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A. Introduction

1. Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L), the International Observatory of Lawyers at Risk (OIAD) and Defiende Venezuela (DV) welcome the opportunity to submit written information to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the 4th cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This report is based on the ongoing documentation work carried out by our organisations, which has included extensive interviews with practising lawyers in Venezuela, as well as with Venezuelan legal professionals in exile.
2. This report highlights key concerns regarding Venezuela's compliance with its international human rights obligations to guarantee the right to independent legal representation, as established in the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (hereinafter, the "Basic Principles")ⁱ and other international human rights instruments. In particular, the report focuses on the following issues :
 - i. Background and legal-institutional framework
 - ii. Lack of guarantees for the practice of the legal profession
 - iii. Restrictions on the right to an effective defence
 - iv. Impacts on the legal profession and access to justice
3. Since the last UPR review, the right to an effective defence in Venezuela has suffered a sustained and systematic deterioration. Legal professionals face serious obstacles to practicing their profession independently and free from harassment, intimidation, threats, and other attacks. Many lawyers working on sensitive cases are subject to surveillance, interference, and arbitrary detention. Access to their clients and court records is routinely denied. Taken together, these facts demonstrate a deliberate undermining of the independence of the legal profession and constitute a serious breach of Venezuela's international human rights obligations, including those related to access to justice and the right to a fair trial.
4. During the third cycle of the UPR, Venezuela received twenty recommendationsⁱⁱ related to ceasing the persecution, criminalisation, and imprisonment of human rights defenders,ⁱⁱⁱ conducting thorough and impartial investigations into threats against them, and reviewing restrictive legislation that penalizes their work. Of these recommendations, nine were supported by the Venezuelan State, which indicated that they "have been implemented or are already being implemented."^{iv} However, the information gathered for this report indicates that these recommendations have not been implemented. One recommendation was noted by the State, which considered that its wording prevented ensuring its implementation at that time, and ten did not receive its support, as it maintained that they constituted "a concrete example of the politicized use of human rights to attack a sovereign State."^v Among the accepted or noted recommendations that remain pending implementation are:

31.171 Ensure that human rights defenders are protected from harassment, criminalization and persecution, and adopt policy for the protection of human rights defenders (Slovenia);

31.197 Guarantee freedom of expression and opinion on- and off-line and access to justice for victims of these violations, and ensure that human rights defenders, journalists and humanitarian workers can operate in a safe environment (Italy);

31.210 Guarantee that NGOs, journalists, trade unionists and human rights defenders can carry out their work without risk of persecution, and remove the legal requirement for NGOs to register with the National Office Against Organized Crime (Norway);

5. Venezuela also received six recommendations related to access to justice, judicial independence, and due process guarantees, including those applicable to arbitrarily detained persons.^{vi} Of these, four were accepted by the State, while two were not. However, the information analyzed for this report indicates that the accepted recommendations continue to be ineffectively implemented. These include:

31.163 Guarantee access to justice for all people, ensuring the independence and impartiality of the judiciary in accordance with international norms and standards, as well as ensuring the independence and impartiality of prosecutors in carrying out prompt, effective and transparent investigations of human rights violations, including those perpetrated by security forces, in order to bring perpetrators to justice and offer adequate reparation to victims (Costa Rica);

B. Background and legal-institutional framework

6. The effective protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms requires that everyone have effective access to justice and quality legal assistance. This assistance can only be adequately provided within a justice system where lawyers can exercise their professional functions independently of the government and free from political pressure. This principle is derived from, among other instruments, the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Furthermore, the protection and independence of actors within the justice system are essential to ensuring the proper functioning of the administration of justice and combating impunity. This is a prerequisite for the effectiveness of the right to a fair trial, protected by Article 14 of the ICCPR.
7. To guarantee access to independent legal counsel and the right to an effective defence, the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers establish fundamental guidelines to ensure the protection and independence of lawyers. In particular, they stipulate that States must guarantee that lawyers can perform all their professional functions without intimidation, harassment, or undue interference. This includes, among other obligations, the duty to refrain from identifying lawyers with their clients or the cases they represent, to guarantee them timely access to their clients and the information necessary for the exercise of their legal defence, and to respect the confidentiality of communications between lawyer and client.
8. In Venezuela, the criminalisation of human rights defenders, the progressive erosion of guarantees for the independent practice of law, and restrictions on access to reliable legal representation have been documented for years by international bodies and civil society organisations.^{vii} These concerns are embedded within a legal and institutional framework characterized by the instrumental use of anti-terrorism legislation to persecute human rights defenders,^{viii} as well as by the adoption of regulations that impose restrictive controls on civil society organisations, including lawyers' collectives.^{ix} Among these regulations is the Law on the Oversight, Regulation, Operation, and Financing of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO Law),^x the application of which has

