



**BAPTIST
WORLD
ALLIANCE**

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NETWORKING THE BAPTIST FAMILY TO IMPACT THE WORLD FOR CHRIST

February 5, 2019

Lcdo. Julio César León Heredia
Gobernador Del Estado Yaracuy
Palacio De Gobierno Del Estado Yaracuy
Avenida Seis c/ Av. Caracas, Piso 2
San Felipe 3201, Yaracuy
Venezuela
gobernador@yaracuy.gob.ve

Dear Lcdo. Julio César León Heredia,

The Baptist World Alliance is a network of 239 member bodies in 125 countries and territories representing 165,000 churches and 47 million individuals. The Union of Baptists of Latin America is part of the Baptist World Alliance and brings together 23 member bodies throughout Central and South America, including the National Baptist Convention of Venezuela.

As an international Baptist community, we are concerned about the welfare of Gregory José Pérez, Executive Director of the National Baptist Union, an auxiliary organization of the National Baptist Convention of Venezuela. Brother Pérez was arrested on January 23, 2019, in the city of San Felipe, Yaracuy State alongside approximately 30 other individuals, including minors. Our concern is not only for Brother Pérez alone but also for these other individuals who have been arrested.

It appears that these arrests, and certainly that of Brother Pérez, were arbitrary. At the time Brother Pérez was in the area to complete work issues and personal procedures and then had gone to visit the home of some Christian leaders with whom he is friends. After some nearby protests, police began going house to house looking for participants. The police entered into the home where Brother Pérez was visiting his friends and decided to arrest Brother Pérez even though there was no evidence linking him to the protests.

Since his arrest, Brother Pérez has been held in detention, publicly humiliated, charged with a lengthy set of allegations, and treated as a terrorist. He and his family have suffered. His temporary custody constitutes an excessive and disproportionate restriction on his right to freedom.

As representatives of millions of Baptists around the world, we write to urge that the charges against Brother Pérez be immediately dropped and that there be a full honoring of the human and legal rights of Gregory José Pérez and the others who were arbitrarily arrested alongside him. We also urge that Brother Pérez be allowed

to retain legal representation by a lawyer he has freely selected rather than the imposition of a public defender, which was mandated under duress. This is his legal right under the provisions of Article 250 of the Criminal Procedural Organic Code.

Gregory Pérez has ably and voluntarily led the Youth Department of the National Baptist Convention of Venezuela for many years. An engineer by profession, Brother Pérez has dedicated his life to serving others and most especially the children and youth of Venezuela. Brother Pérez is an active member of the New Life Baptist Church of San Felipe, Yaracuy State. His mother, Pastor Dinorah Aular, also serves as a pastor in another Baptist church in San Felipe.

Over the course of the leadership of Brother Pérez with the National Baptist Convention of Venezuela, he has developed an outstanding testimony of peace and integrity. He has collaborated with many churches and with many communities across Venezuela, adding positive value to the society as a whole, and carries with him a hope and optimism for those he serves and for Venezuela as a nation. Baptists across the region testify to the positive contributions Brother Pérez offers on a daily basis from his service as an engineer to his work with young people.

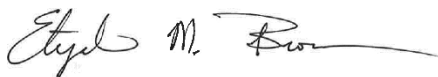
As a signature of numerous human rights treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Venezuela has committed itself to maintaining high standards of judicial integrity, transparency, evidence-based judicial decisions and the upholding of human rights. We will be watching with trust that Venezuela will uphold these commitments in the case of Brother Pérez.

While we are highlighting the case of Gregory José Pérez, we ask that the same principles are equally applied for the approximate 30 other individuals who were arrested in the same manner and at the same time.

On behalf of Baptists from 125 countries and territories, and in direct partnership with our Baptist brothers and sisters in Venezuela, please know of our sincerest prayers for you and your country as a whole. We pray for Brother Pérez. We pray that justice will be strengthened because of your actions. We pray for the wellbeing of your country and for peace throughout Venezuela.

If the Baptist World Alliance and the Union of Baptists of Latin America can be of assistance or engage in further dialogue with you, we stand ready and available.

Sincerely,



Rev. Elijah M. Brown, PhD
General Secretary
Baptist World Alliance



Rev. Parrish Jacome
General Secretary
Union of Baptists of Latin America