



## VENEZUELA: VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DURING PROTESTS DEMAND JUSTICE

### MARCELO CROVATO MUST BE RELEASED



Marcelo Crovato, a lawyer working with the Venezuelan Penal Forum, has been detained since 22 April 2014 awaiting trial. His health has deteriorated in pre-trial detention, but the authorities have failed to respond to several appeals for his release.

Marcelo Crovato was detained on 22 April 2014 when he arrived at his clients' home in order to represent them during a police raid of their house. The police raided the house, which is in Chacao municipality in the capital, Caracas, looking for evidence relating to support and funding for the anti-government protests that had been taking place since the beginning of February 2014.

The Public Prosecution Service has accused Marcelo Crovato of endangering safety on a public road, incitement to commit a crime, public intimidation and conspiracy to commit a crime. These offences carry sentences of at least 15 years' imprisonment.

Amnesty International has been given access to the charge sheet brought by the Public Prosecution Service. The main basis for the charges is the testimony of an unidentified police officer who has accused Marcelo Crovato of taking part in a meeting on 10 April 2014 at which people allegedly responsible for organizing and building barricades and blocking the roads in Chacao were also present. These barricades, known as "guarimbas" (where protesters block roads with burning rubbish and force local residents to stay indoors) were a feature of the anti-government protests between February and July 2014. Marcelo Crovato denied being present in this meeting. To date, the authorities have not produced any credible evidence to support the charges brought against him or his alleged involvement in criminal acts and to justify his detention.

Marcelo's family and lawyer are extremely concerned about the negative effects on his state of health of his imprisonment in the Capital Region Central Prison, Yare III, especially since his attempted suicide in December 2014.<sup>1</sup>

Amnesty International has had access to the medical report of a psychiatric assessment carried out by a team from the Public Prosecution Service itself in October 2014. This states that: "**His emotional instability and evidence that he is harbouring thoughts of death indicate that there is a serious risk of suicide linked to current living conditions and circumstances.**" Despite this report, to Amnesty International's knowledge the authorities have not taken any preventive measures to safeguard Marcelo's life. The Attorney General announced in a press conference on 10 February 2015 that a review of the decision to keep Marcelo Crovato in pre-trial detention had been requested. However, at

<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International, *Venezuela: Marcelo Crovato debe ser liberado. Declaración pública* (Index: AMR 53/026/2014), available at <http://www.amnesty.org/es/library/info/AMR53/026/2014/es>.

the time of writing, Marcelo Crovato's situation had not changed and he remained in detention.

At least 43 people died and more than 800 were injured in the pro and anti-government protests that took place between February and July 2014. In addition, 3,300 people were detained. The vast majority have been released, although some are facing prosecution for their alleged involvement in violence during the protests.<sup>2</sup> According to the Ombudsperson's Office, more than 30 people remain in detention awaiting trial.<sup>3</sup> The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has analysed two of these cases. It found that these individuals were arbitrarily detained and called for their immediate release. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights echoed this call and urged the Venezuelan authorities to release all those arbitrarily detained in the context of the protests.<sup>4</sup>

Amnesty International also shares these concerns. It is also concerned that the pre-trial detention of more than 30 people may be politically motivated.

## TAKE ACTION

Please write to the Venezuelan authorities calling them to:

- Release Marcelo Crovato, given the lack of reliable evidence to support the charges against him.
- Ensure the physical integrity of Marcelo Crovato and put in place all necessary protective measures to safeguard his life.

Please send your appeals to:

### The Attorney General of the Republic

Dra. Luisa Ortega Díaz  
Edificio Sede Principal del Ministerio Público,  
Esquinas de Misericordia a Pele El Ojo  
Avenida México  
Caracas, Venezuela.  
Correo-e.: [ministeriopublico@mp.gob.ve](mailto:ministeriopublico@mp.gob.ve)  
Fax: +58 212 578 3239  
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

### The Minister of Justice, Interior and Peace

Almirante en Jefa Carmen Teresa Meléndez Rivas  
Edificio Sede del Ministerio Poder Popular  
para las Relaciones Interiores, Justicia y Paz  
Av. Urdaneta, Esquina Platanal,  
Caracas, Venezuela.  
Correo-e. [mijcudecon@gmail.com](mailto:mijcudecon@gmail.com)  
Fax: +58 212 506 1558  
Salutation: Dear Minister

### The Minister of Prisons

Sra. Maria Iris Valera Rangel  
Edificio Sede del Ministerio del Poder  
Popular para el Servicio Penitenciario  
AV. Venezuela, Urb. El Rosal,  
Edif. Platinum, Caracas, Venezuela.  
Correo-e: [info@fonep.gob.ve](mailto:info@fonep.gob.ve)  
Fax: +58 212 258.13.38  
Salutation: Dear Minister

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the February to July 2014 events, see the following Amnesty International reports: Venezuela: Human rights at risk amid protests (Index: AMR 53/009/2014), available at <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR53/009/2014/en>; and Venezuela: Briefing to the UN Committee Against Torture, 53rd session, November 2014 (Index: AMR 53/020/2014), available at <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR53/020/2014/en>.

<sup>3</sup> *Últimas noticias*, "Defensor dice que quedan 51 detenidos por protestas de 2014", 16 January 2015, available at <http://www.ultimasnoticias.com.ve/noticias/actualidad/politica/defensor-dice-que-quedan-51-detenidos-por-protesta.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> UN News Centre, "Venezuela: UN rights chief calls for immediate release of opposition leader, politicians", 20 October 2014, available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49120#.VNYDb2SsWIM>.

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