

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
PRESS RELEASE**

**Curaçao: Authorities are denying protection to people fleeing the crisis in Venezuela**

Authorities in the Caribbean island of Curaçao, part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, must protect people who are fleeing the human rights crisis in nearby Venezuela and put an end to the appalling conditions they face upon reaching Curaçao, said Amnesty International in a report published today.

[\*Detained and Deported: Venezuelans denied protection in Curaçao\*](#) presents compelling evidence that foreigners have not been able to apply for international protection in Curaçao since July 2017 and details a number of alleged human rights violations committed against people from Venezuela, who face detention and being sent back in breach of international law.

“It’s a disgrace that the Curaçao government has not established an effective procedure for people to seek asylum. Instead of turning their back on the people fleeing a desperate crisis in Venezuela, the authorities in Curaçao must guarantee the rights of all asylum seekers and refugees in need of international protection,” said Erika Guevara-Rosas, Americas Director at Amnesty International.

Instead of protecting arrivals from Venezuela, the Curaçao government has designed an “active removal strategy” to deport those with irregular migration status. In 2017, the Curaçao authorities removed 1,203 Venezuelans from the island, while in the first four months of 2018 they deported another 386.

Amnesty International found that the authorities are holding those who are due to be deported in detention centres and police cells. The report also describes a case where authorities put children in the care of a state children’s home during the detention of their mother.

Amnesty International observed inexcusable conditions in detention centres, including overcrowding, a lack of privacy, poor hygiene in shower and bathroom areas, and a lack of suitable bedding. Several people told the organization that they had suffered ill-treatment upon arrest or in detention, including the proposition of sexual favours in exchange for sanitary towels and soap.

“Some guards treat us like animals,” a man held in the Rio Canario police cells told Amnesty International.

“We are appalled by the allegations of ill-treatment, excessive use of force and any other form of abuse during arrests or in detention. The Curaçao authorities must put an immediate end to these practices and launch prompt, impartial, independent and effective investigations into any alleged human rights violations,” said Erika Guevara-Rosas.

Venezuela has been in a state of emergency since January 2016, with dissidents subjected to raids, harassment and intimidation. The severe food and health crises continue to worsen, particularly affecting children, pregnant women and people with chronic illnesses. An estimated 2.3 million Venezuelans have fled this unprecedented crisis in their country according to the UN, including an estimated 5,000 to 15,000 people presently in Curaçao with irregular immigration status.

In March 2018, the UN Refugee Agency said a very significant proportion of Venezuelans who have fled the country need international protection. However, the Curaçao authorities have offered no protection for Venezuelan people seeking refuge on the island just 70km from their homeland. Although the Curaçao government claims there is an asylum procedure in place, people from Venezuela told Amnesty International that in practice it is close to impossible to obtain protection.

“I called the police station to ask where I could apply for protection. The police officer laughed and told me that no such procedure existed,” said a Venezuelan member of a humanitarian organization.

Amnesty International calls on the Curaçao authorities to guarantee the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees by setting up a fair and effective asylum procedure. They should only use detention as a last resort, as set out in international human rights law, and must conduct prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all allegations of human rights violations upon arrest and in custody.

As Curaçao is part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Kingdom also has the responsibility to safeguard human rights there. Amnesty International calls on the Kingdom of the Netherlands to ensure that human rights of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees are guaranteed in all its constituent countries.

“The Kingdom of the Netherlands must investigate what’s happening in Curaçao and should offer its support and guidance to ensure that new arrivals receive the protection they need. The Kingdom cannot turn a blind eye while people’s human rights are being violated,” said Erika Guevara-Rosas.

**For more information or to request an interview, contact:**

Yara Boff Tonella (Amnesty International Netherlands): +31 (0) 20 77 33 718,

[y.bofftonella@amnesty.nl](mailto:y.bofftonella@amnesty.nl)

Sergio Ortiz (Oficina Regional para las Américas): +52 1 55 4194 7886,

[sergio.ortizr@amnesty.org](mailto:sergio.ortizr@amnesty.org)

**Read more:**

Detained and Deported: Venezuelans denied protection in Curaçao (Research, 10 September 2018)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur35/8937/2018/en/>

Trinidad and Tobago: Deportation of 82 Venezuelans violates human rights obligations (News, 23 April 2017)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/04/trinidad-and-tobago-deportation-of-82-venezuelans-violates-human-rights-obligations/>

Venezuelans are taking desperate measures to escape (News, 27 March 2018)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/03/venezuelans-are-taking-desperate-measures-to-escape/>