



By: TA | AP Brief

Venezuela releases dozens of prisoners following meeting between Trump and Rodriguez



Human rights groups in Venezuela said that significant numbers of political prisoners were released in the South American country on Saturday, though the total number of those freed has still not been determined.

The prisoner releases follow a meeting Tuesday between Interim President Delcy Rodríguez and President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

In her speech at the UN, Rodríguez said Venezuela, whose government has been widely accused of jailing dissidents, stealing elections and stifling freedom of speech, has “begun a **process of democratic transformation.**”

In a message posted on X, the Venezuelan human rights group Clippve said seven political prisoners were released from a prison on the outskirts of Caracas on Saturday morning, including Wilder Vasquez, a university student who had been sentenced to five years in prison for participating in a 2018 plot to kill former President Nicolás Maduro.

Vasquez has long claimed he was innocent. His sentence had expired in 2023.

In another X message, the human rights group Justicia Encuentro y Perdon said that 29 people were released from Venezuelan prisons Saturday, including 12 inmates who were on its list of political prisoners.

“Seventeen of those freed were not in our database of political prisoners,” the organization said. “Our team continues to verify information to update our registry.”

Venezuela’s government did not make any statements on Saturday’s events.

Rodríguez's administration denies the country is jailing dissidents.

However, it has said it is making an effort to release people who have been investigated or condemned for committing crimes that include attacking the nation’s institutions, as it seeks to promote national reconciliation.

Venezuela continues to hold political prisoners

Hundreds of people have been **released from Venezuela’s prisons** since **Maduro was captured** in January in a U.S. military raid and taken to New York, where he faces drug trafficking charges.

But human rights groups argue that Venezuela continues to hold political prisoners.

In a message posted on Friday, Justicia Encuentro y Perdon said that there are still 450 political prisoners in Venezuela, including 20 foreigners.

Rodríguez said that there will be elections in Venezuela but did not say when

In a speech at the U.N. General Assembly on Thursday, Rodríguez said that there “will be elections in Venezuela” but did not say when.

Democracy activists and human rights groups have been calling on Venezuela's government to hold new elections that would grant legitimacy to its institutions and express the will of the Venezuelan people.

After Maduro was removed, Rodríguez, who was his vice president, stepped in as interim leader, and was given a six-month mandate by the nation’s supreme court.

That mandate has now expired, raising questions about Rodríguez’s legitimacy.

At least 1,800 people were arrested in Venezuela in a crackdown that followed the nation’s **2024 presidential election**, which Maduro was widely accused of stealing.

Dozens of opposition activists went into hiding to avoid arrest and some also left the country, including opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, who smuggled herself out of Venezuela last year to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

Machado has been threatened with arrest by the Rodriguez administration if she returns to the country.