1. Exterior wide shot, Palais des Nations flag alley, nations’ flags flying, a beautiful day.

2. SOUNDBITE (English) — Marta Valiñas, chairperson of the FFM (Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela): “Over the past months, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in accordance with the mandate it was given by the UN Human Rights Council in September of last year, investigated and documented extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment, including sexual and gender-based violence, committed in Venezuela since 2014 to the present.”

3. Medium shot, Palais des Nations flag alley, nations’ flags flying, a beautiful day.

4. SOUNDBITE (English) — Francisco Cox Vial, member of the FFM (Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela): “We have involvement and contribution to the crime by Mr Maduro, either directly through the chain of command and sometimes circumventing the chain of command and giving the direct order. But as we said, what we have reasonable grounds to believe is that this is a State policy, it’s not just a random acts of officials in SEBIN, but it is a political decision to target political opposition to quash this opposition.”


6. SOUNDBITE (English) — Paul Seils, member of the FFM (Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela): “The mission has reasonable grounds to believe that even in specific operational planning, high-level officials, including
senior military and ministerial levels, were also involved. The Mission has looked in close detail at almost 100 cases of protests, and it has reasonable grounds to believe that many of those detained in the context of those protests was subjected to torture, cruel, inhumane, degrading treatment.”


8. SOUNDBITE (English) — Marta Valiñas, Chairperson of the FFM (Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela): “Our team has reviewed close to 2,500 incidents involving close to 4,600 deaths committed by the security forces. This provides the context to what are the violations that we document in the report and that we consider are extrajudicial executions.”

9. Exterior medium shot, Palais des Nations flag alley, nations’ flags flying

10. SOUNDBITE (English) — Paul Seils, member of the FFM (Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela): “If the Venezuelan authorities are not willing, fail to do anything or do anything genuinely, then of course the International Criminal Court has already indicated that it’s examining that position and I think one can assume it stands ready to make a decision.”

11. Exterior wide shot, Palais des Nations flag alley, nations’ flags flying
Venezuela: Human Rights Council-appointed fact-finding report urges accountability for crimes against humanity

Rights violations against anti-Government protesters in Venezuela “amounted to crimes against humanity”, UN-appointed rights investigators have said in their first report.

Announcing their findings on Wednesday, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela cited evidence of unlawful executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and torture since 2014.

Senior military and ministerial figures were likely aware of the crimes, said the investigators, who were appointed by the Human Rights Council in Geneva, in September last year.

“They gave orders, coordinated activities and supplied resources in furtherance of the plans and policies under which the crimes were committed,” the report stated.

Marta Valiñas, chairperson of the FFM, highlighted the extent of atrocities committed in Venezuela since 2014 until today. “The UN Human Right Council in September of last year, investigated and documented extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and torture and other inhumane or degrading treatment, including sexual and gender-based violence.”

President Nicolas Maduro also likely “side-tracked the chain of command” to ensure the commission of crimes, involving the head of the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN), the report’s authors maintained.

“We have involvement and contribution to the crime by Mr Maduro, either directly through the chain of command and sometimes circumventing the chain of command and giving the direct order,” said investigator Francisco Cox.

Paul Seils, the third member of the FFM added that the Mission had “reasonable grounds to believe that even in specific operation planning, high-level officials, including senior military and ministerial levels, were also involved”.

The investigators added that they had reasonable grounds to believe that “many of those detained in the context of those protests was subject to torture, cruel and inhuman degrading treatment.”

Ms. Valiñas explained that close to 2,500 incidents involving close to 4,600 deaths were linked to security forces. “This provides the context to what are the violations that we document in the report and that we consider are extrajudicial executions.”

Mr. Seils added that few individuals had been prosecuted in Venezuela for crimes covered in the report.

“There is as far as we can see no record of any serious investigation into those with a higher level of responsibility in terms of organising crime and instigating these kinds of crimes that have been committed”, he said, adding that “the International Criminal Court has already indicated that it’s examining that position and I think one can assume it stands ready to make a decision”.

The panel’s work, which was carried out without the cooperation of the Venezuelan Government, despite official requests, is contained in a 411-page report covering more than 220 cases.

Thousands more files were also reviewed which identified “patterns of violations …that were highly coordinated” by the authorities.

These included crime-fighting operations by the State, “politically motivated detention and torture” by State
intelligence agencies, and the “increasingly violent response” to mass opposition protests including last year.

Alleged violations included the killing of 36 protesters, as well as torture in detention, including beatings and humiliation, sexual and gender-based violence and mock executions.

State authorities had also failed to intervene in several cases where protesters were killed by armed civilian groups known as “colectivos”, the report’s authors noted, amid an increased State “reliance on military-civilian coordination to maintain public order in recent years”.

The Mission’s report is due to be presented to the Human Rights Council on Wednesday 23 September.