

URGENT ACTION

ARBITRARY DETAINEE DYING FROM NEGLECT

Guillermo Zárraga, a 59-year-old Venezuelan engineer and a former oil industry unionist, was arbitrarily detained in November 2020 at his home by officers from the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence. Since then, he has been charged and tried for criminal association and for allegedly revealing national security information, although there is no evidence to support these allegations. Guillermo's health situation has suffered severely as result of inhumane detention conditions and lack of adequate nutrition. In March he suffered a cardiac syncope, and the blood test results show a severe disbalance that need urgent and trusted medical care.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Celsa Bautista Ontiveros
Minister of Penitentiary Affairs
Ministerio del Poder Popular para Asuntos Penitenciarios,
Avenida Venezuela, Edificio Platinum,
Urbanización El Rosal, Municipio Chacao,
Caracas
Venezuela
Twitter: @CelsaBautistaO

Dear Mrs. Bautista Ontiveros,

I am deeply concerned over the health of Guillermo Zárraga, who is currently imprisoned at the Centro Penitenciario Región Capital Yare II, Venezuela. He remains unfairly detained since November 2020 and has since faced unfounded criminal charges.

Guillermo has endured inhumane prison conditions and authorities in charge of his personal integrity have unjustifiably and repeatedly neglected his health and wellbeing. Since his imprisonment, his family reports Guillermo's weight has dropped over 20 kilos and is yet to receive adequate medical attention for the cardiac syncope and related injuries he suffered in March.

Moreover, Guillermo's trial was mired by flaws in due process guarantees in violation of his right to a fair trial. Reports claim he was arrested and charged on false or non-existent evidence, denied access to trusted legal defense, and even coerced to admit to the alleged crimes he was accused of.

Guillermo should be released from his arbitrary detention, while he is in custody of the state, I call upon you to urgently ensure he receives immediate, adequate and trusted medical care. Guillermo's life cannot continue to be at risk because of penitentiary authorities' refusal to guarantee his right to decent prison conditions and personal integrity.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Venezuelan engineer Guillermo Zárraga worked as an operator technician for Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA, the Venezuelan state-owned oil company) at the Cardón Refinery in the Catalytic Complex located in Coro, Falcón state. He was also a leader in the Sindicato Único de Trabajadores (Unique Workers' Union) within that organization. On 14 November 2020, at 3:00 am, he was detained at his residence by officers from the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM), although DGCIM officers reported that he had been detained on the same day but at the main square in Coro city. According to the indictment by the Public Prosecutor's Office, he has been accused of providing national security information to an American man who had been arrested in September and was believed to be a CIA agent attempting to sabotage the oil industry complex.

In addition to his role as a union leader, Guillermo Zárraga had been photographed with Juan Guaido, a prominent opposition leader. This photograph was included as part of the accusation, serving as evidence of Zárraga's alleged intention to support the sabotage. Despite the fact that Nicolás Maduro's government has released the alleged CIA agent, Guillermo Zárraga remains arbitrarily detained.

As many imprisoned Venezuelans, Guillermo Zárraga's family does not have the means to support him in prison, as prison authorities do not provide detainees with adequate sustenance and drinking water, therefore he does not meet his nutritional needs and his health has severely deteriorated in the last couple of years. On 16 May the court ordered his transfer to a medical facility, but penitentiary authorities have not complied with it.

Nicolás Maduro's government has continually harassed, prosecuted and censored activists and civil society organizations working to protect the rights of Venezuelans amidst a complex humanitarian emergency and a deep human rights crisis that is making Venezuelans flee in unprecedented numbers in search of safety and protection. By March 2023, over 7.24 million had fled the country.

Since 2020, three reports from the independent international fact-finding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have thoroughly documented hundreds of cases of extrajudicial executions; enforced disappearances; arbitrary detentions; and torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment committed in the country since 2014; as well as the ways in which the justice system serves as a tool for the government's policy of repression, and concluded that these grave human rights violations may amount to crimes against humanity.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 26 JULY 2023

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Guillermo Zárraga (he/his)