

## Venezuela bans Attorney General from leaving country; UN rights office voices concern

30 June 2017 – Amid the ongoing violence in Venezuela, the United Nations human rights office today expressed concern about a decision by the Supreme Court to null the appointment of the Attorney General, freeze her assets and ban her from leaving the country.

“We are [concerned](#) that the Supreme Court’s decisions appear to seek to strip her Office of its mandate and responsibilities as enshrined in the Venezuelan Constitution, and undermine the Office’s independence,” said Rupert Colville, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), addressing journalists in Geneva.

The Venezuelan Supreme Court on 28 June decided to begin removal proceedings against Attorney General Luisa Ortega, freeze her assets and ban her from leaving the country. It also transferred some of the Attorney General’s, until now, exclusive functions to the Ombudsperson.

Mr. Colville said that the dismissal of judicial officials should be subject to strict criteria “that do not undermine the independent and impartial performance of their functions.”

UN Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors stipulate that governments should ensure that prosecutors can do their jobs without intimidation, harassment or improper interference, among other things.

OHCHR noted that since March, the Attorney General has taken “important steps to defend human rights, documenting deaths during the wave of demonstrations, insisting on the need for due process and the importance of the separation of powers, and calling for people who have been arbitrarily detained to be immediately released.”

According to the Attorney General’s Office, 75 have been killed and some 1,419 injured so far in the two months of protests.

Mr. Colville urged “all powers of the Venezuelan State to respect the Constitution and the rule of law,” and called on the Government to ensure that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of opinion and expression are guaranteed.

“We also call on all people in Venezuela to only use peaceful means to make themselves heard and urge all parties to renounce violence and harassment of opponents,” he continued.