

## MOE expresses its concern over arbitrary detentions, harassment, and profiling of opposition members through digital platforms in Venezuela

- *Between July 26 and 29, local organizations documented over 130 arbitrary detentions of opposition members and 17 people killed during protests.*
- *There is concern about the use of platforms like VenApp to profile and expose the personal data of leaders and protesters.*
- *The MOE emphasizes the need to advance negotiations that can lead to a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Venezuela, which is shifting from a political crisis to one of human rights violations.*

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**Bogotá D.C., July 31, 2024.** The Electoral Observation Mission - MOE Colombia expresses its deepest concern over the severe deterioration of political and civil rights, as well as freedom of expression in Venezuela. In this regard, the MOE calls attention to arbitrary detentions and the use of digital tools to identify and profile citizens based on their political opinions.

Regarding political persecution, various human rights organizations have reported numerous arbitrary detentions and disappearances between July 26 and 29. Additionally, 17 people were killed during protests over the election results, including a 15-year-old and a 16-year-old. These actions not only violate the right to life and freedom but also create an atmosphere of fear and coercion that restricts democratic expression.

Regarding the alleged profiling of opposition leaders through digital tools, various organizations have documented the use of platforms like VenApp, which, although initially launched in 2022 to report public service failures, is now being used to report and profile opposition individuals. This directive was issued by the current president, Nicolás Maduro, who stated on July 30, from the Balcony of the People, that this application "will now open a special window for all Venezuelans to confidentially provide the details of all criminals who have threatened or attacked the people; we will go after them to ensure swift justice".

For the MOE, such actions by the State constitute an attack on the right to freedom of expression, protest, association, and access to information, as they encourage political persecution against so-called "guarimbas, fascists, and terrorists," endangering human rights organizations and social leaders in the context of opposition protests. Although it is known that this application has already been removed from the App Store and Google Play in Venezuela, it is still available on the web and in other countries.

Additionally, it has been confirmed that various Telegram channels are being used to share and disseminate information and personal data of opposition protesters, with the intent of facilitating their identification and detention. It is also reported that government agents are confiscating cell phones to prevent the dissemination of anti-government content.

For this organization, technology should not be used to restrict political rights, freedom of expression, and the right to protest. "It is important to advance negotiations that can lead to a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Venezuela, which is shifting from a political crisis to one of human rights violations. Conditions must be guaranteed to respect and protect the individual freedoms of all citizens, including those who do not support the current government," added Alejandra Barrios Cabrera, National Director of the Electoral Observation Mission.

Finally, as time goes on, stricter measures must be implemented for an audit authorized by the National Electoral Council of Venezuela. While initially, the electoral records were sufficient to recognize the election results, the MOE now also considers it necessary to review physical polling stations and biometric identification.

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**For more information**

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