

United campaign: against repression in Venezuela!

written by Venezuelans Against Repression | September 3, 2024



Image: Campaña unitaria

On 29 July, after the announcement of the election results that declared President Nicolás Maduro victorious, a wave of protests broke out in the *barrios* and poor neighborhoods of Caracas and many other cities across the country. Convinced that electoral fraud had taken place – given the facts surrounding the announcement, and especially the untimely official proclamation of the ‘winner’ a few hours later, without finalizing the vote count, without audits or evidence of any kind – thousands took to the streets to express their rejection.

The overwhelming popular protest was quelled by a brutally repressive response. From the afternoon of Monday 29 onwards, the government imposed its order. Squads of state security forces (police and parts of the Armed Forces, such as the National Guard) together with armed paramilitary groups, violently repressed the demonstrations. Their occupation of the gates to the neighborhoods and innumerable house raids have completed the offensive.

Twenty-five people were killed between Monday 29 and Tuesday 30 July, according to human rights organizations and the Attorney General’s Office itself. There are around 2,200 prisoners according to President Maduro, or 1,406 according to non-governmental organizations. 95 percent of those imprisoned are from poor neighborhoods, as are almost all the fatalities. This repression is being unloaded on the working class in particular. The prisoners include 117 teenagers, 185 women, 17 people with disabilities and 14 indigenous people. They face possible sentences ranging from 25 to 30 years in prison under charges of alleged ‘terrorism’ and 10 to 20 years in prison if charged with ‘incitement to hatred’.

We, the undersigned, intend to carry out a national and international campaign in defense of our democratic rights and for freedom to those being prosecuted for protesting, for expressing their discontent on social media, or for simply living in a poor area.

We do so with total political independence from the capitalist factions that are currently fighting for power in the country: the Maduro government and the right-wing opposition.

We confront Maduro’s political regime, which is clearly deepening its authoritarian and repressive character. At the same time we oppose the bosses’ opposition led by María Corina Machado, whose

political objectives and interests are also opposed to those of the working people. We do not support either of these reactionary camps.



Squads of state security forces together with armed paramilitary groups violently repressed the demonstrations / Image: Confidential, Wikimedia commons

As we campaign against state repression, we also reject the idea that being a member of the state or the ruling party's structures in the neighborhoods is an automatic motive for stigmatization or even murder, as seems to have been the case of two women in Bolivar and Aragua.

Working class and poor neighborhoods bear the brunt of repression

In addition to the direct repression, hundreds of workers in different companies and public sector jobs have been laid off, in some cases after illegal searches of their mobile phones and social media. People from the *barrios* make up the vast majority of the prisoners, not only for having been the protagonists of the protests of 29 and 30 of July, but also because that's where the raids have been carried out. Just because they live in these popular areas, many workers and young people have been arrested and charges brought against them, with the aim of increasing the number of detainees or for plain and simple police extortion.

In the massive detentions we have seen violations against the most basic guarantees of the rights to personal liberty, defense and due process. We highlight the raids on homes and arrests without warrants; periods of detention without communication for several days; restrictions on the appointment of their trusted defenders; as well as the lack of communication between the detainees and the public defenders appointed by the government itself to prepare their legitimate right to defense. The presentation hearings have been carried out remotely, through summary and collective procedures, without clear individual charges. In the vast majority of cases, preventative detention measures have been ordered, in clear contravention of the constitutionally established right to be tried in freedom. Furthermore, the detainees are being transferred to prisons far from their families' residences, which increases both their isolation and the difficulties for their support networks to attend to and supplement their dietary and/or medical needs during the time they remain in detention. In the cases of adolescent detainees, they have been found to have been held in the same places of detention as adults, violating their right to receive legally established differentiated

treatment.

In these circumstances, poor prisoners bear the brunt of the situation. They are the least visible, the most anonymous, and those who have the least resources and ability to make their cases public. Economic precariousness makes it infeasible for them to bear the costs in a deeply corrupt prison system where one has to pay for everything. Given the class-based nature of 'justice' and the stigmatization of the poor – especially the youth – judges, prosecutors and prison guards are even more vicious in their attacks on them. The employers' right-wing parties, having limited themselves to denouncing the arrest of their political leaders and supporters, have also assisted in making these poor prisoners invisible. They have said little about the repressive offensive deployed in the *barrios*, showing their total disinterest in the poor who came out to protest.

We call on human rights organizations, trade unions, and community and political organizations that defend democratic rights, both in the country and internationally, to pay special attention to this situation and to join forces for the cause of the freedom of those imprisoned for protesting and/or living in a poor neighborhood. Protesting is not a crime. Neither is being poor!

Stop the repression!

Freedom for those imprisoned for protesting!

Popular protest is a right, repression is a crime!

Caracas, 19 August 2024.

Signed by,

El Comité de Familiares y Amigos por la Libertad de los Trabajadores Presos

PPT-APR

Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS)

Partido Socialismo y Libertad (PSL)

Lucha de Clases-RCI

Marea Socialista

enComún

Partido Comunista de Venezuela (PCV)

Mujeres en Lucha

Pan y Rosas Venezuela

Encuentro Nacional en Defensa de los Derechos del Pueblo

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LUIS ZAPATA INTEGRANTE DEL COMITÉ DE FAMILIARES Y AMIGOS POR LA LIBERTAD DE LOS TRABAJADORES PRESOS

On August 29, a press conference was held for the national and international campaign to free prisoners imprisoned for protesting. The statement was read from various left-wing organizations and struggle movements that have been promoting the campaign, in response to the repressive and authoritarian leap by the Maduro government after July 28. "The vast majority of prisoners are from the popular sectors and they are the ones who bear the brunt," they declared.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQFvSIJRB7k>

The campaign "Enough repression! Free the prisoners for protesting!", which has been promoted by various organizations and movements, is being carried out in response to the escalation of the repressive situation by the authoritarian government of Maduro and the arrest of more than 2,000 prisoners for protesting, especially from working-class areas and particularly young people. The press conference was called by the Committee of Family Members and Friends for the Freedom of Imprisoned Workers, the Homeland for All Party (PPT-APR), the League of Workers for Socialism (LTS), the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSL), Class Struggle, Socialist Tide, enComún, the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV), Women in Struggle and Bread and Roses Venezuela.

Luis Zapata, member of the Committee of Family Members and Friends for the Freedom of Imprisoned Workers, together with leaders of the organizations that promote the campaign, read the statement, which emphasizes that "The vast majority of prisoners are from popular sectors and are the ones who bear the brunt." The statement outlined what has been done so far and the activities that are proposed to be carried out.

Here you can read the Statement / Petition and add your signature :

<https://forms.gle/4854YFEqpoAjY1118>