

URGENT ACTION

VENEZUELAN DEFENDERS FACE CRIMINALISATION

On 16 May 2022, recognised Venezuelan human rights defenders Marino Alvarado and Alfredo Infante received notification of a defamation lawsuit filed against them by the governor of Carabobo state, Rafael Lacava. The lawsuit comes as a response to a report published in March by the NGOs Alvarado and Infante belong to, Provea and Centro Gumilla respectively, which exposes possible extrajudicial executions in Carabobo state and the lack of accountability enforced by the governor. This attack from the governor against Marino Alvarado and Alfredo Infante must end immediately, dropping the lawsuit and ensuring a safe working environment for human rights defenders.

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

Governor of Carabobo state

Rafael Lacava

Calle Colombia c/c Montes De Oca, Casa Alvarado,
Capitolio de Valencia, Valencia, Carabobo
Venezuela

Email: sgeneralcarabobo@gmail.com

Twitter handle: @rafaellacava10

Dear governor Rafael Lacava,

I write to you to raise my voice in support of Marino Alvarado and Alfredo Infante, two invaluable human rights defenders whom you have filed a lawsuit against for exposing and condemning potential extrajudicial executions by members of your state's police force and demanding chain of command accountability.

To target human rights defenders with criminal action for exercising their right to defend human rights is against international human rights law, as well as repeated recommendations by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN special procedures, and other human rights bodies.

Human rights defenders should be protected, not attacked, specially when bravely facing threats to their integrity, work and life for exposing grave human rights violations and demanding the highest standards of justice for victims.

We call on you to drop the lawsuit against Marino Alvarado and Alfredo Infante, refrain from blocking efforts to achieve chain of command accountability for grave human rights violations committed in your state, and protect human rights defenders.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In March 2022, NGOs Provea and Centro Gumilla published a report exposing possible extrajudicial executions committed by police officers in Carabobo state, Venezuela, and calling for chain of command accountability. In response, the governor of the state -who would be included in this chain of command responsibility- filed a defamation lawsuit against two members of said NGOs, Marino Alvarado and Alfredo Infante. Both Marino and Alfredo are respected and tireless human rights defenders in Venezuela.

This report is published within the joint project “Lupa por la Vida”, which monitors violations of the right to life at the national level, focused on extrajudicial executions by state security forces. Not only did it shed light on possible extrajudicial executions by state police officers in Carabobo, but it concluded Carabobo police forces has been the most lethal in 2021 in Venezuela.

The report and the public statements made by its spokespeople, Marino Alvarado and Alfredo Infante, specifically called for investigations into possible extrajudicial executions committed by the National Bolivarian Police (PNB), the Scientific, Penal and Criminal Investigations Unit (CICPC), and the state police forces of the states of Zulia and Carabobo. In light of the [open investigation by the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court](#) into crimes against humanity in Venezuela, the human rights defenders stressed the importance of including chain of command responsibility in all criminal investigations.

Nicolás Maduro government has continually harassed, prosecuted and censored activists and civil society organizations working to protect the rights of Venezuelans amidst a humanitarian complex crisis and a deep human rights crisis that has led over 6.1 million fleeing the country in search of safety and protect abroad.

These attacks are not isolated. Since the beginning of 2021, civil society in Venezuela has reported a new crackdown against human rights activists and human rights defenders, focusing on criminalizing international cooperation and attempting to implement [new repressive mechanisms over civil society](#) in the country in 2021, and [more recently in May 2022](#). Another Venezuelan human rights defender and prisoner of conscience, [Javier Tarazona](#), director of NGO FundaREDES, remains arbitrarily detain and in critical need of medical attention.

In 2020 and 2021, reports from the UN independent international fact-finding mission on Venezuela 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, and concluded that these grave human rights violations may amount to crimes against humanity. They also documented how the Venezuelan justice system is utilised to carry out and mask these human rights violations, ensuring the impunity of perpetrators including the highest-ranking authorities.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 15 July 2022

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: They/them/their (he/him/his individually)

ADDITIONAL TARGET

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