

<b>FORUM:</b>	Security Council
<b>ISSUE:</b>	Situation in Venezuela
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## Introduction

Venezuela, a country located at the northern end of South America, is currently facing a severe refugee crisis, political instability and economic problems. 64.8% of Venezuelan households were affected by multidimensional poverty in 2019.

Multidimensional poverty is a measure of income, education, and public services. According to the

*Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida*

(ENCOVI) survey, approximately 96% of the

Venezuelan population lives in poverty, a figure

unmatched in other parts of the region and comparable to poor African countries such as Nigeria or Chad.

In addition, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are 5.4 refugees and migrants worldwide and over 800,000 asylum seekers from Venezuela. Currently in Venezuela, half of the people don't have enough to eat, about 80% have lost their source of income, one in four children are separated from their families during the journey, and many women and girls are exposed to gender-based violence and lack access to sexual and reproductive health services.

With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the situation has worsened due to government inaction. As of July 23, 2021, there are 297,000 cases in Venezuela. However, the government's official COVID-19 statistics indicate the country's testing capabilities and not the actual number of cases. There is a serious threat COVID -19 and protection gap for Venezuelan migrants and refugees. UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) stated that nearly 2 million migrants and refugees have settled in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, countries with some of the highest rates of coronavirus infection and death in the world. Hence, the refugee crisis is no longer just a regional humanitarian issue, but a serious problem that can threaten global security.



Venezuela Gross domestic product in current prices from 1984 to 2022 in billion US dollars

## Background

Currently, many Venezuelans are leaving their homeland to seek international protection. Since 2014, 5.4 refugees and migrants have left the country, making it one of the largest displacements in the world in recent times. The number of Venezuelans seeking refugee status has increased by 8,000% since 2014. Despite this, a large number of Venezuelans are in the country without legal papers or permission to live in neighboring countries and lack basic rights. The refugee crisis has left many refugees exposed to serious dangers, including labor and sexual exploitation, human trafficking, discrimination, and xenophobia. According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 7 million

Venezuelans will need humanitarian assistance by December 2020. The Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees from Venezuela (R4V) has also published the 2021 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela. The plan claimed that 7.2 million people require help but can assist only 3.3 million people.

The socialist PSUV party has ruled Venezuela for the past 20 years. From 1999 to 2013, Hugo Chávez ruled the country as president. Then his right-hand man Nicolás Maduro seized power. However, under the rule of President Maduro, Venezuela's economy collapsed. Moreover, Nicolás Maduro was re-elected for a second six-year term in May 2018. However, the election was highly controversial, prompting opposition parties to boycott the vote. Despite his extensive international support and recognition by 50 countries, Nicolás Maduro was unable to gain enough power during his term. This led to continued political and economic instability in Venezuela. Shortages of basic services occurred, exacerbating the ongoing refugee crisis.



*Venezuela regional exodus map*

## Problems Raised

### *Violation of Human Rights*

The human rights crisis in Venezuela includes extrajudicial executions, excessive use of force and unlawful killings by security forces. People in opposition to the government have been subjected to repressive measures



*Disorder in Venezuela due to instability in the country*

such as criminalization, unfair trials, and arbitrary detention. The humanitarian crisis was exacerbated by the lack of services and extreme poverty. The ongoing deterioration of health infrastructure was exacerbated by COVID-19. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner (OHCHR), security operations killed approximately 2,000 people between January and September 2020. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused migrants to lose employment in the informal economy. This resulted in about 130,000 Venezuelans making the difficult journey back to their country. Authorities and pro-government armed groups, known as *colectivos*, have threatened, verbally harassed and mistreated returnees. In addition, the refugees were housed in unsanitary conditions.

### *Political Instability*

Political instability in Venezuela is not tied to political issues. It has led to serious economic and social problems that exist in Venezuela. The domestic crisis exists at South America, as many Venezuelans have fled the country in search of food, jobs, and housings. This has led to xenophobia and violence against Venezuelan refugees in neighboring countries. The government of President Nicolás Maduro and the opposition are currently engaged in an ongoing power struggle. The United Nations accused Venezuela of instilling fear in its citizens to maintain its power. The Venezuelan government has continuously eliminated opposing forces through extrajudicial killings. Political instability must be addressed to balance the economic and social crises.

### *Poverty and Economic Instability*

Poverty in Venezuela is very great because it is not due to inequality. The abrupt decline in economic output has led to poverty. Data from 2019 to 2020 show that the average income of Venezuelans is now only 72 US cents per day due to continued uncontrolled inflation, which has rendered the national currency almost worthless. Although Venezuela has one of the largest oil reserves in the



world, the country has not produced enough refined gasoline. The country's total crude oil production has fallen to its lowest level in more than 70 years. With COVID-19, infrastructure development, medical progress and economic support have slowed. The ongoing economic problem should be addressed to avoid further problems resulting from poverty.

