
Venezuela Omdusman Slams 'Dangerous' Rise in Politically Motivated Hate Crimes

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Venezuela's ombudsman, Tarek William Saab, denounced on Sunday the [rise in far-right hate crimes](#) as the opposition calls for an escalation of protests against the government that have claimed the lives of over 80 people.

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"Hate crimes, like lynchings, motivated by political reasons advance dangerously and with impunity in the country," Saab said.

He published a series of videos showing how a group of people protesting in the Tamanaco Commercial Center, CCCT in the capital city of Caracas tried to attack a woman and chased her down the mall. She was mistaken for Marlene de Andrade, the wife of Winston Vallenilla, the president of the state-run television station, TVes.

"We are struggling to change a country, where there is tolerance and all of us who think differently can live and facts like these do much harm. The lady here is a worker who was just doing an errand and she did not deserve this aggression," an unknown person is heard saying next to the woman in another video, in what appears to be bathroom inside the mall.

"What would have happened if the mob that chased this lady in the CCCT had managed to lynch her? Applauding this is condemnable," said Saab on Twitter.

At least 86 people have died since opposition-led protests aimed at toppling the government began, despite calls by President Nicolas Maduro for dialogue with opposition sectors. On May 1, President Maduro invoked the legal mechanism allowing him to call for a Constituent Assembly as a means to quell the unrest through a process that would include citizens in the writing of a new constitution for the South American nation.

In addition to those killed, over 1,200 have been injured in the protests.

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Saab also accused the country's right-wing opposition of being behind recent attacks and threats against his family last week. He said some 30 people carrying flags of the opposition party Justice First attacked his family and threatened to burn their house down.

"Seeking aggression with intentions to injure or kill a human being because of their ideological stance is disgusting," Saab wrote on his Twitter account. "The justice system has can stop this despicable phenomenon that if it were to continue with impunity, would be the prologue of a civil war."

Saad denounced last week that opposition sectors have attacked eight of the headquarters of the Ombudsman's Office across the country, including an incident on Saturday when a "group of hooded men sprayed gasoline" at the headquarters in the city of San Cristobal "and attacked it with blunt objects."

Among the most shocking case of hate crime was the lynching of Orlando Figuera, who was burned alive on May 20 in affluent Caracas neighborhood of Altamira, reportedly because opposition protesters suspected that the 21-year-old Black man was a government supporter.
