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COMISIÓN PARA LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS
DEL ESTADO ZULIA

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OVERALL SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE STATE OF ZULIA JULY 2021 SUMMARY

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JULY 2021 SUMMARY

Commission for Human Rights of the state of Zulia (Codhez)

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

This *July 2021 Summary* on the overall human rights situation in Zulia documents acts of violence that involve security officials of the Venezuelan State, causing the death of 158 people due to extrajudicial executions from January to June of this year. The data on police violence and deaths from extrajudicial or potentially illegal executions discussed here derive from monitoring national and regional media.

In this regard, according to our *2020 Annual Report*¹, last year in Zulia, 419 violent events involved State security officials, resulting in a total of 586 deaths during that year.

Specifically, between January and June 2020, 373 people were killed due to 261 violent events with the participation of State officials². For this same period of 2021, 158 deaths occurred, which implies a decrease of -57.64%, and in addition, the death of a State security official was reported, and two more were injured. Regarding the number of violent events, for the first six months of 2021, 122 violent events were verified, representing a decrease of -53.26% compared to this same period of 2020.

As mentioned repeatedly, the right to life cannot be suspended in any case and under any circumstances. Its protection constitutes an international and constitutional mandate, whose main guarantor is the Venezuelan State, which must ensure its prevalence and the physical integrity of all people. This obligation is outlined in various provisions, among others, Article 43 of the *Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*³, Article 3 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*⁴, Article 6 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*⁵, and Article 4 of the *American Convention on Human Rights*⁶.

Likewise, the protection of the right to life by the Venezuelan State implies “...*preventing the arbitrary deprivation of life, in particular through an appropriate framework of laws, regulations, precautions, and procedures. It also demands accountability for arbitrary deprivation of life wherever it occurs*”⁷.

On the other hand, in this newsletter, in order to promote the right to life and the right to health of Zulianos, we continue to report incidents and cases related to the Covid-19 pandemic in the region. Zulia remains among the top states in the country with high official numbers of infections and the number of deaths, amid a problematic structural crisis of the public health system. A disorderly, inequitable and slow vaccination process; and an increase in the deaths of health personnel in the region, in the face of an almost inexistent state response, all of which constitutes a systematic and flagrant violation of human rights.

1. ACTS OF POLICE VIOLENCE

The lack of ethical and human rights training of the region's citizen security officials is exposed by the constant operations of police violence that take place without any control and punishment, generating successive violations of the human rights of victims and their families, who do not find justice regarding these State actions. The attack against the right to life and personal integrity becomes a common factor in the face of these actions—police violence—and omissions—the absence of justice—of the Venezuelan State. This disregards the constitutional provisions that recognize life as one of the highest values of the Venezuelan legal and action system (Article 2).

Deaths that occur as a result of violent events involving State security officials are considered extrajudicial executions or potentially unlawful deaths, that is, deaths caused by “...by acts or omissions of the State, its forces or agents, or may be attributable to the State, in violation of its obligation to respect the right to life”⁸, constituting crimes against humanity following the provisions of Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court⁹, the text of which provides: “1. For the purposes of this Statute, a ‘crime against humanity’ shall be understood as any of the following acts when committed as part of a generalized or systematic attack against a civilian population and with knowledge of said attack: a) Murder...”.

In this sense, Article 29 of the Venezuelan Constitution stipulates that the State is under the obligation to investigate and punish crimes against human rights committed by its authorities, and adds that the actions “...to punish crimes against humanity, serious human rights violations and war crimes are not subject to statute of limitations... The aforementioned crimes are excluded from the benefits that may lead to their impunity, including pardons and amnesty”.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights¹⁰ has repeatedly denounced the existence of extrajudicial executions in the framework of citizen security operations in the country, whose victims are generally young men, with low economic status and from popular residential areas, whose deaths are not investigated and instead are attributed to events such as confrontations or resistance to authority, with disqualification of the victim and threats and intimidation against witnesses and family members, all of which creates a context of impunity and lack of punishment for these behaviors.

Faced with these situations, since 1989, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations adopted the *Principles on the effective prevention and investigation of extra-legal, arbitrary, or summary executions*¹¹. To this end, as a prevention mechanism, it states that the States must guarantee strict control regarding the officials responsible for the capture, detention, arrest, custody and imprisonment of suspects, as well as all officials authorized by law to use force and firearms, for which a clearly defined command hierarchy is necessary. Likewise, in the event of deaths due to police violence, exhaustive, immediate, and impartial investigations must be guaranteed to determine the cause, manner, and time of death, the person responsible and the procedure or practice that may have caused it, and to protect family members, complainants, witnesses and other people who participate in the investigation. In the same vein, States must guarantee judicial procedures for the appearance and trial of the persons identified as perpetrators of these violations to the right to life and ensure that the victims’ families receive fair and sufficient compensation.

Violations of the right to life and impunity

The right to life, considered as an essential element for the achievement of the rest of the human rights, represents a universally recognized fundamental right whose arbitrary deprivation is prohibited at all times and under any circumstance. For this reason, the Venezuelan State must prevent any violation of people's lives and, to this end, it must regulate an appropriate framework of norms, procedures, and institutions that serve as support for that prevention and for timely and adequate punishment in the event of the occurrence of the violation.

The *Minnesota Protocol*¹² states that to ensure the right to life, States must respect, protect and fulfill the right to life; and investigate potentially wrongful deaths, ensure accountability, and provide compensation for such violations.

The Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions¹³ has stated that the “...*Human Rights Committee recognized that the right to life should not be*

interpreted in a restrictive sense, and observed that this right does not impose on the States only negative obligations (such as not to kill), but also positive obligations (such as protecting life), in order to guarantee access to the basic conditions necessary to sustain life”.

