



UN Human Rights Council, 58th Session

Item Agenda 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

18 March 2025

Joint Oral Statement

The **International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute**, Lawyers for lawyers, the Law Society of England and Wales, and Lawyers Rights Watch Canada commend the Fact-Finding Mission's work.

An alarming cycle of repression persists in Venezuela, with the crackdown on dissent creating a chilling effect, and thus contributing to the shrinking and closure of civic space.

The justice system has become one of those tools of repression, with human rights defenders, opposition figures, and even lawyers criminalized for exercising fundamental freedoms. As of 5 March 2025, at least 1,060 people remain arbitrarily detained for political reasons. Among them are lawyers Rocío San Miguel, imprisoned since 9 February 2024, and Kennedy Tejada, since 2 August 2024. As most political prisoners, they have both reportedly been subjected to enforced disappearance, torture, cruel treatment, and denial of legal counsel and effective defence. In this context, we are further alarmed by the recently enacted 'anti-NGO law', which intensified government's surveillance and control over civil society organisations.

We call for the immediate and unconditional release of Rocío San Miguel, Kennedy Tejada, and every victim of arbitrary detention in Venezuela, and we call on this Council to respond robustly to the country's worsening crisis.

This statement was delivered by:
Francesca Restifo
Senior Human Rights Lawyer and UN Representative
International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)
Francesca.Restifo@int-bar.org