their safety, and potentially their lives, at risk. They were first arrested on 19 March 2019 by the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM). Not only are they victims of arbitrary detentions, but they have also been deprived of their plans of growing their family.

Emirlendris Benítez, Juan Carlos Marrufo and María Auxiliadora Delgado should be immediately and unconditionally released. While they remain in custody of the state, you must guarantee their life, health and safety. We urge you to urgently grant them access to trusted and adequate medical care.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Emirlendris Benítez is a Venezuelan mother, sister, and tradeswoman. On 5 August 2018, Emirlendris was arbitrarily detained on fabricated grounds. Authorities falsely linked her to acts of violence committed against high-profile political leaders in Venezuela; an accusation for which there is no evidence and which she has consistently stated that she had no part in. In custody, she was subjected to torture while pregnant. A few weeks after her arrest, she was forcibly transferred to a medical facility and her pregnancy was terminated without her knowledge or consent. The torture she was subjected to left her needing the long-term use of a wheelchair for mobility. In 2022, she was sentenced to a 30-year prison sentence by a partial and politically motivated court. Emirlendris should have never been detained, as it is believed the charges are politically motivated. Furthermore, the draconian sentence against her should be revoked and she must be immediately released.

Juan Carlos Marrufo and María Auxiliadora Delgado were first arrested on 19 March 2019 by the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM). They are a married couple, holding dual Spanish and Italian nationalities, respectively. They had decided to undergo an in vitro fertilization treatment when they were arrested. Their only connection to criminal offenses seems to be limited to María Auxiliadora being the sister of a retired military officer with alleged ties to an attack on Nicolás Maduro. Not only are they victims of arbitrary detentions, but they have also been deprived of their plans of growing their family.

Guillermo Zárraga is a Venezuelan engineer who worked as an operator technician for Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA, the Venezuelan state-owned oil company) at the Cardón Refinery in the Catalytic Complex located in Coro, Falcón state. He was also a leader in the Sindicato Único de Trabajadores (Unique Workers' Union) within that organization. He was detained at his home by officers from the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM) on 14 December 2020. During his detention, Guillermo was subjected to inhumane prison conditions. Prison authorities did not provide him with adequate sustenance and drinking water, severely deteriorating his health while in custody. On 20 December 2023, Guillermo was conditionally released, as were other victims of politically motivated arbitrary detention including Gabriel Blanco and John Álvarez.

Nicolás Maduro's government has continually harassed, prosecuted, and censored activists and civil society organizations working to protect the rights of Venezuelans amidst a complex humanitarian emergency and a deep human rights crisis that is making Venezuelans flee in unprecedented numbers in search of safety and protection. By November 2023, over 7.72 million had fled the country, representing over 25% of the country's total population.

Since 2020, four reports from the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have thoroughly documented hundreds of cases of extrajudicial executions; enforced disappearances; arbitrary detentions; and torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment committed in the country since 2014; as well as the ways in which the justice system serves as a tool for the government's policy of repression, and concluded that these grave human rights violations may amount to crimes against humanity.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 7 March 2024

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Emirlendris Benítez (she/her), Juan Carlos Marrufo (he/him), María Auxiliadora Delgado (she/her)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr53/7288/2023/en/