***Human Rights Council: 39th Session***

*Statement to the Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions.*

Mr. President,

We appreciate the continued attention the Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions dedicates to the question of arbitrary detention in Venezuela, including against human rights defenders.

As the latest OHCHR report on Venezuela shows, those most affected include human rights defenders, adolescents, social activists, students, academics, journalists, citizen journalists (‘infocuidadanos’) and politicians. Arbitrary detention against them is used as a key tool to intimidate, repress and inhibit the rest of society.

Arbitrary detentions represent just one of the flagrant abuses of the human rights of human rights defenders. Amongst other verified practices are cases of enforced disappearance, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment; the use of military justice in civilian cases; violations of due process, and the illegitimate denial of liberty to people with a prison release form.

The criminalization of dissent has developed within the context of a policy of systematic persecution and discrimination of the population in general. All of this occurs in a context of a complex humanitarian emergency in Venezuela. The impact of a lack of democratic institutions and the use of impunity runs through all these practices.

We ask the Working Group to follow up on their request to visit Venezuela, and ask the Venezuelan government to accept and facilitate that visit.

Signatories:

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