Therefore, the main guarantors of the right to life are the agents attached to the Venezuelan State, who must comply with and enforce the law with respect and protection of human dignity. Therefore, mechanisms must be established to guarantee internal discipline and external control and adequate supervision of State officials. Likewise, in the event of possible violations of the right to life by State security agents, appropriate mechanisms must be guaranteed for the reception and processing of complaints and the opening of prompt, competent, exhaustive, and impartial investigations that help determine criminal liability.

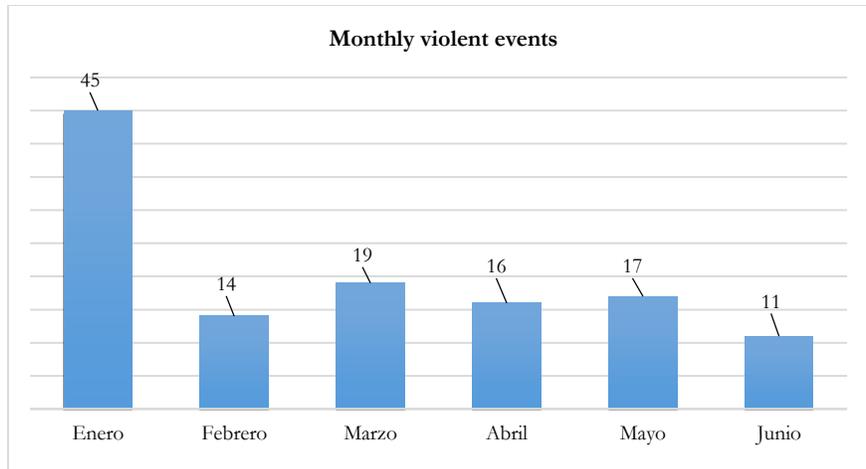
In the event of violations of the right to life as a result of abuses of power by the State security agents, the State is under the obligation to undertake the respective investigations, trials and sanctions, not only to punish the illicit conduct of its agents, but rather to send a message of justice to society that serves as historical memory to prevent the future occurrence of similar events. In these cases, the State must focus on supporting and protecting the victim and their family, guaranteeing access and prompt reparation for the damage suffered.

In general terms, it is highlighted that victims are understood to be “...*the persons who, individually or collectively, have suffered damages, including physical or mental injuries, emotional suffering, financial loss or substantial impairment of fundamental rights, as a consequence of actions or omissions that violate criminal legislation in force in the member states, including that which outlaws abuse of power*”¹⁴. In the same order, the expression victim “...*also includes, where appropriate, family members or dependents who have an immediate relationship with the direct victim and people who have suffered damage due to intervening to assist the victim in danger or to prevent victimization*”.

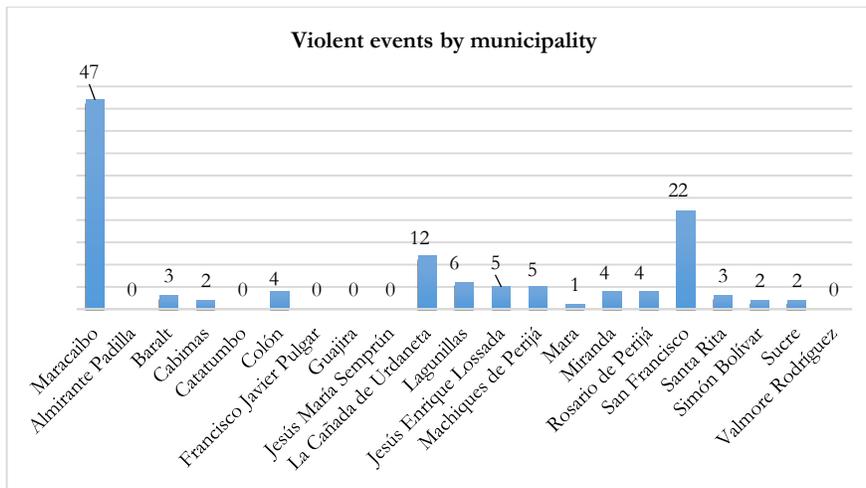
In response to these approaches, the violence deployed by the security forces attached to the Venezuelan State is once again highly worrying, whose results for this first semester of 2021 show 158 deceased persons identified as alleged criminals, a dead security official, and two injured security officials injured, without further details on investigations or inquiries to determine the respective criminal and disciplinary responsibilities.

As noted, between January and June 2021, there were 122 violent events with participation of security forces of the Venezuelan State. Meanwhile, for the same period in 2020, 261 events of this type were recorded¹⁵, while between January and June 2019, at least 187 violent events were caused by police intervention¹⁶.

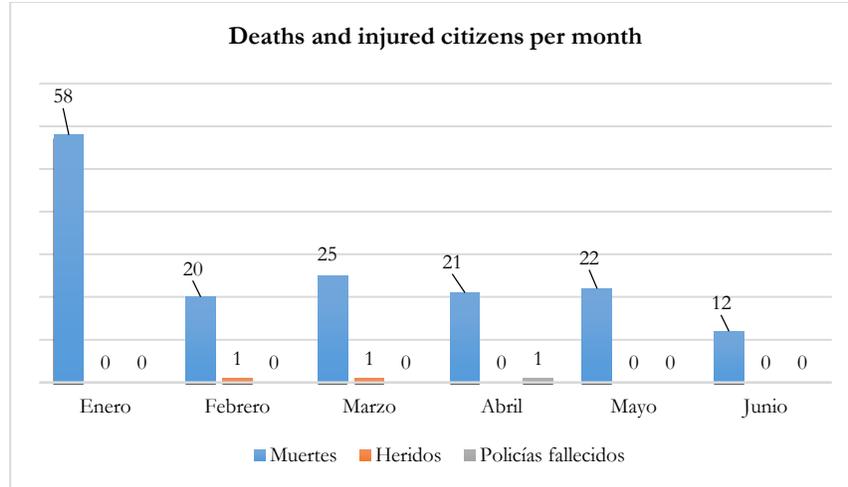
Of these 122 violent events in the first half of 2021, all were classified by the authorities as confrontations between the police forces and alleged criminals. The most violent month was January, with 45 events of this type.



