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| **Deadline extended** / AMR 53/7602/2024 Venezuela - Date: 18 January 2024  |
| FURTHER INFORMATION | URGENT ACTION | FI UA 008/2023-1 |
| NGOs in Venezuela at critical risk |
| VENEZUELA |

On January 9, 2024, the National Assembly resumed consideration of a bill that seeks to restrict and potentially criminalize and close down non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in Venezuela. This bill passed a preliminary vote on January 24, 2023, and its final passage into law may be imminent. If the bill is approved, all NGOs will have to comply with abusive measures or face criminal prosecution. These measures would violate the right to freedom of association, the right to privacy and others, putting NGOs and their beneficiaries at serious risk of criminal prosecution and reprisals. We emphatically urge the National Assembly to immediately put a stop to this bill and cease all attacks on civil society.

The current bill, entitled Law on the Control, Regularization, Activities and Financing of Non-Governmental and Related Organizations, is another attempt to restrict and control civil society in Venezuela. The law’s strict rules would require NGOs to submit donor lists and lists of their members and staff and their assets, as well as to register their financial transactions. Civil society organizations that fail to comply with registration requirements could be closed down and possibly face criminal prosecution. On January 24, 2023, this bill was considered in a first reading and was put to a vote in the National Assembly. It cleared the pre-liminary vote, and the bill will continue its path through the legislature unless the authorities halt its advance.

Previous attempts to control and attack civil society in Venezuela include Administrative Regulation No. 001-2021 of 2021 and the so-called International Cooperation Law of 2022. Amnesty International publicly condemned both initiatives, issuing Urgent Action 46/21 in response to the former and sending an open letter signed by more than 500 civil society organizations to Nicolás Maduro in response to the latter. The Venezuelan government amended Administrative Regulation No. 001 by issuing new regulations that repealed its most troubling elements, including the requirement to disclose NGO beneficiaries, the one-month deadline for submitting the information required by the regulation, and potential criminal liability in case of non-compliance. The National Assembly ultimately never de-liberated or voted on the International Cooperation Law.

Venezuelan human rights defenders are at constant risk of harassment, attacks and detention. Javier Tarazona, a human rights defender, prisoner of conscience and director of the NGO Fundaredes, continues to be detained and prosecuted for defending human rights. We call for his immediate and unconditional release.

Nicolás Maduro’s government has continually harassed, persecuted and censored activists and civil society organizations that are working to protect the rights of Venezuelans in the midst of a complex humanitarian emergency and profound human rights crisis that is pushing an unprecedented number of people to flee in search of safety and protection. As of December 2022, more than 7.1 million people had fled the country.

Since 2020, three reports by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have thoroughly documented hundreds of cases of extrajudicial executions; enforced disappearances; arbitrary detentions; and torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in the country since 2014. The reports have also exposed how the justice system serves as an instrument of the government's policy of repression, and they concluded that these grave human rights violations may constitute crimes against humanity.

TAKE ACTION

* Write an appeal in your own words or use the **model letter** on **page 2**.
* Please take action before **9 May** (= deadline extended)2024.
* Preferred language: **Spanish\***. You can also write in your own language.
* **INFO POSTAGE**: Post delivery is possible to almost all countries. Please check at the Swiss Post whether letters are currently being delivered to the destination country.
If not, please send by email, fax or social media and/or via the embassy with the request for forwarding to the named person. Thank you !

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| APPEALS TO | COPIES TO |
| President of National AssemblyJorge RodriguezEsqs. Monjas a San Francisco, Hemiciclo. Palacio Federal LegislativoCarmelitas, Av Sur 2.Caracas, Distrito Capital, Venezuela**Twitter: @jorgepsuv****Facebook:** [**www.facebook.com/jorgerpsuv**](http://www.facebook.com/jorgerpsuv)⮡ *The best way to reach the target, preferably Twitter or Facebook***Copie:**UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker TurkTwitter: @volker\_turk | Botschaft der Bolivarischen Republik VenezuelaWaldeggstrasse 47, Postfach 2373097 LiebefeldFax: 031 371 64 69E-Mail: embajada@embavenez-suiza.ch |
| ⭢ \***Spanish model letter and Social media guidance** see online: [amnesty.ch](https://www.amnesty.ch) 🔍**UA 008/23** or **AMR 53/7602/2024** |

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President of National Assembly

Jorge Rodriguez

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Dear Jorge Rodríguez,

**It is deeply concerning that the Venezuelan National Assembly is again moving forward with the proposed Law on the Control, Regularization, Activity and Financing of Non-Governmental and Related Organizations against NGOs operating in the country**.

This bill is yet another attempt to control, restrict and potentially criminally prosecute non-governmental organizations that make an indispensable contribution to Venezuelan society. The threat posed by this attempt is ma-de even more serious by the backdrop of possible presidential elections this year.

If passed, this law would violate international human rights norms and standards, and the bill severely threatens the work of NGOs, humanitarian organizations and other members of Venezuelan civil society. It constitutes a shameful effort to curtail their vital work to support the country’s most vulnerable people.

**We emphatically reiterate our call for the National Assembly to immediately drop this bill and ensure an end to all efforts to attack, control, prosecute or censor civil society organizations that are working to protect the rights of all people in Venezuela, particularly those most in need.**

Sincerely,

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**Copie**

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