limited these organisations' access to financial resources and affected their capacity to provide legal assistance and conduct strategic litigation. Likewise, civil society organisations have reported that, despite having duly complied with the registration requirements provided for by law, the authorities have not responded to their requests or have prevented the completion of the procedures, placing them in a situation of legal uncertainty that hinders the development of their activities.

9. The repressive escalation reached a critical point after the July 28, 2024 elections, when the authorities reactivated the most severe forms of state repression, including a sharp increase in arbitrary arrests.^{xi} According to the information gathered, those detained were systematically denied access to a lawyer of their own choosing, while lawyers seeking to represent them faced intensified persecution. This context has contributed to the systematization of repressive practices against the legal profession, as well as the suspension of due process guarantees and the right to defence.
10. While the intensity of arbitrary detentions has decreased since 2025, reports continue to indicate the persistence of practices incompatible with due process guarantees. According to testimonies from lawyers in the country, following the US military operation in Venezuela on January 3, 2026, arbitrary detentions, obstacles to the recognition of lawyers of their choosing, restrictions on the practice of law, and the systematic refusal to admit *habeas corpus* petitions continue to be reported. Furthermore, although the authorities have announced the release of several detainees, many remain subject to restrictive precautionary measures and continue to face public stigmatisation through official accusations linking them to terrorist activities.
11. On February 19, 2026, the National Assembly approved the Amnesty Law for Democratic Coexistence (amnesty law).^{xii} The wording of the law has raised concerns due to its limited scope, as it does not fully cover all arbitrarily detained individuals, nor does it provide for reparations or guarantees of non-repetition. There is also concern about the provision for destroying documentation related to the events covered by the amnesty,^{xiii} which could compromise the preservation of relevant evidence regarding potential human rights violations. Furthermore, individuals released under the law were reportedly unable to appoint lawyers of their own choosing, while amnesty applications submitted by privately appointed lawyers were rejected despite complying with the legal requirements. By contrast, only applications submitted by the Public Prosecutor's Office were reportedly granted. Despite these releases, civil society organisations estimate that more than 370 individuals remain arbitrarily detained for political reasons.^{xiv}
12. The devastating earthquakes of June 2026 have exacerbated the already precarious humanitarian situation and existing institutional limitations in Venezuela. In this context, civil society organisations and legal professionals have expressed concern about the impact of the emergency on access to justice, including the difficulties in maintaining communication between detainees and their families and lawyers, the disruptions to the functioning of courts and other bodies within the justice system, and the risk that measures adopted in response to the emergency will result in further restrictions on the right to defence and due process guarantees.

C. Lack of guarantees for the practice of the legal profession

Arbitrary arrests, criminalisation, and criminal prosecution

13. In Venezuela, lawyers continue to be subjected to arbitrary arrests and criminal proceedings as retaliation for the legitimate exercise of their profession, for representing

people considered to be opponents of the Government, or for expressing critical opinions.