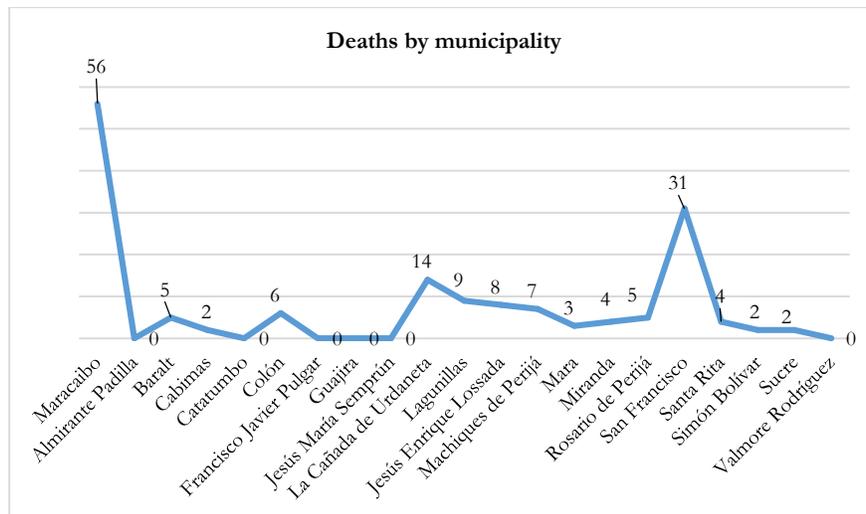
Regarding the distribution of violent events by municipality, Maracaibo continues to be the municipality with the highest number of occurrences of this type, followed by San Francisco and La Cañada de Urdaneta. Police violence in these municipalities was noticeable: 47 violent events took place in Maracaibo (38.52%), 22 in San Francisco (18.03%), and 12 in La Cañada de Urdaneta (9.84%). On the other hand, in Lagunillas, 6 violent events occurred (4.92%), while in Jesús Enrique Lossada and in Machiques de Perijá, 5 events occurred in the course of this first semester.



These violent events gave rise to 158 murdered people classified as alleged criminals by the authorities. Likewise, the death of a member of the State security forces was reported, and two policemen were injured during these violent events. The first month of the year was the one that presented the highest number of deaths in regards to this first semester, since there were 58 deaths due to police violence in January, that is, 36.71% of the total number of people killed from this month to June. In March, there were 25 deaths (15.82%), and one police officer was injured. May comes in third place with 22 deaths (13.92%), followed by April with 21 deaths (13.29%) and a deceased police officer. In February, 20 people were killed (12.66%), and one police officer was reported injured. At the same time, June recorded the lowest number in this regard, with 12 people dead (7.59%).

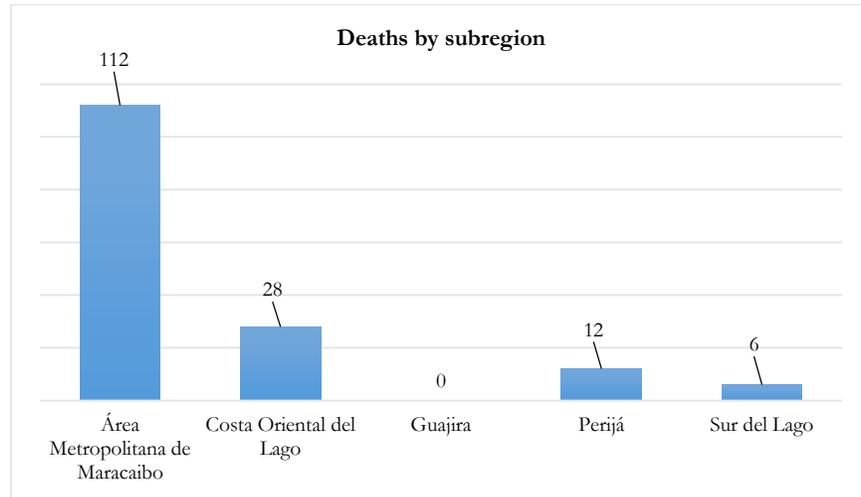


In correspondence with the above, Maracaibo, San Francisco and La Cañada de Urdaneta were the municipalities with the highest number of deaths from police violence. Thus, Maracaibo occupies the first place with 56 deaths (35.44%). San Francisco recorded 31 deaths (19.62%). In Cañada de Urdaneta, 14 deaths (8.86%) were reported. Lagunillas (5.70%), Jesús Enrique Lossada (5.06%), Machiques de Perijá (4.43%) and Colón (3.80%) recorded 9, 8, 7 and 6 deaths due to violence in the hands of Venezuelan State security forces, respectively. It should be noted that the municipalities Almirante Padilla, Catatumbo, Francisco Javier Pulgar, Guajira, Jesús María Semprún and Valmore Rodríguez, did not present deaths from police violence during the reported period.

