

URGENT ACTION

INCOMMUNICADO VENEZUELAN DETAINEE AT RISK

Gilber Caro, whose fate and whereabouts were unknown since 2 March, was brought to a trial hearing on 13 March, where his lawyers and relatives were able to see him after 11 days of authorities denying them information about him. He had been arbitrarily transferred on 2 March without the knowledge of his lawyers or relatives and had been missing since. During the hearing Gilber Caro expressed fear for his life and safety at his new detention centre.

Gilber Caro, detained arbitrarily in Venezuela for political reasons, was transferred to a new location without justification or notification to his lawyers or relatives in the early hours of 2 March. Since then, his lawyers and relatives made repeated and public requests for information on his fate and whereabouts, but authorities ignored their requests. It was not until he was brought to a trial hearing on 13 March that they finally could see him and confirm his new detention centre.

During the hearing, Gilber Caro was seen visibly distraught and in seemingly poor health. His relatives told Amnesty International they fear for his health and wellbeing while he remains in custody of the state.

Furthermore, Gilber Caro himself told the court he fears for his life and personal integrity at this new detention centre, the Fénix-Lara Penitentiary Community (Comunidad Penitenciaria Fénix-Lara) in Lara state, western Venezuela. This prison is known for violent riots.

Since his arbitrary transfer on 2 March, Venezuelan authorities continue denying his lawyers and relatives access and communication to Gilber Caro at the Fénix-Lara Penitentiary Community.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Demanding they immediately grant him free and private access to his family, and lawyers of his choosing;
- Demanding the authorities ensure Gilber Caro's physical and mental integrity are protected;
- Urging them to ensure full respect of Gilber Caro's rights to due process, fair trial and personal integrity.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 APRIL 2018 TO:

Minister of Penitentiary Services

Iris Varela
Avenida Norte 15 entre Avenida Este 0 y
Avenida Urdaneta
Caracas, Venezuela
Twitter: @IrisVarelaANC
Twitter: @mspenitenciario

**Salutation: Dear Minister/ Estimada
Señora Ministra**

Ombudsman

Alfredo Ruiz
Av. Urdaneta, Frente El Universal
Centro Financiero Latino, Piso 27
Caracas, Venezuela
Twitter: @Defensoria_Vzla
Fax: +58 212 507 7025

**Salutation: Mr Ombudsman/ Estimado
Señor Defensor del Pueblo**

And copies to:

Amnesty International Venezuela
AIVEN, Torre Phelps, Piso 17
Plaza Venezuela
Caracas, Venezuela
Twitter: @amnistia
Email: info@aiven.org

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HER EXCELLENCY ROCÍO MANEIRO, Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 1 Cromwell Road SW7 2HW, 020 7584 4206 or 020 7581 2776, Fax 020 7589 8887, despacho.londres@mppre.gob.ve embavenezuk@venezlon.co.uk info@venezlon.co.uk <http://reinounido.embajada.gob.ve/>

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 50/18. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr53/7992/2018/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 26 April 2017, Amnesty International launched a campaign demanding the release of Gilber Caro and 21 other politically motivated arbitrary detainees in Venezuela. The details of his case were documented in *Silenced by force: Politically motivated arbitrary detentions in Venezuela* (see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/docuemnts/amr53/6014/2017/en/>).

On 11 January 2017, Member of Parliament Gilber Caro was on his way home to Caracas, on the Guacara ring road, Carabobo state, central Venezuela, when officers of the Bolivarian Intelligence Service (SEBIN) arrested him. Gilber Caro was with Steyci Escalona, an activist for opposition party Popular Will (Voluntad Popular), who was also arrested and then granted conditional release from pre-trial detention in November on 24 November 2017.

That same day, the Vice-President of Venezuela explained in a TV address that a gun and explosives had been seized from Gilber Caro and Steyci Escalona, and stated that the Member of Parliament was involved in terrorist activities, indicating that Gilber Caro has clandestinely crossed the border to Colombia.

Gilber Caro was brought before a military court on 1 June and charged with stealing military equipment and treason ('sustracción de efectos militares' and 'traición a la patria'). Not only was his parliamentary immunity unduly violated, but he has also been deprived of his freedom, imprisoned without a warrant, and brought before a military court despite being a civilian.

On 2 March, Gilber Caro was arbitrarily removed from his detention centre in Carabobo state, central Venezuela, and transferred to a new facility in Lara state, western Venezuela, which is widely considered a high-risk centre for detainees.

During his detention, Gilber Caro has repeatedly denounced violations to his right to food and being subjected to cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment.

On 23 October, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions determined Gilber Caro's case constituted an arbitrary detention and demanded his immediate release.

Furthermore, on 27 February 2018 Amnesty International raised Gilber Caro's arbitrary detention before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights during a public hearing on citizen security and institutionality in Venezuela. During this hearing, Amnesty International denounced other cases of unlawful and irregular transfers of other arbitrary detainees, including Alexander Tirado, which exemplifies the risk of detainees being subjected to the arbitrary and unlawful actions of the Venezuelan authorities.

Further information on UA: 50/18 Index: AMR 53/7992/2018 Issue Date: 16 March 2018