

Venezuelan authorities must guarantee freedom of expression and protect the work of journalists

Given the current electoral situation in Venezuela, the undersigned international organizations and regional networks defending freedom of the press and expression express their concern about the attacks against national and international journalists who are documenting the events happening in the country, as well as activists, demonstrators, and the general population. We urge the Venezuelan authorities to fulfill their obligation to guarantee and protect the exercise of freedom of expression and peaceful association, as well as to guarantee the safety of journalists working in the country.

Before, during, and after the election day on July 28, cases of abuse of public force, arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, and restrictions on journalistic work have been documented, which have violated the rights to freedom of expression and the press, especially in access to information and coverage of protests and events related to the electoral process.

According to figures from the Institute for Press and Society, IPYS Venezuela, during the electoral campaign, 51 aggressions against the press were recorded. On the election day alone (July 28), 41 cases were documented affecting 26 communicators, five photojournalists, and two cameramen. Additionally, journalists have also been victims of physical attacks: by July 31, a journalist had been shot in Maracay, and three journalists were imprisoned: Paul León in Valera; Yousner Alvarado in Barinas, and Joaquín De Ponte in San Juan de los Morros.

Similarly, the organization Espacio Público monitored that at least six people were victims of reprisals for recording or disseminating public interest information on election day. Practices of intimidation and threats of detention for publishing content critical of the government through instant messaging applications have also been reported. Arbitrary checks of cell phones in public institutions have also been announced as surveillance mechanisms for communications.

Limitations or restrictions on access to information have been another violation of press and expression freedom. On Sunday, election day, accredited press workers from the National Electoral Council (CNE) were denied entry to polling stations. Days earlier, the blocking of news websites, fact-checking platforms, and civil society organizations had been recorded.

Censorship and repression of journalists, civil organizations, activists, and demonstrators by different Venezuelan authorities are evidence of the severe and growing deterioration of freedoms in the country.

Venezuelan authorities have also strongly repressed protests that have occurred since the results were announced by the CNE. According to the [Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela](#), dozens of people were injured during the demonstrations. [The National Hospital Survey](#) recorded, as of July 31, at least 13 people killed and 93 injured in the context of the protests.

Given the severity of this situation, we call on the current government of Venezuela and all state authorities to stop the repression and abuse of force against demonstrators and journalists, respecting the work of the press. Within the framework of international standards, the Venezuelan state needs to ensure the safety and access to information for those covering the current situation in the country. Beyond the current situation, their work is essential for disseminating matters of public interest and overseeing and verifying the electoral process. The free and critical exercise of the press is the fundamental basis for the strengthening of democracy.

Likewise, it is necessary for the Organization of American States (OAS), the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE), the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Opinion, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the international community, and countries in permanent communication with the government of Nicolás Maduro to reject the violations of press freedom and directly urge the Venezuelan government to comply with what is established in international law regarding freedom of the press and expression, thus prioritizing the defense of an open civic space that guarantees civil liberties of expression, association, and protest.

This statement is signed by organizations and networks defending freedom of the press and expression in the region:

- Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
- Free Press Unlimited
- Freedom House
- Fundamedios
- IFEX-ALC
- Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP)
- International Media Support (IMS)
- La Alianza Regional por la Libre Expresión e Información