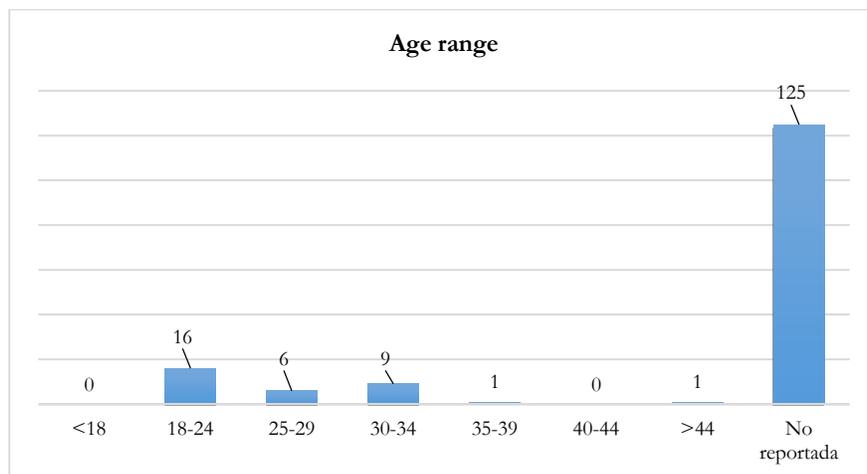


In consideration of the number of deaths distributed by subregion, it stands out that the highest number was again concentrated in the Metropolitan Area of Maracaibo (Maracaibo, San Francisco, La Cañada de Urdaneta, Mara and Jesús Enrique Lossada) summing up to a total of 112 (70.89 %). Meanwhile, on the Eastern Coast of the Lake (Miranda, Cabimas, Lagunillas, Valmore Rodríguez, Baralt, Simón Bolívar, Santa Rita and Sucre) there were 28 deaths due to police violence (17.72%), and one police officer died. In the Perijá subregion (Machiques and Rosario de Perijá) there were 12 deaths (7.59%), while in the South Lake subregion (Colón, Catatumbo, Jesús María Semprún

and Francisco Javier Pulgar) there were 6 deaths (3.80%). On this occasion, the Guajira subregion (Guajira and Almirante Padilla) did not report deaths of this type during the period analyzed.



Of the 158 people killed during the first half of 2021, 125 people could not identify their ages (79.11% of cases). This information is necessary to be aware of the group of people most vulnerable to this form of human rights violation by the Venezuelan State, demonstrating the government's indifference in knowing about the circumstances that gave rise to these deaths. In this sense, it was only possible to identify the ages of 33 deceased persons, most of them young adults: 16 between 18 and 24 years old (10.13%); 6 between 25 and 29 years old (3.80%); 9 between 30 and 34 years old (5.70%); 1 between 35 and 39 years old (0.63%); and one older than 44 years (0.63%). It should be noted that there were no findings of deaths of people under 18 years old or between 40 and 44 years old.



In this first semester of 2021, no female deaths due to police violence were reported.

Excessive use of public force

One of the most serious human rights violations is the use of public force against the life and integrity of persons. State security agents many times exacerbate their powers, taking advantage of

their status of power, and systematically disregard their duties of protection and defense of conventional and constitutional prerogatives, such as their participation, collaboration, authorization or consent in the practice of extrajudicial executions.

In the face of this background, it is necessary to reaffirm the criteria of ethics and the obligation to respect human rights on the part of State security agents, who are responsible for enforcing the norm but within the limits of human dignity, because of what Otherwise, it would become an offender of the same law that it has to guarantee. It would unleash a series of consequences with an impact on society, such as erosion of public trust, obstruction of the effectiveness of justice, isolation of the Police concerning the community, punishment of innocent people, denial of justice to the crime victim for their suffering, police agencies that are more reactive than preventive in their approach to crime, decline in the reputation of the agents and institutions of the public authority, and aggravation of public disorder and chaos¹⁷.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in its *Human Rights Standards and Practice for the Police*¹⁸, establishes a series of rules and skills that guide the execution of the activities of State security agents in their relation to human rights. Specifically, regarding the use of force, the preeminence of respect for the right to life, personal safety, and not being subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment is raised. For this reason, State security agents in the exercise of their functions must resort to non-violent means, for which they must receive adequate training; use force only when it is strictly necessary and for lawful law enforcement purposes, without exceptions or excuses; force must always be proportional to lawful objectives and applied sparingly; minimize damage and injuries; provision of a series of means that allows a differentiated use of force, for which security agents must receive adequate training.

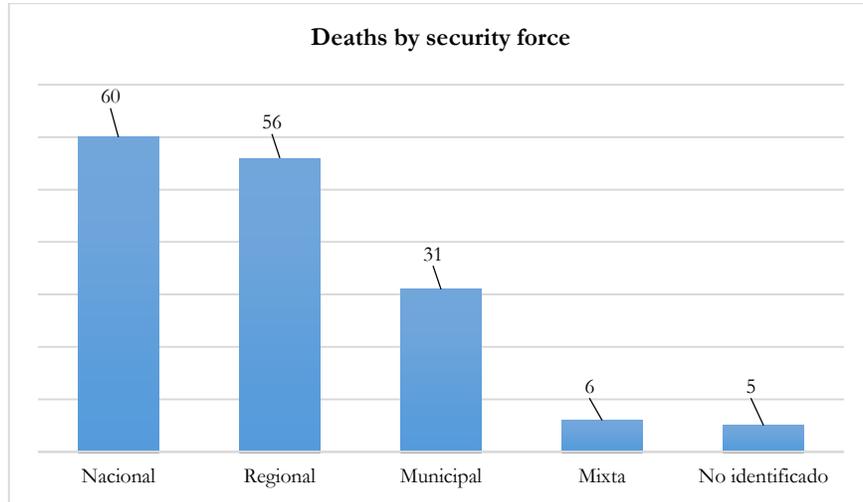
The use of public force, and in particular of firearms, must be exceptional and justified. In this regard, the *Regulations* above foresee specific admissible circumstances for the use of firearms by State security agents. Thus, they may only be used in extreme situations, either in self-defense or in defense of others against an imminent threat of death or serious injury; to avoid a particularly serious crime that involves a severe danger to life; to stop or prevent the escape of the person who poses that danger and opposes efforts to eliminate it; and in all cases, only when the least extreme measures are insufficient. It is emphasized that the use of force and firearms with the intention of causing death will only be allowed when it is strictly unavoidable to protect the life of a person¹⁹.

