

OAS Permanent Council | Regular Meeting

Washington, D.C. October 8, 2025

*Remarks by Commissioner **Gloria de Mees**, Country Rapporteur for Venezuela*

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation for the opportunity to address this session of the Permanent Council.

We meet at a pivotal moment — to consider the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' request to conduct an on-site visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

It is not a mere procedural step. It is a decisive moment, one that will speak volumes about Venezuela's willingness to engage with the inter-American human rights system, to uphold international obligations, and to allow independent scrutiny.

For years, the Commission has documented how institutions once tasked with protecting democracy and human rights in Venezuela have lost their independence — and become instruments of repression sustaining an authoritarian regime. In this context, the Commission reaffirms its solidarity with the victims of human rights violations, and with the Venezuelan people, in their ongoing efforts to restore democracy and the rule of law.

I. Core speech

a. The Request for a Visit

Last September, the Commission requested authorization to visit Venezuela before the end of this year. The objective of this mission is clear: to observe firsthand the human rights situation in the country, with particular attention to the conditions of persons deprived of liberty at the Caracas Metropolitan Area Center for Prosecuted and Convicted Persons, widely known as “El Helicoide.”

To this day, however, the State has not responded.

Through its petitions and cases system, reports from international organizations, and high-ranking Venezuelan regime official's personal social media profiles, cross-referenced with information provided by civil society, the Commission has received alarming information. **Currently, 808 people remain arbitrarily detained** in Venezuela, with many families still unaware of their whereabouts—situations that may amount to enforced disappearance.

Women, children, journalists, opposition leaders — many held without contact, without lawyers, without due process.

A visit to *El Helicoide* is essential. And, as always, the Commission intends to meet with State and non-State actors, with victims, and with human rights organizations across the country. regions.

b. Historical Context and Legal Framework

The last IACHR visit to Venezuela took place in 2002 — more than twenty years ago. Since then, every new request, in 2017 and 2020, has been denied. In 2020, the delegation was even prevented from boarding the plane to Caracas.

Despite this, the Commission has remained steadfast. In 2024 alone, it issued **23 precautionary measures**, and in 2025, it has already granted 25. These measures have drawn attention to urgent risks, established official records of State obligations, and offered protection to those at risk.

c. A Deepening Crisis

Regrettably, the situation has not improved - it has **deteriorated**.

In January 2025, the Commission published a report on serious human rights violations following the July 2024 presidential elections. The findings are stark. Violations are not isolated incidents; they are **planned, executed, and sustained to perpetuate power**. The persecution of dissenting voices has intensified, revealing a deepening authoritarianism.

In its *Chirinos Salamanca et al. v. Venezuela* judgment of August 21, 2025, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights reaffirmed that Venezuela remains under the jurisdiction of the inter-American system. The Court found the 2012 withdrawal from the American Convention invalid, as it occurred outside a democratic framework, and confirmed that the 2019 ratification by the National Assembly restored Venezuela's international obligations.

This ruling reopens access to justice for victims of violations committed between 2016 and 2018, — a vital step for justice in a country where independent institutions have been dismantled.

d. **Conclusion: A Defining Choice**

Excellencies,

The message to the Venezuelan people, to those enduring persecution, repression, and fear, must be unmistakable: **they are not alone.**

The Commission remains fully committed to its mandate to monitor the situation, issue precautionary measures, and bring visibility to ongoing violations. But today, there is a choice before the Venezuelan authorities.

Authorizing the Commission's visit would signal a genuine willingness to engage independently with the inter-American system and to uphold international obligations.

Denying **it would do the opposite:** it would confirm, unmistakably, the collapse of institutional guarantees in Venezuela.

The IACHR stands ready to carry out this mission with professionalism, independence, and full respect for Venezuela's sovereignty. **What is at stake is not merely access to places of detention; it is the protection of the human rights of the Venezuelan people as a whole.**

Thank you.