



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Venezuela - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Tuesday 6 June 2017

Information on current violent repression and/or persecution of political opponents of the government including: by the police and/or military and/or a civilian militia; if it is politically motivated against people of a particular political group who are opposed to the government

A report issued in June 2017 by *Deutsche Welle* points out that:

“Almost 100 more people have been injured in clashes with police. As Venezuela's 66th day of protest came to an end, the government repeated its pledge of a constitutional referendum. Leaders of the opposition alliance Democratic Unity Roundtable said some 100 demonstrators had been injured on Monday. Lawmaker Juan Requesens, who was hurt along with his colleague Miguel Pizarro, said police officers teargassed, beat and even robbed demonstrators and journalists on Monday. Opposition leader Henrique Capriles even alleged that authorities had used live fire to disperse protesters. The Public Ministry remained silent on the injuries, except to announce without details that three members of the security forces had been hurt during demonstrations in Caracas on Monday. Argentina and neighboring Colombia condemned the attacks on legislators, protesters and the press” (Deutsche Welle (6 June 2017) *More injuries in Venezuela as regime pushes referendum*).

In June 2017 *Reuters* states:

“Maduro foes are in their third month of protests to demand general elections, freedom for jailed activists, foreign humanitarian aid and autonomy for the opposition-controlled National Assembly. The government calls the protesters violent coup-mongers, supported by the United States, and security forces have been quick to snuff out rallies in recent days” (Reuters (5 June 2017) *Venezuela opposition sit-in blocked, lawmaker says pushed in manhole*).

A document published in June 2017 by the *Guardian* points out that:

“A Venezuelan judge has been shot and killed as he approached a street barricade in Caracas, in an attack that has prompted fears of growing lawlessness as the country enters its third month of political unrest. Nelson Moncada, 37, was shot several times and then robbed of his belongings in a Caracas district that has been the frequent site of clashes between anti-government protesters and security forces. His murder brings to 61 the number of deaths associated with protests that erupted on 1 May. Victims have included supporters on both sides, bystanders and members of the security forces” (Guardian (2 June 2017) *Venezuelan judge murdered as street violence spirals amid political unrest*).

A report published in June 2017 by *Amnesty International* notes that:

“The increased deployment of military forces to repress protests, the rise in excessive use of force against protesters and others, and the use of military courts to try to silence dissenting voices illustrates a terrifying shift of the Venezuelan authorities' approach to the human rights crisis wreaking havoc across the country,

Amnesty International said after at least 60 people were killed in protests in the past 60 days” (Amnesty International (2 June 2017) *Venezuela: Authorities' militarization of crisis escalates violence and promotes fear*).

This report also states:

“Over recent weeks, security forces have used undue force to prevent peaceful demonstrations from taking place. Individuals living in residential areas, and not taking part in demonstrations, have also reported being victims of indiscriminate tear gas attacks” (ibid).

It is also pointed out in this document that:

“The situation has been particularly acute in the states of Carabobo, Lara, Barinas and the border state of Táchira where more than 600 soldiers have been deployed to respond to peaceful demonstrations” (ibid).

A report issued by *Reuters* in June 2017 notes that:

“Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro pledged on Thursday to hold a referendum on a new constitution he has proposed to try and quell two months of anti-government unrest that has killed at least 62 people” (Reuters (1 June 2017) *Venezuela's Maduro vows referendum, death toll from unrest hits 62*).

This document also notes that:

“Victims from two months of unrest have included supporters on both sides, bystanders and members of the security forces” (ibid).

A report issued in May 2017 by the *Washington Post* states:

“Venezuelan security forces and the pro-government motorcycle gangs known as “colectivos” have met the unrest with escalating force, and in some cases, lethal gunfire, making matters worse. At least 55 people have been killed in the past seven weeks, including protesters, members of the security forces and bystanders caught in the fray. About 1,000 have been injured, according to the latest tally by authorities, and 346 businesses have been looted or burned” (Washington Post (24 May 2017) *Venezuela is sliding into anarchy*).

In May 2017 the *Inter-American Commission on Human Rights* states that:

“According to information presented publicly by the Attorney General of Venezuela, records of the Public Prosecutor's Office indicate that between April 6 and May 24, 55 people died in acts of violence, 52 of them civilians and 3 officers. The Public Prosecutor's Office also reported that more than 1,000 people have been injured, including 771 civilians and 229 officers. It indicated that 346 properties had been damaged during the acts of violence. The Attorney General reported that there are 1,465 investigations underway, that 2,674 people have been charged with different criminal offenses, and that 284 of these individuals are being held in custody. Civil society organizations and government spokespersons, for their part, say that the violence in the context of the demonstrations has left 60 people dead, including six adolescents, and said that 2,815 demonstrators were arrested between April 1 and May 24, 2017, and 1,240 of them are still being detained” (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (26 May 2017) *IACHR Deeply Concerned about the*

Worsening Violence in Venezuela and the Use of Military Courts to Prosecute Civilians).

A report released by the *International Crisis Group* in May 2017 states that::

“...in response to almost daily demonstrations by the MUD, security forces have clearly been given orders to intensify the repression. By 10 May, six weeks of violence had killed 39 people, according to the PROVEA human rights organisation. At least two demonstrators have been killed and many more injured by riot squads repeatedly firing tear-gas grenades directly into crowds. Police use them to disperse static crowds, often firing in front of and behind protesters, trapping them. Retreating protesters are pursued with volleys of tear gas, which is now frequently being fired into residential or commercial premises, and has even affected schoolchildren and hospital patients. Shotguns firing plastic pellets are also often used at almost point-blank range, and demonstrators caught alone can expect to be severely beaten. Over seven hundred injuries are reported, along with 2,000 arrests, according to legal aid group Foro Penal. Once again, civilian parapolice gangs, armed with pistols, have been deployed to intimidate protesters, some of whom have died of gunshot wounds, often to the head” (International Crisis Group (11 May 2017) *Venezuela: A Blueprint for Strife*).

References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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