As mentioned, to comply with these norms and practices, ethical behavior and values of respect, observance, and protection of human rights are necessary, which implies an adjustment of the tasks of citizen security bodies to basic conditions of social coexistence and justice, such as those mentioned in the *Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials*²⁰: Article 2: “*In the execution of their duties, law enforcement officials shall respect and protect and maintain human dignity and defend the human rights of all people*”; Article 3: “*Law enforcement officials may use force only when strictly necessary and to the extent required by the performance of their duties.*”

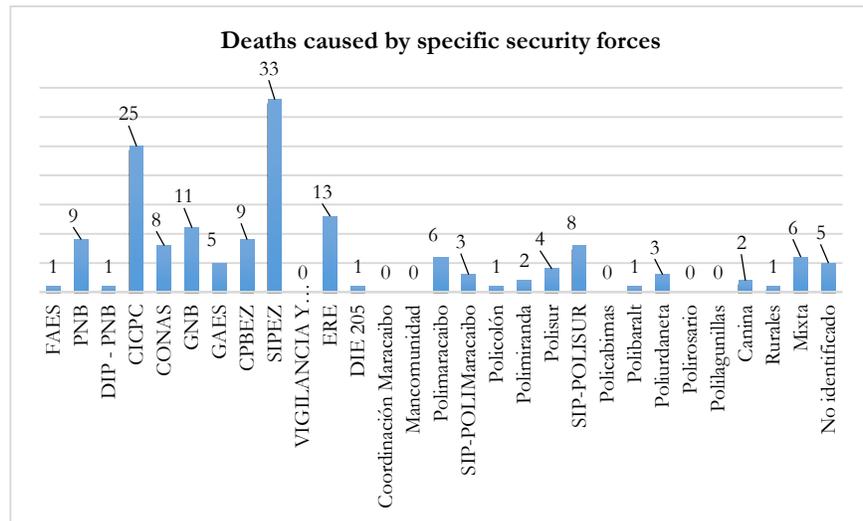
In this first semester of 2021, as already mentioned, 158 deaths occurred as a result of police violence carried out by citizen security forces of the Venezuelan State. This police violence often reveals excessive use of public force, improper and unjustified use of firearms, and abuse of power.

In Venezuela, according to their order of competence, national, regional and municipal security bodies are distinguished, that is, depending on whether their assignment belongs to the

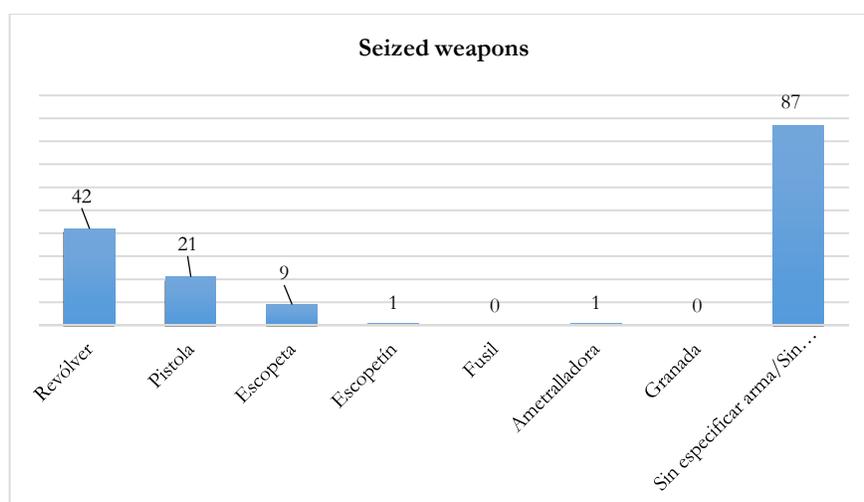
national, regional, or municipal executive branches. In this sense, during the first six months of this year, the most lethal security forces were those belonging to the national government and the regional government. Indeed, the highest number of deaths is attributable to security forces attached to the national government (60, that is, 37.97% of the cases in the January-June period), followed by regional security forces (which killed 56 people, 35.44%). For their part, the municipal security forces caused the death of 31 people (19.62%). In addition, the joint actions of mixed commissions caused the death of 6 people (3.80%), while there were six murdered by security forces that could not be specified (3.16%).



Four security forces caused the highest number of deaths. Thus, specifically, the SIPEZ²¹ caused the death of 33 people (20.89%), the CICPC²² of 25 (15.82%), the ERE²³ of 13 (8.23%), and the GNB²⁴ of 11 (6.96%). As can be seen, there are two security forces attached to the national government –CICPC and GNB– and two to the regional government –SIPEZ and ERE–. Likewise, the PNB²⁵ (5.70%) and the CPBEZ²⁶ (5.70%) caused the death of 9 people each. The CONAS²⁷ caused the death of 8 people (5.06%), as did SIP-POLISUR²⁸ (5.06%). Also, both the Polimaracaibo (3.80%) and mixed commissions (3.80%) caused the death of 6 people each.



The presence and use of firearms characterize these violent events. In this first semester of 2021, the seizure of different types and calibers of firearms was again reported for a total of 161, supposedly used by alleged criminals in confrontations against State security forces. The characteristics of 87 (54.04%) of these seizures were not specified or reported. 42 revolvers (26.09%), 21 pistols (13.04%), 9 shotguns (5.59%), 1 small shotgun (0.62%), and 1 machine gun (0.62%) were recorded.



