

# VENEZUELA 2021 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While Venezuela is legally a multiparty, constitutional republic, the authoritarian regime led by Nicolas Maduro usurped control over all branches of government: executive, judicial, legislative, the offices of the prosecutor general and ombudsman, and the electoral institutions. In December 2020 the Maduro regime organized parliamentary elections that were rigged in favor of the regime, and approximately 60 countries and international bodies publicly declared the elections were neither free nor fair.

Civilian authorities' control over the security forces continued to decline and was deeply politicized. Increasingly unpopular with citizens, the Maduro regime depended on civilian and military intelligence services, and to a lesser extent, progovernment armed gangs known as *colectivos*, to neutralize political opposition and subdue the population. The Bolivarian National Guard – a branch of the military that reports to the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior, Justice, and Peace – is responsible for maintaining public order, guarding the exterior of key government installations and prisons, conducting counternarcotics operations, monitoring borders, and providing law enforcement in remote areas. The Ministry of Interior, Justice, and Peace controls the National Scientific Criminal, and Investigative Corps, which conducts most criminal investigations, and the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service, which collects intelligence within the country and abroad and is responsible for investigating cases of corruption, subversion, and arms trafficking. Police include municipal, state, and national police forces. Mayors and governors oversee municipal and state police forces. The Bolivarian National Police report to the Ministry of Interior, Justice, and Peace. The national police largely focused on policing Caracas' Libertador municipality; patrolling Caracas-area highways, railways, and metro system; and protecting diplomatic missions. The national armed forces patrolled other areas of the country. There were credible reports that members of security forces committed numerous abuses, and a 2020 United Nations report concluded there were reasonable grounds to believe that Maduro regime authorities and security















































































































































operated illegally and exposed miners to injury, disease, and mercury poisoning.

The OHCHR documented high levels of violence and human rights violations linked to the control of and dispute over mines by organized criminal and armed groups. In some cases security forces were reportedly involved in some of the violent incidents.

NGOs reported the use of beatings, mutilation, disappearances, and killings by armed groups to enforce control in mining areas.

**Informal Sector:** Vast portions of the economy operated in the informal sector, where standardized labor protections did not exist, and labor violations occurred frequently. The regime made little effort to provide social protections in this area.