14. The documented cases reveal a consistent pattern of criminalisation. Arrests are often carried out without a warrant and are followed by periods of enforced disappearance or incommunicado detention, during which the authorities withhold information about the detainee's whereabouts. Subsequently, the lawyers are charged with crimes such as terrorism, conspiracy, criminal association, or treason, based on vague or insufficiently substantiated accusations. Furthermore, the proceedings are marked by repeated violations of due process guarantees, including the denial of the right to appoint lawyers of their choosing, and judicial decisions lacking sufficient justification.
15. The following cases illustrate this pattern of persecution. Although the individuals mentioned have been released from prison, several of them remain subject to precautionary measures and their criminal proceedings remain open, which maintains an intimidating effect on them and on the independent practice of law.
 - i. **Eduardo Torres**, a lawyer and member of the Venezuelan Program for Education-Action in Human Rights (PROVEA), a beneficiary of precautionary measures issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR),^{xv} was arrested in May 2025 in Caracas while defending people detained for political reasons. He was initially subjected to enforced disappearance and subsequently held incommunicado, without regular access to family or lawyers of his choosing. He was accused of terrorism and treason for his participation in human rights training activities. After more than 267 days of detention, he was released and the charges against him were dismissed in accordance with the Amnesty Law, although his passport remains invalidated.
 - ii. **Emilio Negrin**, a lawyer and trade unionist, has been the target of acts of intimidation and harassment documented repeatedly by international human rights protection mechanisms.^{xvi} He was arrested in July 2022^{xvii} without a warrant, accused of conspiracy and criminal association, after taking on the defence of a group of union leaders. He was subsequently included as a defendant in the same case in which he was acting as defence counsel, using as alleged incriminating evidence the documentation he himself had submitted in the course of his legal representation. He was sentenced to sixteen years in prison by a ruling that lacked individualised justification and was upheld on appeal without a substantive analysis of the grievances raised. He remained incarcerated for two years and eight months until his release as part of a prisoner exchange with the United States in 2023. Due to the persistence of the criminal proceedings and the precautionary measures against him, he was forced to leave the country.
 - iii. **Kennedy Tejeda**, a lawyer and member of Foro Penal, was arbitrarily detained in August 2024 after going to the Montalbán Rural Command in Carabobo state to check on the situation of people detained during the protests and offer them free legal assistance. He was subsequently transferred between different detention centres and presented at a collective virtual hearing, where he was charged with terrorism-related offences without any individualisation of his alleged conduct or sufficient evidence to support the accusation. He was also denied the right to legal counsel of his choosing. After being arbitrarily deprived of his liberty for nearly eighteen months, he was released in January 2026.

- iv. **Rocío San Miguel**, a lawyer and president of the organisation Citizen Control for Security, Defence, and the National Armed Forces, was arbitrarily detained on February 9, 2024, by agents of the Venezuelan intelligence service. She was charged with treason, conspiracy, terrorism, and other offences, as part of an alleged conspiracy against the President of the Republic. During her detention, she was prevented from appointing a lawyer of her choosing and was also denied a meeting with the public defender assigned to her, seriously violating her right to a defence and a fair trial. She remained in detention from February 2024 to January 2026.

Torture and other cruel treatment or punishment

16. Lawyers who have been deprived of their liberty have reported being subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment during their detention. The testimonies received describe the use of prolonged isolation, physical and psychological punishment, restrictions on access to drinking water and adequate food, overcrowding, lack of ventilation, and deliberate denial of medical care, including the refusal to provide treatment for illnesses contracted as a result of these unsanitary conditions. Collective reprisals against detainees have also been documented in response to complaints made by their families regarding prison conditions.
17. Several lawyers have also reported being subjected to coercion during their detention in order to obtain information about other legal professionals and incriminate them. Reported practices include threats, physical assaults, transfers to detention centres with harsher conditions, forced administration of substances, and pressure to record self-incriminating statements or implicate third parties, including claims that their professional activities were funded by opposition groups or foreign agents.

Surveillance, harassment and defamation

18. Lawyers representing political prisoners, human rights defenders, and those involved in other high-profile cases continue to be subjected to surveillance, harassment, and intimidation in retaliation for their professional work. Information received documents a pattern that includes physical surveillance—using vehicles without license plates or allegedly belonging to security agencies—digital surveillance, wiretapping, unauthorized access to email accounts and cloud-based information, as well as anonymous threats and acts of intimidation. Furthermore, lawyers interviewed reported recurring threats of arrest from officials within the justice system, including judges, prosecutors, and public defenders. In several cases, these practices have preceded the opening of criminal investigations or arbitrary detentions.
19. At the same time, a pattern of public stigmatisation persists against lawyers and organisations providing legal assistance in human rights cases. High-ranking state officials have made public statements labelling them as conspirators, foreign agents, or collaborators of opposition groups, associating them with the causes they represent and exposing them to a greater risk of reprisals. In some cases, these smear campaigns have targeted entire legal aid organisations, such as Foro Penal, with the aim of discrediting their work and discouraging legal representation for victims of human rights violations.^{xviii}
20. Lawyers have also reported arbitrary restrictions on their freedom of movement. They have documented instances of being prevented from leaving the country, being detained

