

Venezuela | The right to freedom of assembly must be respected

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Decisions of the Venezuelan Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice to severely reduce the powers of the Venezuelan National Assembly are the most recent attempts to restrict the functions of the Assembly. They have been roundly criticised. The Attorney General noted that the Court's March decisions represented a rupture of the constitutional order. The Inter-American Commission condemned the rulings as '[a usurpation of legislative functions](#)'.

Whilst these recent decisions were revoked, constitutional checks and balances remain at risk. [45 national civil society](#) organisations have expressed concern over a weakening of the rule of law and threats to the separation of powers in the country. A state of exception, declared in January 2016, remains in place.

In this context, demonstrations have taken place in the cities of Venezuela. Reports of disproportionate use of force against demonstrators prompted the Secretary General of the Organisation of American States to express grave concern over '[the use of repression, intimidation and terror as a tool of the enforcement of power](#)'. The Inter-American Commission has also condemned the repression of demonstrations and urged the State '[to respect and guarantee the necessary conditions for the exercise of political rights, freedom of expression and the right of peaceful assembly of those protesting in the country](#)'.

ISHR has [previously expressed concern](#) about the lack of respect of fundamental freedoms in the country and of the stigmatisation, criminalisation and arbitrary detention experienced by some human rights defenders. 'In this current climate, it is essential that the Venezuelan government take steps to ensure people can demonstrate peacefully and work for the respect of human rights without fear or hindrance,' said ISHR's Eleanor Openshaw.

Please find the CIVICUS and ISHR alert [here](#).

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