

# There shall be no trace

*Hiding medical and legal evidence  
in the context of demonstrations and arrests*

## Executive summary

This report describes the strategies used by various organs of different branches of government to cover up evidence of mistreatment or torture, as well as to prevent them from being duly known to the bodies responsible for investigating the allegations, throughout the arrests that followed the demonstrations of 2014. These strategies included: incommunicado detention, transfer of injured to military hospitals and institutions, pressures to victims, the use of Public Defense to prevent complaints, omissions by judges during presentation hearings, transforming victims into perpetrators, confusion between forensic medical examination and the medical examination at the place of detention, the removal and disappearance of evidence of mistreatment and torture and pressure against doctors.

During the repression against the demonstrations that occurred between February and July 2014, there was a deliberate and conscious practice from different organs of the State, intended to hide the evidence of torture and cruel treatment and hinder the complaint about violations of the right to physical integrity, which was expressed in:

- The isolation of prisoners, especially those who had serious injuries, who not

only suffered isolation in places of detention, but also at health centers.

- The transfer of the wounded to military hospitals where secrecy about their health remained and access to family was impeded.
- Pressures to victims of violations to the right to physical integrity, who were forced to sign statements denying being ill-treated or to state that the injuries were not produced in a given place of detention, without more explanation on the circumstances of them.
- Impairment of private Interviews between detainees and lawyers, in the few cases where they had access to them, hampering the timely communication of information on aggressions suffered.
- Use of Public Defense as a mechanism to prevent victims to expose at hearings the circumstances in which injuries occurred.
- The presentation at hearing of persons visibly injured or in poor health conditions, sometimes under the influence of strong drugs or affected by the suspension of treatment, without the judges let the facts recorded in the minutes of hearing.
- The lack of provision of forensic medical reports on the court records.
- The attempt to transform victims into perpetrators, claiming that the injuries

had occurred in response to alleged injuries caused by them to officials, without providing information on the identity of the alleged assaulted, or forensic record of injuries allegedly caused.

- The entry in records medical reports by no independent health professionals attached to the agency responsible for detention.
- Conducting superficial forensic examinations, which did not establish connection between the injuries and the circumstances thereof.
- The removal and disappearance of medical reports and other evidence of mistreatment and torture, as well as the loss of the chain of custody of personal belongings of the victims and objects removed from their bodies in surgery.
- The pressure on the medical staff in public hospitals and private clinics for reports of injured patients or to force a premature medical discharge as well as intimidating presence to interfere with the treatment.

The situations described compromise the responsibility of officials of the organs of apprehension, transfer executors, guardians and others responsible for detention facilities, public defenders, judges, health professionals in detention centers and military detention facilities and forensic doctors, in developing a set of actions designed to **leave no trace** of violations of the right to physical integrity of detainees and pointing, over a year after the events, to the impunity of the cases.

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Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Católica Andrés Bello

UCAB. Urb. Montalbán, Av. Teherán, Edif.

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Caracas 1020- R/F- J-00012255-5

Tel. 0212-407-4434

[cddhh@ucab.edu.ve](mailto:cddhh@ucab.edu.ve)

[cdhucab@gmail.com](mailto:cdhucab@gmail.com)

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