at airports, and having their passports cancelled or blocked through immigration alerts issued by security agencies, even when the individuals affected were not subject to court-ordered travel bans or facing criminal charges. These measures have continued to affect even lawyers who have been released from prison, limiting their freedom of movement, hindering their professional practice, and, in some cases, forcing them to leave the country.

- i. **Olnar Ortiz**, lawyer, Baré indigenous leader and coordinator of Indigenous Peoples at Foro Penal, who is also a beneficiary of precautionary measures by the IACHR,^{xix} has suffered repeated reprisals in connection with his legal work. On July 28, 2024, he provided legal support at polling stations and was subsequently followed by officials from the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) and the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM). Furthermore, his participation before international human rights mechanisms has been met with repeated acts of intimidation and surveillance.^{xx} These reprisals forced him to leave the country due to the risks to his safety, and he currently remains in exile.
- ii. **Iván de Jesús Toro Dugarte**, a lawyer and former prosecutor with the Public Prosecutor's Office, has denounced recurring threats of arrest and obstacles to freely practicing law due to his critical stances and his involvement in representing victims of human rights violations. He also reported that, during a court hearing held in April 2022, a prosecutor publicly questioned his legitimacy to act as a defence attorney because of his status as a former Public Prosecutor official, claiming, without legal basis, that his actions constituted a crime. These statements shifted the focus of the proceedings toward the criminalisation of the lawyer himself and constituted an act of intimidation aimed at obstructing the independent exercise of his legal defence.

Forced exile

21. As a result of threats, acts of harassment, the risk of arbitrary detention, and the lack of guarantees for access to a fair trial, lawyers have been forced to leave Venezuela. This forced exile not only affects their individual rights but also weakens the independence of the legal profession and reduces the availability of independent legal representation for victims of human rights violations in the country.
22. In exile, lawyers face significant obstacles to resuming their practice. Among these are the difficulties in obtaining and legalising the documentation necessary for the recognition of their professional degrees, due to a lack of effective access to the procedures and certifications issued by Venezuelan authorities. This situation significantly limits their employment opportunities and contributes to the precariousness of their living conditions. Added to this are the difficulties arising from prolonged immigration and international protection procedures, as well as the uncertainty regarding the regularisation of their legal status in host countries.
23. Likewise, some lawyers have reported that acts of harassment persist even after their exile, extending to their relatives who remain in Venezuela.
 - i. In the case of **Omar Antonio Mendoza Gil**,^{xxi} SEBIN agents reportedly continued to monitor his home and office after his exile. After Mr. Mendoza posted a video

on his social media accounts regarding the 2024 electoral process, officials went to his residence to verify if he had returned to the country, with the intention of arresting him. His brother has also been subjected to surveillance and threats by SEBIN officials.

Interference in professional associations and weakening of self-regulation in the legal profession

24. Bar associations have been progressively weakened in the context of the Venezuelan institutional crisis. Lawyers interviewed indicated that the lack of regular internal elections—which in some associations has been ongoing for more than twenty years—along with allegations of interference by state bodies in their operations, has affected their legitimacy, autonomy, and ability to effectively represent the interests of the profession. These allegations include reports of interventions by the Supreme Court of Justice in the boards of directors.^{xxii}
25. Although the bar associations formally retain autonomy in carrying out their functions, several professionals consulted stated that institutional pressures and fear of reprisals have significantly limited their ability to speak out publicly on cases of persecution, criminalisation, or attacks against lawyers.
26. The information received also reflects a progressive weakening of the profession's self-regulation mechanisms regarding disciplinary processes. While the legal system provides for disciplinary procedures to be carried out by the bar association's governing bodies, lawyers consulted indicated that these mechanisms are, in practice, ineffective or lack independence. Furthermore, complaints have been received about the use of disciplinary procedures for retaliatory purposes against critical or independent lawyers, without respect for due process guarantees or the rules governing such procedures. Finally, an increasing intervention by judicial bodies in matters traditionally attributed to the self-regulation of the legal profession has been described. In particular, the Supreme Court of Justice has assumed disciplinary powers over lawyers, reducing the capacity of these bodies to perform their functions independently.