2. REPORT OF EVENTS OF POLICE VIOLENCE BY MONTH OF OCCURRENCE

January

In January, 45 violent events occurred with the participation of officials from State security agencies, all classified by the authorities as supposed confrontations between alleged criminals and the security forces, resulting in 58 deaths, with no casualties among state agents. That is to say, there was an average of 1.45 daily violent events with the intervention of State security forces and this represented 36.71% of deaths due to police violence in the first half of 2021. Similarly, for this month, the number of violent incidents and deaths by subregion is distributed as follows:

- Metropolitan Area of Maracaibo:
 - 36 violent events (41.38% of the total for the first semester in this subregion), distributed as follows: 14 in Maracaibo; 12 in San Francisco; 8 in La Cañada de Urdaneta; 1 in Mara; and 1 in Jesús Enrique Lossada.
 - 48 deaths (42.86% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 17 in Maracaibo; 18 in San Francisco; 9 in La Cañada de Urdaneta; 3 in Mara; and 1 in Jesús Enrique Lossada.
- East Coast of Lake Maracaibo:
 - 4 violent events (18.18% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 1 in Miranda; 1 in Lagunillas; 1 in Santa Rita; and 1 in Sucre.
 - 5 deaths (17.86% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 1 in Miranda; 2 in Lagunillas; 1 in Santa Rita; 1 in Sucre.
- Perijá:
 - 4 violent events (44.44% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 1 in Machiques de Perijá; and 3 in Rosario de Perijá.
 - 4 deaths (33.33% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 1 in Machiques de Perijá; and 3 in Rosario de Perijá.

- South of Lake Maracaibo:
 - 1 violent event (25.00% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): in Colón.
 - 1 deceased (16.67% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): in Colón.

There were no events or deaths due to police violence in the Guajira subregion.

February

In February, 14 violent events occurred with the participation of officials from State security forces, all classified by the authorities as supposed confrontations between alleged criminals and the security forces, resulting in 20 deaths and a wounded police officer. That is to say, there was an average of 0.48 daily violent events with the intervention of the State security forces, and this represented 12.66% of deaths due to police violence in the first half of 2021. Similarly, for this month, the number of violent incidents and deaths by subregion is distributed as follows:

- Metropolitan Area of Maracaibo:
 - 10 violent events (11.49% of the total for the first semester in this subregion), distributed as follows: 7 in Maracaibo; 2 in San Francisco; and Jesús 1 in Enrique Lossada.
 - Fourteen deaths (12.50% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 10 in Maracaibo; 2 in San Francisco; and 2 in Jesús Enrique Lossada.
- East Coast of Lake Maracaibo:
 - Three violent events (13.64% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 2 in Lagunillas; 1 in and Simón Bolívar.
 - Four deaths (14.29% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 3 in Lagunillas; and 1 in Simón Bolívar.
- Perijá:
 - One violent event (11.11% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): in Rosario de Perijá.
 - Two deaths (16.67% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): both in Rosario de Perijá.

There were no events or deaths due to police violence in the Guajira and South Lake Maracaibo subregions.

March

In March, 19 violent incidents occurred with the participation of officials from State security forces, all classified by the authorities as supposed confrontations between alleged criminals and the security forces, resulting in 25 deaths and a wounded police officer. That is to say, there was an average of 0.63 daily violent events with the intervention of State security forces, and this represented 15.82% of the deaths due to police violence in the first half of 2021. Similarly, for this month, the number of violent incidents and deaths by subregion is distributed as follows:

- Metropolitan Area of Maracaibo:
 - 13 violent events (14.94% of the total for the first semester in this subregion), distributed as follows: 8 in Maracaibo; 3 in San Francisco; 1 in La Cañada de Urdaneta; and 1 in Jesús Enrique Lossada.
 - 16 deaths (14.29% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 10 in Maracaibo; 3 in San Francisco; 1 in La Cañada de Urdaneta 1; and 2 in Jesús Enrique Lossada.
- East Coast of Lake Maracaibo:

- 3 violent events (13.64% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 2 in Baralt; and 1 in Sucre.
- 5 deaths (17.86% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 4 in Baralt; and 1 in Sucre.
- Perijá:
 - 2 violent events (22.22% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): both in Machiques de Perijá.
 - 2 deaths (16.67% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): both in Machiques de Perijá.
- South of Lake Maracaibo:
 - 1 violent event (25.00% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): in Colón.
 - 2 deaths (33.33% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): both in Colón.

There were no events or deaths due to police violence in the Guajira subregion.

April

In April, 16 violent incidents occurred with the participation of officials from State security agencies, all classified by the authorities as supposed confrontations between alleged criminals and the security forces, resulting in 21 dead people, and a dead security official. In other words, there was an average of 0.53 daily violent events with the intervention of State security forces, and this represented 13.29% of deaths due to police violence in the first half of 2021. Similarly, for this month the number of violent incidents and deaths by subregion is distributed as follows:

- Metropolitan Area of Maracaibo:
 - 10 violent events (11.49% of the total for the first semester in this subregion), distributed as follows: 5 in Maracaibo 5; 3 in San Francisco; and Jesús 2 in Enrique Lossada.
 - 12 deaths (10.71% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 6 in Maracaibo; 3 in San Francisco; and 3 in Jesús Enrique Lossada.
- East Coast of Lake Maracaibo:
 - 3 violent events (13.64% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 1 in Cabimas; 1 in Lagunillas; and 1 in Simón Bolívar.
 - 4 deaths (14.29% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 1 in Cabimas; 2 in Lagunillas 2; and 1 in Simón Bolívar 1. It should be noted that in the Lagunillas municipality, the death of a security official attached to the CICPC was reported.
- Perijá:
 - 1 violent event (11.11% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): in Machiques de Perijá.
 - 2 deaths (16.67% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): both in Machiques de Perijá.
- South of Lake Maracaibo:
 - 2 violent events (50.00% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): both in Colón.
 - 3 deaths (50.00% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): in Colón.

There were no events or deaths due to police violence in the Guajira subregion.

