

Advisory Panel on the Question of the Venezuela Crisis (APQVC)

The humanitarian crisis



Forum	Advisory Panel on the Question of the Venezuela Crisis
Issue:	The humanitarian crisis
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Introduction

Venezuela has been in the midst of a humanitarian crisis which has stemmed from a severe socio-political and economic crisis as well as the conflictual leadership relations between Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó. Whereas Maduro won a heavily disputed election in May 2018, Guaidó proclaimed himself president in 2019. The socialist party that has run the country under Maduro says: “We are a major force in Venezuelan history”, although it has been made clear that a significant facet of Maduro’s power comes from his backing by the military and therefore, oppression of the civil rights of the Venezuelan people. The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) have said: “Venezuela is the archetype of a failed petrostate” – a ‘petrostate’ being a country that is reliant on oil and natural gases as resources. These states often depict high levels of corruption at the higher echelons of society and widespread poverty for the majority. This economic crisis caused by a diminution in production, a dependency on oil and massively increasing debt has caused widespread suffering for the population of Venezuela. Now, the National Survey of Living Conditions has even estimated that roughly 94% of Venezuelans live in poverty. A number of severe human rights violations have also plagued the country, including unlawful killings, forced disappearances and torture. These human rights violations are mostly in consequence to the lowered standards of living and deteriorating physical protection of citizens by the state.

Definition of Key Terms

Humanitarian crisis

A Humanitarian crisis is a crisis that may ensue from a political or economic crisis and poses a direct threat to the safety and health of civilians. This damage to a community may be due to internal or external conflict and usually occurs throughout large areas of land. In the case of Venezuela, the



population is suffering a humanitarian crisis due to their oppression and loss of rights, especially the one of voter freedom in response to proliferating corruption within Venezuelan politics since Maduro. Since Venezuela now suffers massive “hyperinflation, violence, and food and medicine shortages” – *world vision website* - worldvision.com, their situation can be regarded as a humanitarian crisis.

Emigration

Whereas immigration is the seeking out of asylum within another nation, emigration is the opposite and is when one is seeking to specifically leave one’s own country to permanently settle in another. Causes for this can include war, disease, food shortages, etc. One might leave one’s country to seek better employment elsewhere. Emigration can often have a negative impact on the nation, especially economically, by affecting the workforce and consumer spending. Venezuela is currently suffering an emigration crisis as large numbers of the population are attempting to escape the current humanitarian crisis. The main difference between someone emigrating to seek better conditions and a refugee is that a refugee is forced to seek shelter and better conditions often due to ongoing conflict, etc. whereas someone emigrating is much less compelled to flee.

Refugee

A refugee is a person compelled to leave their hometown or country in response to conflict, natural disasters or persecution. Refugees have the right to seek safe asylum elsewhere and the United Nations have been fighting to protect the rights of refugees. Notable work has been done by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR). To obtain international protection for refugees, countries must be made aware that they have obligations to set up safety nets consisting of basic human rights and physical protection of refugees. Country’s are not permitted to forcibly return refugees to territories where they have to face danger.

Human rights

Human rights are rights justifiably attributed to all people by virtue of being human beings. These rights are defined on different scales, e.g nationally, locally and internationally, by different legislative law making bodies. The United Nations have promoted and protected human rights around the world within their United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) since 2006. Our human rights embody the values we wish to uphold within our societies, e.g equality, justice and dignity. Therefore, they are equally significant in protecting all those suffering from abuse or isolation. Some of the most important human rights include the freedom of speech, the freedom to vote and the right to a fair



trial. Human rights are incredibly important in maintaining democracy within a society as they ensure access to information and free participation in voting, etc.