D. Restrictions on the right to an effective defence

Violation of the right to have the assistance of a lawyer of one's choice

27. One of the most serious violations of the right to an effective defence and a fair trial that persists in Venezuela is the obstruction of the right of detainees to appoint a lawyer of their choosing. Although the Venezuelan legal framework does not establish formalities for the appointment of private defence attorneys and even allows for such appointments to be made by family members, in practice, administrative obstacles have been imposed that hinder or prevent the effective exercise of this right. Since 2024, it has been documented that authorities require certain conditions for accepting the appointment of lawyers of their choosing, including the joint signature of the detainee and the official in charge of the police station or detention centre. However, lawyers do not have access to their clients during detention, nor can they meet with them to obtain this authorisation. In practice, this requirement has been used to prevent the appointment of private lawyers.
28. This situation continues to affect individuals released on bail whose legal proceedings remain open. Lawyers consulted reported that, upon reappearing in court since January 2026, some of these individuals have attempted to appoint lawyers of their choosing to

continue their defence, but have encountered obstacles preventing them from formalizing such representation.

29. As a result, individuals subjected to politically motivated criminal prosecution are frequently represented by court-appointed public defenders, rather than by lawyers of their own choosing. These public defenders face limitations in providing an effective defence, including restrictions on filing appeals, initiating legal proceedings, or taking procedural steps necessary to protect the rights of their clients.

Denial of access to clients and case-related materials

30. Lawyers have denounced administrative and de facto obstacles that limit their ability to defend their clients. These include arbitrary blocking of their profiles in the system of the Lawyers' Social Security Institute, a platform necessary for carrying out procedures related to professional practice and the management of legal proceedings. These administrative restrictions can be selectively used to prevent certain lawyers from effectively performing their duties.
31. Furthermore, the use of administrative procedures as a means of pressure or intimidation has also been documented. Reported practices include the unjustified return of documents at notary offices, the creation of administrative errors, and artificial delays in procedures, particularly targeting lawyers perceived as critical of the government. For example, the notarisation of *affidavits* for testimonies or expert opinions before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights must be processed through the online system of the Autonomous Service of Registries and Notaries (SAREN). According to reports, these requests often remain under review indefinitely or are rejected without justification, hindering the presentation of evidence before the court.
32. In cases involving individuals detained for political reasons, lawyers have faced systematic restrictions on accessing their clients and adequately participating in legal proceedings. During the arrests following the January 2024 protests, defence lawyers reported waiting for days at specialised terrorism courts for their clients to appear. In several instances, detainees were transferred to detention centres to prevent contact with lawyers, and hearings were subsequently held at night or in the early morning without effective notification to the lawyers of choice.
33. Lawyers involved in politically sensitive cases have repeatedly reported that access to court files is restricted to the moments immediately preceding hearings, in some cases just minutes before they begin. These lawyers have also reported acts of intimidation during their work, including being barred from court and expelled from court by security officials, restrictions on access to detention centres, recording of their communications or visits with clients, inspections of their belongings, review of working documents, and the extraction or copying of information from electronic devices. These practices violate attorney-client confidentiality and severely impair the ability to prepare an adequate defence.

Structural corruption and lack of independence of the justice system

34. The restrictions on the practice of law described above are exacerbated by the persistent lack of independence and impartiality and by repeated allegations of corruption within the justice system. In certain cases, procedural decisions may be influenced by corrupt

practices and undue pressure. Lawyers consulted reported the existence of demands for illicit payments to facilitate legal proceedings or influence decisions regarding the release of detainees, as well as pressure aimed at inducing defendants to plead guilty, especially when they lack the financial resources to meet such demands. Interviewed lawyers indicated that, in practice, those who do not participate in informal networks of influence or refuse to make improper payments face serious obstacles in pursuing judicial or administrative actions, thus jeopardizing access to justice and the right to effective judicial protection.

