

Venezuela demands probe after baby dies in migrant boat incident

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[File: Andrea De Silva/Reuters]?

Caracas, February 9 (RHC)-- Venezuela has demanded Trinidad and Tobago launch an “exhaustive investigation” into a deadly incident at sea, in which a baby perished and his mother wounded on board a boat carrying about 40 migrants.

Trinidad and Tobago’s Prime Minister Keith Rowley said the incident occurred on Saturday when coastguard officers attempted to shoot the vessel’s engines after repeatedly ordering to stop during what the island nation’s authorities called “security operations” involving human traffickers.

Trinidadian officials said the baby, identified as Yaelvis Santoyo Sarabia, died in the arms of the mother, Darielvis Sarabia. Sarabia suffered gunshot wounds and was taken to a hospital in stable condition. Officials did not say how the baby died.

On Monday, Caracas called for a probe “to clarify the facts surrounding this fatal incident.”

A group of UN agencies on Monday said in a statement they were “deeply saddened” by Saturday’s event.

“No migrant child should ever die, whether traveling with their parents or alone. No mother wants to put the lives of her children at risk on a small ship in the deep sea, unless she has no other option,” said Jean Gough, regional director for UNICEF in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In a statement, the Venezuelan Ministry of Foreign Affairs urged the authorities of the neighboring nation to carry out an investigation to determine why the uniformed officers proceeded to shoot at the people who were on the boat.

"The Venezuelan government extends its most sincere condolences to the relatives of the infant, while urging the authorities of Trinidad and Tobago to conduct a thorough investigation to clarify the facts surrounding this fatal incident in which, unfortunately, a Venezuelan child lost his life," the text stressed.

It mentioned that President Nicolás Maduro instructed the Foreign Ministry to "activate the diplomatic mechanisms in order to clarify this unfortunate event." The statement added that the Venezuelan president asked "to establish the necessary binational protocols to consolidate the dynamics of cross-border security that preserves the good understanding between our countries."

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