ACAT (Harrow) - prayer case of the month *(August 2023)*

Please pray as you feel led for **Emirlendris Benitez** (42), a tradeswoman in Venezuela. Since her arrest in August 2018, she has been a victim of countless human rights violations; including arbitrary detention, torture, gender-based violence, discrimination, unfair trial, and inhuman detention conditions.



In 2018, **Emirlendris Benitez** was arbitrarily detained on fabricated grounds. Authorities falsely linked her to acts of violence committed against high-profile political leaders in Venezuela; an accusation for which there is no evidence and which she has consistently stated that she had no part in.

In custody, she was subjected to torture while pregnant, and lost her baby. The torture she was subjected to also left her needing the long-term use of a wheelchair for mobility. In 2022, she was sentenced to a 30-year prison sentence by a partial and politically motivated court.

The prison conditions **Emirlendris Benitez** is currently enduring are so dire that her family has to provide her with her basic needs, including water, food and medication. This is further complicated by the humanitarian emergency that is currently crippling Venezuela, as it severely limits their own access to food, medicines, and transportation (she is imprisoned approximately 30 km away from Caracas, where her family lives).

In the last few weeks, authorities at her detention centre have delayed her transfer to a medical centre based on bureaucratic justifications that are unacceptable given her critical condition. She has experienced multiple episodes of fainting and endured sudden rises in blood pressure, despite not having a history of hypertension.

**Emirlendris Benitez** is an example of the Venezuelan government’s terrifying policy of repression. Although she had not undertaken any form of political activism, she was incriminated in a political case and was not allowed to exercise her right to a fair trial.