May

In May, 17 violent events occurred with the participation of officials from State security agencies, all classified by the authorities as alleged confrontations between alleged criminals and security forces, resulting in 22 deaths, with no casualties among state agents. That is, there was an average of 0.55 daily violent events with the intervention of the State security forces, and this represents 13.92% of deaths due to police violence in the first half of 2021. Similarly, for this month, the number of violent incidents and deaths by subregion is distributed as follows:

- Metropolitan Area of Maracaibo:
 - 10 violent events (11.49% of the total for the first semester in this subregion), distributed as follows: 6 in Maracaibo; 2 in San Francisco; and, 2 in La Cañada de Urdaneta.
 - 13 deaths (11.61% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 6 in Maracaibo; 5 in San Francisco; 2 in La Cañada de Urdaneta.
- East Coast of Lake Maracaibo:
 - 6 violent events (27.27% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 3 in Miranda; 1 in Lagunillas; and 2 in Santa Rita.
 - 7 deaths (25.00% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 3 in Miranda, 1 in Lagunillas; and 3 in Santa Rita.
- Perijá:
 - 1 violent event (11.11% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): in Machiques de Perijá.
 - 2 deaths (16.67% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): both in Machiques de Perijá.

There were no events or deaths due to police violence in the Guajira and South Lake Maracaibo subregions.

June

In June, 11 violent events occurred with the participation of officials from State security agencies, all classified by the authorities as supposed confrontations between alleged criminals and security forces, resulting in 12 deaths, with no casualties among state agents. That is to say, there was an average of 0.37 daily violent events with the intervention of the State security forces, and this represents 7.59% of deaths due to police violence in the first half of 2021. Similarly, for this month, the number of violent incidents and deaths by subregion is distributed as follows:

- Metropolitan Area of Maracaibo:
 - 8 violent events (9.20% of the total for the first semester in this subregion), distributed as follows: 7 in Maracaibo; and 1 in La Cañada de Urdaneta.
 - 9 deaths (8.04% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 7 in Maracaibo; and 2 in La Cañada de Urdaneta.
- East Coast of Lake Maracaibo:
 - 3 violent events (13.64% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): 1 in Cabimas; 1 in Lagunillas; 1 in and Baralt.
 - 3 deaths (10.71% of the total for the first semester in this subregion): in 1 in Cabimas; 1 in Lagunillas; and 1 in Baralt.

There were no events or deaths due to police violence in the Guajira, Perijá, and South Lake Maracaibo subregions.

3. GENERAL SITUATION OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN ZULIA

June went by with profound misinformation and dispersion regarding the vaccination process in Zulia. One of the first reports that emerged at the beginning of the month was the announcement of the militarization of the areas where vaccines are found in the region, a measure taken by the governor in light of the alleged sale of vaccines on the black market nationwide²⁹. In the same order, there were reports regarding the installation of four pilot centers, including the Palace of Events in Maracaibo, and seven vaccination points in the region, and it was announced, according to the governor, that for the month of June they would be 442,000 people vaccinated, with a daily average of 14,735 vaccinated people, out of the 4,296,027 Zulianos registered in the *patria platform*³⁰. By that date, a total of 193,340 doses of vaccines against Covid-19 - 65,000 Sputnik V and 128,340 Sinopharm VeroCell - would have arrived in Zulia, which would be used to vaccinate health personnel from both public and private centers³¹.

According to the governor, from the beginning of the second phase of vaccination - there was no information about any first phase - until June 10, 23,904 vaccines had been administered. At the same time, he reported on the deployment of security measures aimed at supervising the sale of medicines against Covid-19, in the face of complaints of alleged sales with surcharges and conditional sales³². By the end of June, the governor declared that 200,000 people had been vaccinated and confirmed that the public health system continues to guarantee medical care and treatment against Covid-19³³.

In any case, complaints about the collapse of the region's health system continue. According to testimonies, in the *centros de diagnóstico integral* (comprehensive diagnostic centers, CDI) there are no PCR reagents, so the people who go there are sent to the University Hospital, where they are informed that the 20 daily tests they perform are intended for medical personnel. In other centers such as the Health Institute, the results take up to 20 days. Meanwhile, tests for Covid-19 in private clinics are priced between USD 60 and 80. It also emerged that medical personnel from the University Hospital recommend that infected people be treated at home because there are no supplies, medications, or personnel who provide appropriate attention in that institution. Contrary to this reality we find the statements of the governor, who has repeatedly affirmed that the situation is under control and there are enough beds for coronavirus patients³⁴.

This complex panorama worsens if the difficult daily conditions regarding the disease that the Zuliano must face are considered. Not having money for treatment, the unbearable lack of services such as electricity and drinking water, food prices, the absence of public transport, the shortage of cash, and the acute problem of fuel in the region, build a scenario of anguish, discouragement, sadness and unprecedented restlessness in the entity.

The truth is that for the first week of June there were 8 more deaths of health professionals nationwide. Of these deaths, 6 corresponded to Zulia: 3 nurses and 3 doctors³⁵. Later, the death of two more doctors was added³⁶. From the beginning of the month until June 12, the death of 10 doctors in the region was reported³⁷. By June 17th, 14 members of the health personnel had died from Covid-19 in the course of that month³⁸. Then, the deaths of 4 doctors were reported between June 19 and 21³⁹. Until that moment, there were 18 members of the health personnel who had died from difficulties associated with Covid-19 during the month of June, for which, on average, one death occurred every 29 hours⁴⁰. According to Doctors United for Venezuela, June closed with 651 deaths

of people belonging to the health sector nationwide since the pandemic began, of which 131 correspond only to the state of Zulia⁴¹.

Given this, there are multiple complaints about the need for vaccination of health personnel in the region, since it is estimated that only 4% of said personnel of the entity have received the first dose of the vaccine, as stated by the President of the Zulian Bioanalyst Association⁴². This coupled with complaints about the ignorance of the whereabouts of 40.7% of the vaccines that have entered the country, because of the supposed 3,230,000 vaccines that have arrived in the country -since February 2021-, there is no public evidence of 1,315. 353 doses⁴³.

