



# Communique Committee of Experts

***The Committee of Experts of the MESECVI expresses its deep concern over the serious human rights violations suffered by human rights defender Martha Lía Grajales in Venezuela, which took place following her participation in a peaceful vigil alongside mothers demanding justice for their detained children. The Committee calls for urgent action to ensure her protection, liberty, and full respect for due process.***

Washington, DC, August 18, 2025. [The Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women “Belém do Pará Convention” \(MESECVI\)](#), is gravely concerned about the arbitrary detention and subsequent deprivation of liberty of human rights defender Martha Lía Grajales, which occurred on August 8, 2025, in Caracas, Venezuela, in the context of repression against women peacefully exercising their right to protest.

Based on information received by the Committee of Experts (CEVI), as well as reports widely disseminated in the media and reflected in statements by international organizations, on August 6, 2025, a group of mothers from the Committee of Mothers in Defense of the Truth, accompanied by Ms. Grajales, held a peaceful vigil in front of the Supreme Court of Justice to demand justice and the release of their children, who they believe are being arbitrarily detained. According to these reports, at around 9:30 p.m., after security forces had left, approximately 50 armed men violently stormed the gathering, physically assaulting participants and subjecting them to threats and verbal harassment. They also confiscated the identity cards and cell phones of more than 30 mothers and Ms. Grajales, documents essential to visit detainees. The Public Prosecutor’s Office did not accept the corresponding complaint.

According to complaints submitted by Ms. Grajales’ relatives and colleagues, two days later, on August 8, after participating in another peaceful gathering in front of the United Nations office in Caracas to draw attention to the August 6 assaults, she was intercepted and forced into an unmarked van in front of a National Bolivarian Police checkpoint, without intervention by the officers present. From that moment, and for nearly 96 hours, she remained disappeared, with officials denying knowledge of her whereabouts despite her being in custody. On August 9, the judiciary refused to admit a habeas corpus petition, obstructing access to justice and gravely violating her right to effective judicial remedies.

The same sources reported that on August 11, she was brought before the courts via teleconference, charged with conspiracy with a foreign government, criminal association,

and incitement to hatred, without the ability to appoint legal counsel of her choice. The only evidence presented was a visit to the public website of the organization *Surgentes*, arbitrarily interpreted to link her peaceful accompaniment work to alleged acts of destabilization.

Finally, according to the information received, on August 12 she was released under a reporting regime, but continues to face restrictions on her liberty, without judicial guarantees, and in a context of risk to her life and integrity. Serious concerns requiring urgent attention remain: her detention took place in circumstances comparable to an enforced disappearance; the acts form part of a campaign of intimidation linked to her defense of the assaulted mothers; and since her detention, she has been the target of a smear campaign in public media, calling into question not only her work as a defender, but also exposing her to further risk.

In light of these widely publicized complaints, formally submitted to the Committee, the CEVI recalls that the disappearance and detention without due process of a human rights defender constitute serious violations of the international obligations assumed by the Venezuelan State under the Belém do Pará Convention, in particular Article 4, which recognizes every woman's right to life, to physical, mental, and moral integrity, to personal liberty and security, to not be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and to freely exercise the right to defend human rights; as well as Article 7(b), which imposes on States the duty to act with due diligence to prevent, investigate, and punish violence against women. This situation also contravenes provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which enshrines the right to personal liberty and security and access to effective judicial remedies against violations of fundamental rights (Articles 2 and 9).

These events reflect a troubling repressive response against women exercising their right to defend human rights and to protest peacefully. The assault suffered by the mothers during the August 6 vigil and the subsequent arbitrary detention of Ms. Grajales are directly linked and share the same intent: to discourage and punish peaceful activism, restrict civic space, and weaken support networks for victims of human rights violations. The connection between Ms. Grajales' accompaniment work and her deprivation of liberty confirms that the legitimate exercise of human rights defense and the demand for justice continues to be the target of serious reprisals, contrary to Venezuela's international obligations.

The Committee of Experts therefore urges the Venezuelan State to immediately ensure the protection, full liberty, and security of Martha Lía Grajales; to conduct an independent, thorough, and impartial investigation into her detention, initial enforced disappearance, restrictions on her legal defense, and the smear campaign against her; and to adopt urgent measures to protect the mothers assaulted during the August 6 vigil, ensuring their effective access to justice. The CEVI reaffirms its solidarity with Martha Lía Grajales, her family, her colleagues, and the mothers assaulted during the peaceful vigil, and will remain vigilant until her rights are fully guaranteed and Venezuela fulfills its international obligations.

The Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention, through its Committee of Experts, places itself at the disposal of the Venezuelan State for any technical assistance it may require in fulfilling its obligations under the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women.

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*The Committee of Experts is the technical body of the MESECVI, responsible for the analysis and evaluation of the implementation process of the Convention of Belém do Pará. It is made up of independent Experts, appointed by each of the States Parties from among their nationals, who perform their duties in a personal capacity.*