

**29 NATIONS ISSUE JOINT STATEMENT IN UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN VENEZUELA**

*Expresses concern over the repeated reports of repression of opposition voices in the country and calls for the release of all political prisoners*

Geneva – Today, the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay delivered a joint statement on the human rights situation in Venezuela to the United Nations Human Rights Council on behalf of the Governments of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Paraguay, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States of America.

In the statement, the countries “reiterate [their] commitment to assist, within the framework of International Law, to both strengthening the rule of law and ensuring Venezuelans fully enjoy their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.” They also, “share the concerns presented by the High Commissioner about the grave and repeated reports of repression of the voices of the opposition and members of the Venezuelan civil society, those of arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and use of excessive force against peaceful protesters and journalists; as [they] request the early release of persons arrested for political reasons.”

This statement is the first time that Governments around the world have come together to issue a declaration on human rights in Venezuela at the United Nations. It comes at a time when the human rights situation in Venezuela is continuously deteriorating. A struggling economy has led to shortages of food, medicine, and other staples, and the rate of violent crime is the highest in the world. The Government has responded to all dissent with heavy-handed repression. Since 2014, there have been 6,489 arbitrary detentions in the country. Currently, there are 96 political prisoners in the country, including opposition leaders Leopoldo López, Daniel Ceballos, and Antonio Ledezma. The Venezuelan opposition has launched an effort, supported by the Venezuelan people, to ensure the constitutional right to hold a recall referendum on the presidency, but has been repeatedly obstructed by the Government. In response, almost a million people have taken to the streets of Venezuela to protest this month. More protests are scheduled in the coming weeks to pressure the Government to respect the country’s constitution and formally hold the recall referendum.

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*The following Joint Statement on Venezuela was delivered by Ambassador Oscar Cabello Sarubbi, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, on behalf of 29 nations at the 33rd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.*

**JOINT STATEMENT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA**

33rd Session of the Human Rights Council  
Item 10 – September 29th, 2016

As Delivered by Ambassador Oscar Cabello Sarubbi  
Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay:

Thank you Mr. President, I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the delegations of 28 countries and my own, the Republic of Paraguay,

1. At the beginning of the session, the High Commissioner expressed his willingness to provide technical assistance and cooperation to help improving the human rights situation in Venezuela. In that regard, we reiterate our commitment to assist, within the framework of International Law, to both strengthening the rule of law and ensuring Venezuelans fully enjoy their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.
2. We underscore our commitment to democracy and human rights, we condemn violence regardless of its origin, and reiterate our support for any efforts of understanding among all parties through a timely and effective dialogue, either from a direct way or through facilitators, that help resolve the urgent needs of the people of Venezuela; to preserve peace and safety, to ensure the full respect of human rights, due process, the separation of powers and the consolidation of a representative democracy.
3. We welcome the disposition expressed by the Holy See to contribute in facilitating the political dialogue and we call upon all parties to consider this offering and launch a national dialogue, both inclusive and in good faith, that will allow to identify long-lasting solutions in an environment of peace and mutual respect, encouraging all parties to continue observing peaceful ways of expression.
4. Finally, we also share the concerns presented by the High Commissioner about the grave and repeated reports of repression of the voices of the opposition and members of the Venezuelan civil society, those of arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and use of excessive force against peaceful protesters and journalists; as we request the early release of persons arrested for political reasons.

List of Countries Supporting the Statement: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Paraguay, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America.

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