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Attorney General of the Republic

Tarek William Saab

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Dear Attorney General of the Republic,

**Official reports of the arrest of more than two thousand people for exercising their right to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and political participation are appalling. Among them are more than 100 teenagers aged between 13 and 17 and at least 16 people with disabilities who have been victims of this wave of repression. Protest must be protected, not punished.**

It is extremely alarming that virtually all of these people, including teenagers and vulnerable groups such as young pregnant women, are experiencing a total lack of due process guarantees, such as not being allowed to communicate with their families, denial of representation by trusted counsel, and unjustified transfers to maximum security prisons. It is alarming to learn of the real risks of ill-treatment or even torture faced by thousands of people.

These arrests, torture, killings and excessive use of force, carried out arbitrarily and with impunity, are characteristic of a policy of repression that has been in place for years and is aimed at silencing dissent, including protest. It is important to remember that both the UN Fact-Finding Mission and the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court have stated that the crimes committed in Venezuela appear to constitute crimes against humanity, for which there is no statute of limitations.

**We therefore urge you to protect those exercising their right to peaceful assembly, to immediately release all those detained for protesting, and to protect those who are vulnerable because of their age, disability, or serious or chronic health condition.**

Yours sincerely,

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**Copie**

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