According to official spokespersons, as of June 22, 813,877 people had been vaccinated nationwide, which means that only 3.69% of the vaccines have been administered to achieve immunization in Venezuela (813,877 of people compared to 22,000,000 of people, equivalent to 70% of the population), so 96.3% of the population is still missing, a question that does not correspond to the percentages reported by the national government, according to which the population already vaccinated reaches 11%⁴⁴. In summary, the issue of vaccination in Venezuela is characterized by uncertainty, delay, misinformation and state disorder, coupled with announcements about immunization with the Cuban vaccine Abdala, not certified by the World Health Organization, which is in the phase of clinical trial⁴⁵. This confirms the confusion and improvisation of the national government in this regard, regardless of the health or well-being of the population.

By the beginning of July, worldwide, 182,078,349 sick people with Covid-19 and 3,950,530 deaths were recorded⁴⁶. According to reports published by the national government, 274,024 positive cases and 3,135 deaths were added throughout the country. Meanwhile, in the state of Zulia there were 25,335 positive cases and 368 deaths⁴⁷.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The attack against the right to life continues to characterize security agencies in the region. The results of this study are discouraging and alarming, because despite the decrease in the known number of extrajudicial executions in Zulia, representative data of police violence still persist, demonstrating the lack of interest of government entities in addressing and attacking this police vice. Several factors, such as the pandemic, affect this decrease in known statistics - there is a threshold of unknown cases - but the objective must be zero police violence and zero deaths for this reason, since the commitment must be oriented towards the unconditional respect for rights human rights by the Venezuelan State.

Maracaibo continues to be the most violent municipality in the region, both in terms of the number of violent events (38.52%) and the number of deaths caused (35.44%). For its part, the actions of SIPEZ, attached to the Zulia Government, caused the highest number of deaths: 33 (20.89%), followed by CICPC: 25 (15.82%). Most of the people killed are young men, classified as criminals by the authorities, without further evidence of investigations to solve these cases. In this semester, the death of a security agent and two wounded police officers stands out, in the context of these violent events.

It should be remembered that respect for human rights by citizen security bodies must be a moral, legal and ethical imperative, a practical necessity for the application of the law. These premises

would generate, as feedback, the trust of the population and respect for the police function, an increase in the trust of the justice apparatus, which would translate into the perception of State security agents as the first line of defense in the protection of human rights.

On the other hand, the fact that the State does not deal promptly and as a priority with the public health system and access to medicines, constitutes another form of violation of the right to life, this also occurs when it applies an alleged massive vaccination plan against a disease such as Covid-19 in a discriminatory, uninformed manner and restrictively, an illness that has generated millions of deaths worldwide and, in a particular and worrying way, has caused the death of 651 health workers nationwide, and 131 in the region. The denial of the right to health implies the rejection of the right to life, the State cannot justify its inefficiency by claiming lack of resources, security interests or any other reason that hinders access to an open and high-quality health system.

NOTES

¹ Codhez (June 1, 2021), *Annual Report 2020. General Situation of Human Rights in the state of Zulia*, <https://codhez.org/wp-content/uploads/Informe-Anual-2020-Situacion-General-of-Human-Rights-in-the-State-Zulia.pdf>.

² Idem.

³ National Constituent Assembly, *Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*, in Ordinary Official Gazette of the Republic number 36,860, dated December 30, 1999.

⁴ United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, <https://www.un.org/es/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>, December 18, 1948.

⁵ United Nations General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, <https://www.ohchr.org/sp/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>, December 16, 1966.

⁶ Inter-American Specialized Conference on Human Rights, *American Convention on Human Rights*, <https://www.oas.org/>, November 22, 1969. Ratified by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on July 18, 1978.

⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2016), *Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Deaths*, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/MinnesotaProtocol_EN.pdf.

⁸ “Includes... all deaths possibly caused by law enforcement officials or other agents of the State; deaths caused by paramilitary groups, militias or ‘death squads’ suspected of acting under the direction of the State or with its consent or acquiescence; as well as deaths caused by private military or security forces in the exercise of State functions” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Minnesota Protocol on the investigation of potentially unlawful deaths*, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/MinnesotaProtocol_SP.pdf, 2016).

⁹ United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, July 17, 1998.

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¹³ United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. Saving lives is not a crime*. August 7, 2018.

¹⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (November 29, 1985), *Declaration on the fundamental principles of justice for victims of crime and abuse of power*. Resolution 40/34, <https://www.ohchr.org/sp/professionalinterest/pages/victimsofcrimeandabuseofpower.aspx>.

¹⁵ Codhez (June 1, 2021), *Annual Report 2020. General Situation of Human Rights in the state of Zulia*, <https://codhez.org/wp-content/uploads/Informe-Anual-2020-Situacion-General-of-Human-Rights-in-the-State-Zulia.pdf>.

¹⁶ Codhez (May 20, 2020), *2019 Annual Report on the general situation of human rights in Zulia*, <http://codhez.org/noticias/379-el-empentación-de-las-condiciones-de-vida-and-police-violence-marked-the-human-rights-situation-of-zulia-during-2019.html>.

¹⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2004), *Human Rights and Law Enforcement. Professional Training Series No. 5 / Add.2. Instructor's Guide to Human Rights for Police*. United Nations.

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¹⁹ Idem.

²⁰ United Nations General Assembly, *Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials*. Resolution 34/169, December 17, 1979.

²¹ Zulia State Police Investigation Service, body attached to CPBEZ.

²² Scientific, Criminal and Forensic Investigations Agency.

²³ Special Response Team, body attached to CPBEZ.

²⁴ Bolivarian National Guard.

²⁵ Bolivarian National Police.

²⁶ Bolivarian Police Corps of the Zulia State.

²⁷ National Anti-Extortion and Kidnapping Command.

²⁸ San Francisco Municipal Police Criminal Investigation Service.

²⁹ Todosahora.com (June 2, 2021), “Government of Zulia militarizes vaccines in the state”, at <https://www.todosahora.com/venezuela/zulia/gobernacion-del-zulia-militariza-vacunas-en-el-condition/>.

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