35. One of the lawyers interviewed summarized this situation as follows: *"Legal technique is no longer the determining factor; decisions often depend on personal relationships and corrupt practices. As a lawyer, one ends up facing a system that hinders the independent practice of the profession and the effective representation of clients."*
36. Furthermore, lawyers interviewed reported that, since 2024, various criminal courts have systematically refused to admit *habeas corpus* petitions in cases involving individuals detained for political reasons, citing orders from higher authorities. According to the information received, these refusals are often accompanied by a lack of information regarding the whereabouts of the detainees, depriving them of one of the main legal safeguards against arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and torture.

E. Impacts on the legal profession and access to justice

37. The practices described in this report, coupled with persistent impunity for violations committed against lawyers, have created an increasingly hostile environment for the independent practice of law in Venezuela. While lawyers representing politically detained individuals, human rights defenders, and civil society organisations face greater risks, the impact extends to the entire legal profession. Lawyers interviewed indicated that those who are not part of networks of influence or corruption encounter increasing obstacles to practicing law, which has contributed to a widespread climate of insecurity and intimidation.
38. This context has had a marked chilling effect on the practice of law. The threat of arbitrary arrests, reprisals, surveillance, harassment, and criminal prosecution, coupled with repeated violations of due process and the lack of independence of the justice system, has fostered self-censorship among legal professionals. As a result, many lawyers have chosen not to take on certain cases—especially those related to human rights or people persecuted for political reasons—refrain from reporting irregularities, or abandon the practice of law altogether. Others have been forced into exile or into activities outside the legal profession to protect their safety and well-being.
39. These practices directly affect the population's access to justice. The reduction in the number of lawyers willing or able to take on sensitive cases, coupled with restrictions on appointing lawyers of their choosing and obstacles to independent legal representation, limits the availability of effective legal assistance for victims of human rights violations and weakens due process guarantees.
40. Women lawyers, particularly those representing victims of gender-based violence or handling litigation related to women's rights, face distinct forms of discrimination and harassment. In addition to the forms of harassment described in this report, several

professionals reported practices of discrediting, infantilising, and ridiculing them by judicial and security officials, as well as additional obstacles in carrying out procedural and administrative actions. According to the information received, the risk increases when their professional activities affect interests linked to corruption networks or challenge actors with the capacity for retaliation.

i. The case of the lawyer and director of the 100% Estrógeno organisation, **Venus Faddul** illustrates this pattern: in addition to being subjected to physical and digital surveillance and acts of intimidation, she reported threats against her organisation after making visible a case of sexual violence and homicide of great public impact, as well as acts of harassment aimed at hindering the exercise of her professional work.

F. Recommendations

Our organisations urge the United Nations Member States to formulate the following recommendations to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela during its fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review:

- Refrain from taking any action that may constitute harassment, persecution or undue interference in the exercise of the legal profession, including the arrest or criminal prosecution of lawyers for illegitimate reasons, such as the expression of critical opinions or the nature of the case in which they are professionally involved.
- Take immediate steps to ensure that lawyers have full access to their clients and restore and ensure the absolute confidentiality of communications between lawyers and clients.
- Take immediate steps to ensure due process and the right to a fair trial, including respect for the right of every person to freely choose and be assisted by a lawyer of their choosing, as well as full and timely access for lawyers to court records, without undue delays or restrictions, so that they can provide effective legal assistance to their clients, and refrain from any action that limits their ability to prepare an adequate defence.
- Take effective measures to ensure that threats, acts of harassment and other violations committed against lawyers are effectively investigated and that those responsible are brought to justice.
- Immediately repeal laws that hinder the protection of human rights and the rule of law by persecuting or stigmatising individuals and organisations, including lawyers, legal aid organisations and civil society organisations, or reform them to ensure their full compliance with international human rights standards.
- Guarantee the effective, uniform and non-discriminatory application of the 2026 Amnesty Law by adopting the necessary legislative, administrative and judicial measures, ensuring the comprehensive reparation of the beneficiaries and that their access respects the principles of equality of the parties, equality of arms and due process, avoiding selective or discriminatory practices in its granting.