## International Actions

### *UNHCR*

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights, and helping refugees find their way to a better future. Since the severe refugee crisis in Venezuela, UNHCR has been an active organization assisting refugees in need. In Venezuela, UNHCR has begun to work closely with host governments and partners, including



*UNHCR's support for Venezuelans in need*

International Organization for Migration (IOM). They have adopted coordinated and inclusive approaches to address the needs of refugees and migrants. They have also collected data to understand the specific needs of Venezuelans, provided ongoing support for legal orientation upon arrival, and distributed drinking water and health kits for women and children.

### *UNDP*

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is the United Nations global development network working for international solutions to eradicate poverty. In Venezuela, the UNDP has formed alliances to strengthen the capacities of men and women, organizations, and institutions. It also promotes progress in different areas such as the economy, politics, the environment, and culture. The main objective of the UNDP and Venezuela is to reduce poverty by working towards gender equality and the advancement of technologies.

## Key Players

### *United States of America*

The United States is committed to providing humanitarian assistance to Venezuelans in need. Since 2017, the United States has supported Venezuela by providing more than \$1.4 billion in humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Venezuelans, Venezuelan migrants, and host communities throughout the region. In addition, USAID partners are helping Venezuela by providing primary health



care services, access to basic health care and medicines, and treatment for diseases. The United States is also committed to upholding human rights, promoting civil society, strengthening a democratic society, and developing transparency in Venezuela.

### *National Assembly*

The National Assembly is the only important institution not controlled by the PSUV party (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela), also known as United Socialist Party of Venezuela. According to the Venezuelan constitution, the government needs the approval of the National Assembly to sign international treaties and enter into important contracts with foreign companies.



*National Assembly of Venezuela*

Nicolás Maduro's opponent candidate, Juan

Guaidó, held his swearing-in ceremony for the deputies of the old Congress. He declared himself interim president with the support of the opposition party. His seizure of power has been playing an important role in Venezuela's political instability.

## **Possible Solutions**

### *Aid from More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs)*

Problems such as unlawful killings, health problems of refugees and poverty should be addressed immediately through humanitarian aid. Currently, aid is provided by non-governmental organizations and international organizations, including United Nations. However, it is not enough to support Venezuelans in need. The people who receive aid are also suffering. For example, in January 2021, 37.3% of pregnant women receiving assistance from UNICEF were suffering from malnutrition. Currently, most aid is focused on people struggling with severe economic or health problems. However, in Venezuela, even more people are in desperate need. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, only 3.9% of the population in Venezuela is vaccinated. With health facilities non-functioning, many civilians are also in need of medical assistance. MEDCs that can help the civilian population in Venezuela can now assist the population with free distribution of vaccines, emergency medical assistance, and sanitation development. After the pandemic is contained, the global community could provide infrastructure, food, and technology assistance for the country's development.

### *Negotiation with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)*

Because there is a great deal of political instability in Venezuela, it is difficult for the country to tighten legislation or introduce new legal systems to help the civilian population. While there are steps that NGOs can take to address the serious problems resulting from political, economic, and social instability. However, the government's actions to restrict international funding to NGOs create a hostile environment that limits the ability of NGOs to defend human rights. Therefore, negotiations should be conducted between the government and relevant NGOs to provide further support to Venezuelans.

### *Global Actions from the United Nations*

In addition, the website United Nations should provide a comprehensive report on the abuses in Venezuela while protecting whistleblowers. These measures could alleviate the political instability that currently leads to violence and social problems. The Security Council can work with the Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to investigate allegations of atrocities. Also, International Criminal Court (ICC) could analyze the Venezuelan government's ruthless violence against opposition forces and detention of the population through an ongoing investigation of government actions. In addition, United Nations can facilitate the assistance of other relevant organizations such as the World Food Program, Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, The Water Project, and UNICEF to consistently assist civilians in Venezuela.



*The United Nations*

## **Glossary**

### *Colectivos*

*Colectivos* are irregular, leftist Venezuelan community organizations that support Nicolás Maduro, the Bolivarian government, the Great Patriotic Pole (GPP) political alliance, and the party, and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV).

### *ENCOVI*

Encovi is also known as *Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida* or Living Conditions Survey. It provides the best data-based overview of social conditions and is an important institution amid the lack of official data in Venezuela.

### *ICJ*

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial body of the United Nations (UN). However, it has no enforcement powers, other than the ability to negotiate reparations required for non-compliance with agreements.

### *Extrajudicial killing*

Extrajudicial killing means killing by the authority of the state without judicial or legal sanction. The authorities target political, trade union, dissident, religious and social opponents. The practice of extrajudicial killings is a violation of people's human rights.



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