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Venezuela: Recently elected National Assembly must put human rights first

Amnesty International calls on the recently elected National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to take urgent measures to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights of everyone without discrimination.

In recent years, human rights guaranteed both by the 1999 Constitution and the human rights standards to which Venezuela is a party, have deteriorated, and the institutions that sustain the rule of law have had their independence and impartiality severely dented. The new National Assembly must take the necessary steps to reverse this situation on 5 January 2016 when it commences its duties.

Amnesty International urges the representatives of the new legislature to put human rights at the forefront of their political agenda by immediately asking the State to ratify the American Convention on Human Rights, denounced in September 2012, and recognize the competence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights again.

Human rights defenders must be allowed to do their job without reprisals and the National Assembly must ensure the most vulnerable and traditionally marginalized sectors of society such as economically disadvantaged people, women, children, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) and indigenous peoples are at the forefront of any legislation they propose.

The National Assembly must also take urgent measures to guarantee the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience and of anyone facing judicial proceedings based on politically motivated charges without solid and irrefutable evidence having been presented before the courts.

It is essential that the judicial system is strengthened so that its independence and impartiality is guaranteed and that the high levels of impunity end and the right of all victims to truth, justice and adequate reparation is fulfilled.

Accountability and transparency of all state institutions must be guaranteed and all human rights must be respected so that people live in dignity, including the rights to life, physical integrity, health, education, land, freedom of expression, assembly and association as well as the right to access to public information.

The high rates of violence and crime make it necessary for the new parliament to take action to reverse this trend by controlling the use of arms and ensuring that the security forces have the resources needed to act in accordance with the international human rights standards on the use force.

Building bridges and avenues for dialogue, the National Assembly must take urgent and decisive action to address the major challenges that the country is facing. Amnesty International hopes that in its pursue for the protection of human rights the new Parliament will strengthen the institutions that support the rule of law, so that everyone can exercise their human rights without discrimination.