ⁱ The United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers provide a concise statement of international standards concerning the fundamental aspects of the right to independent legal representation. These Principles were adopted by consensus during the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders,

held in Havana, Cuba, on 7 September 1990. Subsequently, the United Nations General Assembly welcomed the Basic Principles in its resolution on "Human Rights in the Administration of Justice," adopted without a vote on 18 December 1990, both in the Third Committee and in plenary session of the General Assembly.

ⁱⁱ Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 11 April 2022, [A/HRC/50/8](#). Recommendations concerning the protection of human defenders include: 31.124, 31.170, 31.171, 31.172, 31.174, 31.175, 31.178, 31.181, 31.188, 31.185, 31.186, 31.189, 31.197, 31.200, 31.201, 31.205, 31.206, 31.212, 31.210 and 31.213.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers has stated that: "When acting on behalf of their clients in defence of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, lawyers can also be considered human rights defenders." See: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, 22 August 2016, [A/71/348](#), para. 35.

^{iv} Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, 1 June 2022, [A/HRC/50/8/Add.1](#)
^vIdem.

^{vi} Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 11 April 2022, [A/HRC/50/8](#). Recommendations relating to these issues include: 31.138, 31.149, 31.159, 31.160, 31.162 and 31.163.

^{vii} Lawyers for Lawyers and International Bar Association Human Rights Institute, [Joint Submission for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela](#), February 2022; Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 16 June 2021, [A/HRC/47/55](#), para. 33.

^{viii} International Commission of Jurists, [The use of anti-terrorism courts to suppress dissent in Venezuela](#), February 2026.

^{ix} Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, [IACHR and RELE express concern over bill that limits citizen participation in Venezuela](#), March 6, 2023; Amnesty International, [Venezuela: Alarming Escalation of Persecution Against Critical and Dissident Voices](#), April 15, 2024; Acceso a la Justicia, Sub-legal [Norms Expand Controls on NGOs in Venezuela](#), September 25, 2025.

^x Official Gazette of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, [No. 6.855 Extraordinary](#), November 15, 2024.

^{xi} Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, September 17, 2024, [A/HRC/57/57](#).

^{xii} Official Gazette of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, [No. 6.990 Extraordinary](#), February 19, 2026.

^{xiii} Article 14 of the law provides: "The administrative, police or military bodies and entities in which records or background information on persons benefiting from the amnesty subject to this Law are kept, must eliminate from their files the records and background information related to them, ex officio or at the request of the Public Ministry, the interested person or their legal representative."

^{xiv} Foro Penal, [Repression in figures](#), figures as of July 13, 2026.

^{xv} IACHR, Precautionary Measures No. 438-15 Members of the Venezuelan Program of Education-Action in Human Rights (PROVEA) regarding Venezuela, April 29, 2024, [Resolution 26/2024](#).

^{xvi} Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, 13 September 2022, [AL VEN \(4.2022\)](#).

^{xvii} Human Rights Council, Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, The State Apparatus, Its Mechanisms of Repression and Restrictions on Civic and Democratic Space, 18 September 2023, [A/HRC/54/CRP.8](#), paras. 601-606.

^{xviii} IACHR, Extension, modification, monitoring and lifting, Identified members of the organisation "Foro Penal", Venezuela MC 143-13, 181-19, [Resolution No. 92/24](#), para. 45.

^{xix}Idem.

^{xx} Human Rights Council, Report of the Secretary-General, Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights, 9 September 2025, [A/HRC/60/62](#), paras. 105 and 155.

^{xxi} OIAD, [Lawyer Omar Antonio Mendoza Gil forced to leave the country after suffering threats, harassment and attempts at criminalization](#), February 13, 2025.

^{xxii} Acceso a la Justicia, [Intervention in the election of the Bar Association of the state of Carabobo and appointment of an ad hoc board of directors](#), November 22, 2023; Acceso a la Justicia, ["New" Electoral Chamber debuts with the same jurisprudence on elections in Bar Associations](#), May 30, 2022; Acceso a la Justicia, [The takeover of power in the bar associations in Venezuela \(2000-2020\)](#), July 24, 2022.