

26 November 2019

## Venezuela: CADEF members followed and harassed by the police

On 21 November, 2019, five members of the human rights organisation **CADEF** were followed, stopped and harassed by the security forces in several locations in the cities of Cojedes and Tinaquillo, after they participated in a peaceful protest.

[The Center for Action and Defense of Human Rights](#) (CADEF) is an organisation dedicated to the promotion and defense of human rights in Cojedes, in the northwest of Venezuela. It seeks to educate, train and provide the necessary tools for the empowerment of new generations of human rights defenders. CADEF monitors, and documents human rights violations in the context of the ongoing national crisis in Venezuela. It organises workshops, campaigns and advocacy activities, that help social and legal challenges to the government in this environment.

On 21 November 2019, five members of CADEF, **Gabriel Aranguren, Luis Henriquez, Erick José García Lucena, Carlos Cisneros** and **Richard Medina** used photographs, videos, and interviews to document the national protest for "Student's Day," a peaceful protest organised by the student population in the city of San Carlos. After the demonstration took place — which occurred without violence or direct police repression — officials from the Bolivarian National Police (PNB) and the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB) approached the human rights defenders to photograph them with their mobile phones. Then, as the human rights defenders returned to their vehicle to go back to the city of Tinaquillo, they were followed by two unmarked vehicles and an official motorcycle, which ordered them to stop. They were held for an hour and a half without providing any information about the reasons for their detention. Later, they were summoned one by one and photographed. Once permitted to continue their journey, they were stopped three more times by police at various check points on the route, where they were photographed again, and were told that there were "orders to search" them.

Front Line Defenders expresses concern that public officials are using their authority to intimidate human rights defenders. Front Line Defenders is particularly concerned about the systematic way in which it receives complaints that public officials, and in particular the Bolivarian National Police (PNB) and the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB), are responsible for assaulting and intimidating those who defend human rights and exercise their right to freedom of expression and association in Venezuela.

Front Line Defenders opposes the use of intimidation tactics against human rights defenders in Venezuela. These acts generate an unfavorable climate for the defence of human rights and discourages the continuation of work carried out to protect them, which is essential in a democratic society. This environment negatively affects all human rights defenders who raise their voices and document human rights violations in the country.

### Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Venezuela to

1. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety and physical integrity of CADEF members, in consultation with them;
2. Refrain from persecuting, criminalising, monitoring and threatening human rights defenders in Venezuela.

3. Ensure that human rights defenders in Venezuela can continue their human rights activities without fear of reprisals and without any restrictions, including police harassment