

# *Venezuela Rejects Torture Allegations*

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Caracas, March 11 (RHC) -- Venezuela's human rights representative German Saltron said Monday the political opposition's accusations that the government had violated human rights were baseless.

"None of the accusations of torture have been proven," said the government representative at an Inter-American Commission for Human Rights in a statement aired on state-run VTV.

"The press has even widely reported the case of a woman who claimed to have been raped but never showed up for the medical exam to verify if that was true," said Saltron, adding that the national government had taken steps and arrested those responsible.

Authorities confirmed that excessive force was used in three of the recent arrests of violent protesters in the ongoing anti-government demonstrations, Saltron said, adding those officers, who are members of the National Guard, would face legal penalties.

According to the official, the accusations are part of a right-wing smear campaign to discredit the government for political gain.

"It's a campaign to claim that human rights are being violated in Venezuela to then justify a foreign intervention," said Saltron. He added most of the arrested people were released in less than 48 hours with

a warning.

Many of the protesters were trained to stir up violence, according to the official, who said the government had followed all the norms outlined by international agencies and reacted responsibly over the past four weeks of violent actions and attacks on government institutions and supporters.

The ongoing violence in Venezuela, promoted by extreme right-wing groups, have left 21 people dead and about 300 injured, including 51 police officers, since February 12th, according to official figures.

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