



1.6. State security forces

For background information on the structure of state security forces, see EUAA COI Report – Venezuela Country Focus November 2023.

The Special Action Force (FAES, Fuerzas de Acciones Especiales), a police unit implicated in serious human rights abuses, was dissolved in 2022 and replaced by the Directorate of Strategic and Tactical Actions (DAET, Dirección de Acciones Estratégicas y Tácticas) following sustained international pressure.[271](#) According to sources, DAET operates with functions and methods similar to those of FAES, and former FAES officials involved in grave abuses now hold key positions within the new unit.[272](#)

State security forces continued committing extrajudicial killings,[273](#) arbitrary detentions,[274](#) torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of different profiles, – including political activists, women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ persons –[275](#) enforced disappearances and sexual violence,[276](#) and engaged in corruption.[277](#) Cuban intelligence agencies reportedly provided training to Venezuelan security forces on repression tactics and interrogation, including under torture.[278](#)

State security forces at the national, state, and municipal levels, as well as the armed forces and *colectivos*, committed unlawful killings, including extrajudicial executions.[279](#) For information on *colectivos*, see section [2.1.1 Colectivos](#). During the post-electoral protests of 2024, 25 people were killed in circumstances that may amount to extrajudicial executions.[280](#) The UNFFMV reported that victims were struck by bullets in vital areas such as the abdomen, head, neck, and chest, often from distances of no more than 10 metres.[281](#) Human rights organisations identified the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB, Guardia Nacional Bolivariana), the Bolivarian National Police (PNB, Policía Nacional Bolivariana), the army, and *colectivos*, as responsible for these killings.[282](#) For additional information on the treatment of demonstrators, see section [3.1 Political opponents and activists, and human rights defenders](#).

Following the July 2024 elections, authorities carried out Operation Knock Knock (Operación Tun Tun), described by sources as a massive and indiscriminate campaign of intimidation, repression, and arbitrary detentions.[283](#) Actions attributed to state security forces during this operation included beatings, blows with bats, suffocation with plastic bags during interrogations, sexual violence, psychological torture, and the denial of food, water, and healthcare to detainees.[284](#) For additional information, see section [3.1 Political opponents and activists, and human rights defenders](#).

The UNFFMV reported that, of the 25 deaths recorded during the post-2024 election protests, state security forces were responsible for at least 12.[285](#) The GNB and the Army reportedly fired

live ammunition at protesters.[286](#) Security forces were also accused of using methods intended to cause 'severe suffering' to extract information, humiliate, or punish detainees.[287](#) The UNFFMV documented, for example, the case of a member of Voluntad Popular detained by DGCIM on 20 August 2024, who was repeatedly beaten with wooden and metal rods to coerce him into providing information about the party's leadership.[288](#) Another political activist detained twice by SEBIN in July 2024 was subjected to electric shocks to force him to reveal the whereabouts of opposition members and the identities of those safeguarding election records.[289](#) SEBIN, the GNB, and DGCIM were also accused of carrying out enforced disappearances of dissidents and government critics following arbitrary arrests. Victims were reportedly detained without warrants, and authorities either denied involvement in the arrest or refused to disclose the detainee's location.[290](#) One example is the case of Rory Branker, editor of the local news outlet La Patilla, who was arrested by SEBIN on 20 February 2025; authorities withheld information about his whereabouts until his release on 14 January 2026 as part of a broader government initiative to free political prisoners.[291](#)

Sources indicated that extortion by state security forces is widespread and increasing.[292](#) A joint investigation by Alianza Rebelde Investiga (ARI) and Connectas described how members of the PNB took over extortion schemes in the Cota 905 neighbourhood after dismantling the powerful Koki gang in 2021, targeting local businesses and engaging in arbitrary detentions and the planting of incriminating evidence to extort detainees and their families.[293](#) Other reports noted that security forces extort individuals in exchange for releasing them without charges[294](#) or for avoiding the fabrication of serious offences such as 'treason'.[295](#) Demands reportedly range from 300[296](#) to 50 000 USD.[297](#) The UNFFMV documented the case of a detainee who paid 3 500 USD to the head of a DGCIM office to secure his release.[298](#) Allegations also include sexual extortion of women in exchange for release or improved detention conditions.[299](#) Sources further indicated that security forces detain relatives of wanted individuals to pressure them into surrendering.[300](#) The UNFFMV cited the case of a social activist whose spouse was detained for this purpose.[301](#)

Local news source NTN24 reported an extortion scheme inside the Helicoide prison, operated by PNB officers: individuals detained at PNB checkpoints in Caracas for minor or arbitrary reasons were transferred to the Helicoide, where fear of the facility was used to coerce payments, reportedly starting around 6 000 USD, to avoid harsher cells or referral to the Prosecutor's Office.[302](#) Officers searched detainees' phones, applied psychological pressure, and instructed families to bring cash.[303](#) Detainees were then forced to record videos stating they had been treated properly.[304](#) Officers concealed their identities, and the scheme reportedly expanded after July 2024. Several victims said they gathered money out of fear, and some subsequently left the country.[305](#)

Impunity for security forces remained a serious problem; corruption, inadequate training, and limited resources, particularly in opposition-run areas, combined with widespread fear and distrust of police discouraged victims from reporting violent crimes.[306](#) In many cases, authorities moved quickly at the outset of investigations to assert that state security forces were not responsible for the alleged crimes.[307](#)

On 12 March 2026, the UNFFMV indicated that several senior government and military officials previously identified as responsible for crimes against humanity continue to hold high-level

positions within both the executive branch and the security forces.³⁰⁸ Sources also indicated that on 20 March 2026, interim president Rodríguez replaced 17 senior military commanders in an effort to consolidate control over the Armed Forces; among the changes was the appointment of a new Minister of Defense to replace General Vladimir Padrino López, who had been appointed by Maduro in 2014 and was one of his staunchest supporters.³⁰⁹ Rodríguez also introduced additional changes across the armed forces, including new commanders at military bases, brigades, and the military academy.³¹⁰

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