

# URGENT ACTION

## DEFENDERS AT RISK FOLLOWING BREACH OF PRIVACY

**The private communications of two human rights defenders may be being monitored by the Venezuelan authorities. This appears to be an attempt to restrict their ability to freely carry out their legitimate human rights work. The two men, their colleagues and the people they represent might be at risk.**

On 13 May the President of the National Assembly, Diosdado Cabello, publicly shared details on the travel arrangements of two human rights defenders, **Rafael Uzcátegui** from the Venezuelan Program for Education and Action on Human Rights (Provea) and **Carlos Correa** from Public Space (Espacio Público). The information was shared in Diosdado Cabello's weekly television program "Con el Mazo Dando", where the work of human rights defenders is regularly questioned and details of their whereabouts are shared. The ongoing attacks and smear campaigns by the President of the National Assembly along and with other high ranking authorities contributes to the stigmatization of the defenders' work and puts them at risk as it could incite government sympathizers, including pro-government armed groups, to intimidate them, including by carrying out physical attacks on them and their families.

Among other details, Diosdado Cabello announced that Rafael Uzcátegui and Carlos Correa were traveling to Chile to meet the former coordinator of Provea. According to Rafael Uzcátegui and Carlos Correa this information was only shared in their private online communications, which they now fear are being monitored by the authorities. Their communications with victims of human rights violations might have also been intercepted and could compromise their right to truth, justice and reparation. They have made a formal complaint with the Public Prosecution Service but have not yet received any response from the authorities.

At the end of March, Rafael Uzcátegui and Carlos Correa were part of a group of twelve human rights defenders who were harassed and intimidated at the airport in Caracas, the capital, on their return from participating in hearings before the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights. Days earlier, the President of the National Assembly identified the names of the human rights defenders in his television program who had come before the Inter-American Commission and publicly shared the details of their return flight.

### **Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:**

- Calling on the authorities to carry out independent, thorough and impartial investigations into Rafael Uzcátegui and Carlos Correa's complaints that their communications are being monitored by the authorities;
- Urging them halt any attacks and smear campaigns on the part of the authorities at the highest level and to explicitly recognize the legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders, including by making public declarations recognizing their contribution to the promotion of human rights;
- Reminding the authorities that human rights defenders have a right to carry out their activities without any unfair restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 JULY 2015 TO:**

#### **Vice President**

Sr. Jorge Arreaza  
Vicepresidencia de la Republica  
Av. Urdaneta, Esquina de Carmelitas,  
Caracas, Venezuela

**Email: via website**

**http://www.vicepresidencia.gob.ve**

**Twitter: @jaarreaza**

**Salutation: Señor Vicepresidente/**

**Dear Vice President**

#### **Attorney General of the Republic**

Dra. Luisa Ortega Díaz  
Edificio Sede Principal del Ministerio Público,  
Esquinas de Misericordia a Pele El Ojo  
Avenida México

Caracas, Venezuela

**Email: ministeriopublico@mp.gob.ve**

**Fax: 011 58 212 578 3239**

**Salutation: Dra. Fiscal / Dear Attorney  
General**

#### **And copies to:**

#### **Ombudsman**

Tarek William Saab  
Defensor del Pueblo  
Av. Urdaneta - Frente a El Universal  
Centro Financiero Latino, Piso 27  
Caracas, Venezuela

**Fax: 011 58 212 5077025**

**Email: contacto@defensoria.gob.ve**

#### **Also send copies to:**

Charge de Affairs Maximilien Sanchez Arvelaiz, Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela  
1099 30th St. NW, Washington DC 20007

**Fax: 1 202 342 6820 | Phone: 1 202 342 2214 | Email: prensa.embveus@mppre.gob.ve OR despacho.embveusa@mppre.gob.ve**

Please let us know if you took action so that we can track our impact! EITHER send a short email to [uan@aiusa.org](mailto:uan@aiusa.org) with "UA 123/15" in the subject line, and include in the body of the email the number of letters and/or emails you sent, OR fill out this [short online form](#) (press Ctrl + click on link) to let us know how you took action. Thank you for taking action! Please check with the AIUSA Urgent Action Office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This latest incident is not isolated. Despite the commitment made by Venezuelan authorities to respect human rights defenders before the Committee against Torture in November 2014, Amnesty International has continued to receive an increasing number of reports about harassment against human rights defenders. Of particular concern are public statements by high rank authorities against human rights defenders, especially after they have denounced human rights violations, locally or before international and regional human rights bodies.

The twelve human rights defenders who were intimidated and harassed in the Caracas airport at the end of March upon their return from the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights reported having been watched, followed, photographed and filmed with cell phones by at least five men without identification. These incidents occurred during the defenders' arrival at the airport when exiting the plane, on their way to immigration, during presentation of their documents to immigration officials, during baggage collection and customs checks, and when leaving the airport. The unidentified men, who came and went freely in non-public immigration areas, openly harassed the group of human rights defenders.

Human rights defenders have repeatedly expressed concern that in a society as polarized as that in Venezuela, the ongoing attacks and smear campaigns on the part of the authorities at the highest level could incite government sympathizers, including pro-government armed groups, to intimidate them, including by carrying out physical attacks on them and their families. Providing specific details on the location of human rights defenders puts them at further risk.

Amnesty International has also received reports from a lawyer representing victims of human rights violations that he has been informed that the National Intelligence Service had requested permission to intercept his communications, which will include those with his clients. The National Intelligence Service is the same institution that is being accused of some of the human rights violations by the victims he represents. This seriously undermines the right of detainees and those facing charges to a fair trial, in particular their right to a legal defense and confidential communications and consultations with their legal representatives, and may also jeopardize the right to access to justice of victims of human rights violations.

The actions of human rights defenders, lawyers representing victims and families and victims themselves demanding rights are essential, legitimate and necessary for advancing towards the achievement of justice and rights for everyone. Those exercising the right to defend human rights are those who by their actions expose human rights violations and abuses, document their severity, support victims, survivors and their families, and together with them seek justice, truth, memory, redress, prevention and no repetition. States have the primary responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, including the right to defend human rights. This includes taking adequate measures to protect defenders and ensuring that those responsible for attacks against them are brought to justice.

**Name:** Rafael Uzcátegui (m) and Carlos Correa (m)

**Issues:** Human rights defenders, Freedom of expression, Fear for safety

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**Country:** Venezuela