

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE NEEDS MEDICAL CARE

Prisoner of conscience Villca Fernández has been scheduled to be transferred to hospital to receive specialized medical treatment since June 2017. Doctors requested his transfer to hospital and the Attorney General's Office issued an order to this effect which has not yet been executed. His transfer was postponed for the fifth time in November while his health continues to deteriorate.

Villca Fernández, an activist and leader of the student movement in the state of Mérida, western Venezuela, was arbitrary detained on 31 January 2016 hours after he published a tweet replying to a senior government official who had publicly accused him of being part of a conspiracy on national television. He is being unlawfully held in the National Bolivarian Intelligence Service (Servicio Bolivariano de Inteligencia Nacional, SEBIN) facilities in Caracas, the capital. He is a prisoner of conscience and should be immediately and unconditionally released.

Whilst in SEBIN custody, Villca Fernández has suffered from a range of ailments, including hypertension, bronchitis, back pains, and gastrointestinal problems. Doctors inside SEBIN facilities performed his most recent medical exam on 7 December 2017, and urged his transfer to a specialized hospital that could adequately assess and treat his cardiac problems. An order from the Attorney General's Office for his transfer to hospital has been postponed by SEBIN officers five times.

According to information received by Amnesty International, Villca Fernández has also suffered a number of violations to his right to due process and to his right to not be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Villca Fernández's relatives told Amnesty International that SEBIN officials have often denied them access to see him for extended periods of time, most recently for over four weeks between October and November. They have also denied Villca Fernández access to sunlight for weeks at a time. The start of his trial is unjustifiably pending after almost two years.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the Venezuelan authorities to release Villca Fernández immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience who has not used or advocated violence and is being arbitrarily detained in SEBIN custody;
- Calling for Villca Fernández to be transferred to a health centre of his choice in order to receive the treatment prescribed by doctors who evaluated him and as advised by the SEBIN medical staff;
- Demanding that Villca Fernández be protected from any kind of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment while in detention.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 JANUARY 2018 TO:

Director of the National Bolivarian
Intelligence Service (SEBIN)

Gustavo González López
Torre Corporativa Metro de Caracas
Avenida Casanova, Plaza Venezuela
Caracas 1050, Venezuela
Twitter: @SEBIN_OFICIAL

**Salutation: Dear Director/ Estimado
Señor Director**

Vice President of the Republic

Tareck El Aissami
Esq. Carmelitas, Avenida Urdaneta
Caracas 1010, Venezuela
Twitter: @TareckPSUV
Fax: +58 212 506 9845
Email: direcciongeneral@vicepresidencia
.gob.ve

**Salutation: Dear Vice President/
Estimado Señor Vicepresidente**

Ombudsman

Alfredo Ruiz
Av. Urdaneta, Frente El Universal
Centro Financiero Latino, Piso 27
Caracas, Venezuela
Twitter: @Defensoria_Vzla
Fax: +58 212 507 7025
Email: contacto@defensoria.gob.ve
**Salutation: Mr Ombudsman/ Estimado
Señor Defensor del Pueblo**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY ROCÍO MANEIRO
Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 1 Cromwell Road SW7 2HW, Fax 020 7589 8887, despacho.londres@mppre.gob.ve
embavenezuk@venezlon.co.uk, info@venezlon.co.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Villca Fernández is a young civil and political rights activist, and leader of the student movement in the state of Mérida, western Venezuela. He is a student at the University of Los Andes, where he studies political sciences.

Villca Fernández was arrested on 31 January 2016 by officers of the National Bolivarian Intelligence Service (SEBIN). Since then, he has been unjustly detained in 'El Helicoide', one of SEBIN's facilities in Caracas.

On 27 January 2016, a senior government official publicly named him during a television programme, accusing him of 'conspiring to topple the government'. Four days later, Villca Fernández published a tweet stating he "wasn't afraid" of this government official, and that his days in power were "numbered". Hours after this tweet was published, SEBIN officers arrested him at a street fair. The officers who arrested Villca Fernández did not have a warrant for his arrest, nor did his arrest comply with the requirements established by Venezuelan law. His arrest constituted an arbitrary detention that continues to this day.

The Attorney General's Office accused Villca Fernández of "inciting hate" (*incitación al odio*) and "divulging false information" (*divulgación de información falsa*). Amnesty International believes this accusation was politically motivated. His trial has yet to begin after almost two years.