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For Immediate Release

*****To join news conference at 10:00 a.m. ET on August 17:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88192951863>

Venezuela: UN Human Rights Council Should Renew Experts' Mandate

Due to Lack of Judicial Independence, International Accountability and Monitoring Are Key

(Geneva, August 17, 2022) – The United Nations Human Rights Council should renew the mandate of its Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela, 124 national and international organizations working on [Venezuela](#) said today. The Mission, established in 2019 to investigate systematic human rights violations in Venezuela, has played a key role in pushing for accountability for serious crimes in the country and ensuring international scrutiny over the ongoing crisis, the groups said in a [joint question-and-answer document](#).

The Mission's experts are scheduled to present their third report at the 51st session of the Human Rights Council, from September 12 to October 7, 2022. A resolution is needed to extend the mission's mandate beyond September. In the past, a group of Latin American countries led this initiative and presented a text establishing the Mission's mandate for adoption. If a vote is called, a simple majority of voting members is needed to adopt the text.

Latin American governments should once again lead this effort for accountability and ongoing monitoring and urge all UN member states to support the renewal of the mandate, the groups said. The groups will hold a news conference about this key issue on August 17 at 10 a.m. Caracas time.

The Human Rights Council [established](#) the Mission in 2019 to investigate “extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment since 2014,” including sexual and gender-based violence, with a view to “ensuring full accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims.” In 2020, the mission's initial one-year mandate [was extended](#) for another two years, until September 2022.

In 2020, the mission [concluded](#) that there were sufficient grounds to believe that crimes against humanity had been committed in Venezuela, that “high-level authorities had knowledge of those crimes”, and that “commanders and superiors knew or should have known about those crimes and ... did not take measures to prevent or repress them.” A year later, in its second report, the Mission [documented](#) the country's lack of judicial independence and impunity for human rights violations, and reported that Venezuela's justice system served as a mechanism of repression instead of a guarantor of rights, emboldening state agents to continue carrying out abuses.

The failure of the Venezuelan authorities to implement the Mission's recommendations and the structural conditions that prompted the creation of the Mission remain, including impunity, lack of domestic avenues for redress for victims of abuses, and the government's continued attempts to evade international scrutiny, the groups said. In the face of a Venezuelan government that does not seriously respond to the recommendations, the Mission has advanced the search for truth, justice, and reparation for victims and survivors of human rights violations. It has also outlined the fundamental reforms needed to prevent further violations and abuses.

Renewing the mandate would allow experts to continue gathering evidence of serious, ongoing human rights violations, report on current dynamics in the country, and provide recommendations for necessary action.

Presidential elections are scheduled for 2024, and legislative and regional elections are set to take place in 2025. Government repression has peaked during past election periods. The Mission can perform a crucial early warning role that may help to deter such abuses, the groups said.

The question-and-answer document explains how the Fact-Finding Mission complements and supports the role of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and that of the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. It also emphasizes that the Mission can help to strengthen political dialogue, helping to ensure that any discussions include a human rights approach that contributes to improving the situation in Venezuela.

Venezuelan authorities are undertaking a strategy of apparent, but not genuine, engagement with the Human Rights Council and its procedures, as they did in 2019 and 2020. However, during her oral update in July 2022, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet [reported](#) that while crimes under international law continue being committed, her team is no longer granted access to two Venezuelan detention centers, Helicoide and Boleita, and military detention centers, where detainees are being arbitrarily detained for political reasons.

Venezuelan authorities have also [failed to implement recommendations](#) by various human rights mechanisms. Justice system reforms recently announced by Venezuelan authorities have not meaningfully addressed the serious damage done to judicial independence, and do not ensure full and effective investigations of human rights violations, the groups said.

List of Signatories:

AC Conciencia Ciudadana
AC Instituto Mead de Venezuela
AC Liderazgo y Vision
AC Los Naguaritos
AC Médicos Unidos de Venezuela
AC Trabajando Sin Frontera

Acceso a la Justicia
Acción En Positivo
Acción Solidaria
AlertaVenezuela
Alianza de Familiares de Víctimas en Venezuela (AlfavicVzla)
Amnesty International
Asociación Cauce
Asociación de Liderazgo para la Mujer (ALMA)
Asociación Mujeres Sin Fronteras
Asociación Venezolana para la Hemofilia
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Children Believe
Ciudadanía Con Compromiso AC
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Comisión Episcopal de Acción Social - Peru
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Human Rights Watch
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Instituto Venezolano de Estudios Sociales y Políticos -INVESP
International Center for Transitional Justice
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