



4. Freedom of movement

4.1. Treatment of persons returning from abroad

In October 2024, Acceso a la Justicia reported that, according to a new government directive, Venezuelans abroad with an expired passport or without a passport must request a letter-of-safe-passage (*salvoconducto*) at the nearest Venezuelan diplomatic representation, or, at a date yet to be announced, online.⁷⁴⁹ The directive, which was not published in the official gazette, violates Article 50 of the Constitution, which guarantees the free entry of Venezuelans into the country without any authorisation.⁷⁵⁰ The website of the Venezuelan Ministry of Foreign Affairs also stated that Venezuelans with an expired passport or without a passport must apply for a letter-of-safe-passage in order to return to Venezuela. Required documents include the original and copies of the police report (if lost or stolen), the original and a copy of the travel ticket validated by the airline, a copy of the applicant's ID (ID card or passport), a photo in JPG format on a CD or DVD, and proof of payment of any applicable consular fee. For children and adolescents, a copy of both parents' Venezuelan ID cards and passport bio pages is required, and if the minor travels alone or with only one parent, the non-travelling parent's authorisation must be apostilled.⁷⁵¹

According to the government, around 20 200 Venezuelans returned to the country under the Great Mission Return to the Homeland (Gran Misión Vuelta a la Patria) between February 2025 and February 2026.⁷⁵² The program assists Venezuelans abroad who are in conditions of 'vulnerability' or detained in immigration detention centres abroad.⁷⁵³ For additional information about the program, see section 2.4.1 of the EUAA COI Report on Venezuela: Country Focus (2023).

In July 2025, El Salvador repatriated 250 Venezuelans who had been deported to that country by the US in March 2025. The returned Venezuelans, who had been accused by the US of being members of Tren de Aragua and were returned in exchange for the release of 10 US citizens imprisoned in Venezuela, were imprisoned in the Centre for the Confinement of Terrorism (CECOT, Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo) in El Salvador. According to the repatriated Venezuelans, they were subjected to abuses by Salvadoran authorities, including torture and sexual violence.⁷⁵⁴

Human Rights First, a US-based NGO, reported that US authorities carried out 11 removal flights to Venezuela in March 2026, returning 1 726 people, including families and children.⁷⁵⁵ The same source indicated that, from mid-January 2026, US officials operated three weekly flights after the program had been briefly paused for five weeks. Since late November 2025, all flights have departed from Phoenix, Arizona, and landed at Simón Bolívar International Airport in

Maiquetía.⁷⁵⁶ Between February and December 2025, the US conducted 76 removal flights to Venezuela, removing 14 310 Venezuelans, including families and children.⁷⁵⁷

According to Notiprensa Digital, upon arrival, Venezuelans returning under the Return to the Homeland Plan undergo established migration protocols, including individual interviews, case reviews, and verification and registration procedures. Afterwards, medical assistance and 'comprehensive guidance' from government institutions are provided before they are transported to their respective destinations within the country.⁷⁵⁸ The reception operation involves interviews with CICPC, SEBIN, GNB, PNB,⁷⁵⁹ and DGCIM.⁷⁶⁰ Protocols reportedly include criminal-background checks, physical and psychological assessments, and assistance in accessing documentation.⁷⁶¹ Human Rights Watch reported in November 2025 that some returnees did not receive further psychological support.⁷⁶² Most interviewees said they had not experienced persecution or threats from Venezuelan authorities or armed or criminal groups; however, two former detainees reported that SEBIN agents visited their homes as part of a "'monitoring process'" and asked them, while being filmed, to discuss their detention in the US, the treatment received, and whether they had any ties to US agencies allegedly attempting to "'destabilize the government"'.⁷⁶³

According to PROVEA, some exiles were detained upon return for social-media posts.⁷⁶⁴ Tal Cual reported on 4 August 2025 that four Venezuelan TikTok influencers were detained upon return from the US and charged with 'incitement to hate' for posting messages critical of the government while abroad.⁷⁶⁵ According to PROVEA, these detentions constitute a 'symbolic punishment' for Venezuelans abroad expressing dissent.⁷⁶⁶ One of the influencers was in the United States irregularly, and posted videos on how to break and enter into houses and how to beg on the streets with a baby. Upon deportation to Venezuela, the individual was charged with 'incitement to hatred' and 'child exploitation'.⁷⁶⁷ On 26 February 2026, local news source La Patilla reported that the individual had been released and had resumed posting on social media.⁷⁶⁸ Additional information could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this report.

Amaya indicated the following:

'At Maiquetía Airport, the country's main airport, numerous cases were previously reported in which individuals were detained, had their passports confiscated, or were sent back home. Others faced obstacles to departure or were denied exit altogether, in a context described as highly arbitrary. Recently, however, people with open judicial cases, including communicators and activists who had been living abroad, have returned and passed through Maiquetía without incident. This does not eliminate risk, but the airport is no longer perceived as the 'black hole' it once was. In the past, many travellers avoided Maiquetía and instead exited Venezuela via the land border with Colombia. Crossing into Colombia does not require a Venezuelan exit stamp, as Colombian authorities no longer demand it. Travellers could therefore leave Venezuela through a formal crossing without stamping their passport at the Administrative Service of Identification, Migration and Foreigners (SAIME, Servicio Administrativo de Identificación, Migración y Extranjería), proceed directly to Colombian Migration (Migración Colombia), which stamps the entry, and enter with their passport. The same applied when returning: travellers could exit Colombia with a Colombian exit stamp and enter Venezuela without passing through the SAIME

booth, and if questioned, simply present their national ID and state they had been shopping'.[769](#)

The same source also indicated that, in his view, people who participated in protests have not been detained upon their return to the country after January 2026, but that two people who entered by land from Colombia were detained, but released shortly, and that authorities are now stamping passports without problems.[770](#)

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