

Press Releases: Non-Violence and Accountability During Protests in Venezuela

Press Statement
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Venezuela has been witness in recent weeks to ongoing social protests, ever since the Supreme Court demonstrated its lack of independence from the Executive Branch through a continuing series of court decisions against the members of the freely-elected National Assembly.

Thus far, six demonstrators have been killed, with hundreds arrested. There have been credible accounts of use of torture by SEBIN and CICPC. More demonstrations are called for the coming days, in particular for Wednesday, April 19.

We call again upon the Government of Venezuela to fulfill the commitments it made as part of the Vatican-backed Dialogue process last Fall: to hold prompt elections; to respect the constitution and the National Assembly; to provide for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners; and, to tend to the humanitarian needs of the Venezuelan people.

We echo the joint call made April 17 by 11 Latin American governments on the government of Venezuela to immediately take these steps to permit a prompt solution to the grave crisis affecting all Venezuelans, and increasingly, the region.

We again urge demonstrators to express themselves non-violently. We deplore the use of violence against unarmed protestors. In particular, we deplore the use of *colectivos* – armed bands under the political control of PSUV party leaders – to repress protestors while the security forces responsible for maintaining public order idly stand by.

We also again remind the public forces – members of the Police, the Army and the National Guard – as well as members of the judiciary, of their legal and constitutional responsibilities to protect, not prevent, peaceful demonstrations.

Those responsible for the criminal repression of peaceful democratic activity, for the undermining of democratic institutions and practices, and for gross violations of human rights, will be held individually accountable for their actions by the Venezuelan people and their institutions, as well as by the international community.

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