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## Venezuelan Migrants Allege Torture in El Salvador Prison Following U.S. Deportation

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Over 250 Venezuelan migrants, deported from the United States and held in El Salvador's controversial Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT), have accused authorities of severe human rights abuses. Venezuela's Attorney General has launched an investigation after returnees described appalling conditions and mistreatment at the prison. The detainees were returned as part of a recent U.S.-Venezuela prisoner exchange.

Venezuelan Attorney General Tarek Saab held a press conference Monday where he played recorded testimonies of former detainees who detailed alleged abuse inside the Salvadoran maximum-security facility. CECOT, which stands for *Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo*, has been widely criticized for its harsh conditions. Saab's office is investigating El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele, Justice Minister Gustavo Villatoro, and Prison Chief Osiris Luna Meza for potential violations of international human rights standards.

According to Saab, detainees described enduring beatings, sexual abuse, and denial of medical care, including surgeries without anesthesia. They were reportedly held in overcrowded cells with no access to legal representation or contact with family. Some were served spoiled food and denied sunlight or proper ventilation for months. One former detainee, Andry Hernández Romero, said in a recorded statement, "We were going through torture, physical aggression, psychological aggression. I was sexually abused."

The detainees were allegedly affiliated with the *Tren de Aragua*, a Venezuelan criminal organization. U.S. officials deported the group earlier this year under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, a rarely used wartime statute invoked by President Donald Trump. The law allowed the government to expel individuals deemed security threats without court hearings. Human rights groups and families of the accused disputed the gang affiliations and criticized the lack of due process.

The U.S.-led deportations were controversial, triggering international concern. In exchange for the migrants, Venezuela released 10 U.S. nationals who had been imprisoned there. While the opposition in Venezuela welcomed the release of American detainees, they noted that nearly 1,000 political prisoners remain incarcerated across the country, with a dozen new arrests reported in the past week.

One of the mothers of the released migrants, Mercedes Yamarte, told French news outlet AFP that she hadn't heard her son's voice in over four months. "Listening to him was a joy I cannot describe," she said.

Venezuelan authorities stated the returned individuals will be medically evaluated, debriefed, and reissued national identity cards before being reintegrated. Meanwhile, the country remains under investigation by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for alleged human rights violations within its own borders.

This case underscores the geopolitical complexities surrounding immigration enforcement, national security, and civil liberties. It also raises concerns about the use of outdated legislation and the handling of detainees by foreign governments in high-security detention centers.