General Overview

Due to the economic and political crises present in Venezuela, the humanitarian crisis has rapidly developed in correlation to the living conditions which have just as rapidly deteriorated. The currently spiralling economy, which most attribute to Maduro and previously Chavez's economic policies, has seen the Venezuelan Gross Domestic Product (GDP) shrink by roughly two thirds between 2014 and 2020. Experts are also foreseeing a further five percent degradation as the global demand for oil depresses amidst the coronavirus pandemic. On the other hand, there are some experts which hint towards a gradual growth in the Venezuelan economy and in consequence, a general improvement in living conditions for Venezuelan people as more money can be spent on the country's infrastructure. The International Monetary Fund estimates the economy has contracted by 74% in recent years but only by 5% last year, where hyperinflation has abated and oil prices are increasing. The oil industry, Venezuela being one of the largest oil producers in the world does also offer a lot of employment opportunities for Venezuelans with fairly stable incomes as Venezuela has doubled its oil output in recent years. This has displayed that some progress is occurring in Venezuela and economic recovery is partially present although massive wealth inequalities are present and therefore maintain a large percentage of the population in poverty and without their basic needs. Despite that progress however, there are still massive shortages across all fields (e.g. food and medicine) and we still see 94% of Venezuelans living in poverty with 77% in extreme poverty. All of these issues coupled with international sanctions have had a massive effect on the availability of basic goods for example, water, medicine, gasoline and food. Since 2014, nearly six million Venezuelans have fled the country although around 130,000 returned to Venezuela after not being able to find employment in other South American nations.

A failing Health system

After Hugo Chavez became the president of Venezuela in 1998, promises were made to the population including free health care by enshrining this right within the constitution. Immediately, rapid progress in the health sector was made, which saw an increase in life expectancy from 71.8 to 74.1 years and a drop in infant mortality rate 26.7 to 14.6 deaths per 1000 births. Furthermore,



Venezuela developed a stronger relationship with Cuba who provided the nation with trained doctors and medical supplies. Venezuela even achieved most of the UN's Millennium Development Goals set for 2010. However, since the drop of oil prices which has repelled foreign investors, and the election of Nicolas Maduro the government has reported a 65% increase in maternal mortality and 30% increase in infant mortality (11,466 infants died during 2016) had previously been recognised that Venezuela was one of the first nations to properly eradicate the consequences of Malaria in populated areas in the year XXXX. Experts have however concluded that malaria amongst other diseases such as diphtheria have returned to Venezuela in severe outbreaks. With a deteriorating health care system, Venezuela has had major troubles dealing with these returning outbreaks.

The annual spending dedicated to the health care system has decreased drastically from 9.1% in 2010 to 5.8% in 2014. The leading causes of death in Venezuela are in consequence heart diseases and diabetes, which require significant medical resources to treat. Venezuela therefore has seen a growth in privatised health care which charges in US dollars and is therefore less affordable to the population, especially in response to the abundance of medical supplies that have to be imported. Medical supplies have also been reported to have gone missing or getting embargoed, possibly due to corruption which is hindering its distribution. According to a survey conducted by the 'Encuesta Nacional de Hospitales 2018', the health crisis in Venezuela is much worse than has been anticipated and that according to figures, most hospitals or laboratory services are either only available intermittently or are completely inoperable.

The Venezuelan Refugee Crisis

The Venezuelan refugee crisis, also known as the Bolivarian Diaspora, is the largest recorded refugee crisis in South America. Studies have shown that there have been over 6 million emigrants, which is approximately 20% of the Venezuelan population in 2017. Academics and analysts suggest this crisis has aggravated massively since the end of Chavez's presidency and during Maduro's. Although Chavez promised to specifically aid lower-income Venezuelans, the crisis has begun to affect them inclusively. This massive period of emigration contrasts massively to previous emigration rates with only a meagre 1.5 million in the ten years of Chavez's presidency. The peaks of emigration came right after Maduro's election victory with the middle classes fearing the worst from the prominent shortages, inflation and political unrest. Between 2012 and 2015, the refugee crisis reached its peak (with 2.3 million people fleeing), and the New York Times referring to the diaspora as "the highest [number] in



more than a decade". After Maduro was re-elected, the emigration continued with citizens assuming the conditions of civilians would not ameliorate with the continuation of his presidency. One of the major causes for emigration is also the present crime rates in Venezuela. With crime rates going up, in correlation to worsened human living conditions and a crippling financial situation, mass insecurity has generally led to increased emigration. The murder rate has increased from 25 per 100,000 in 1999 (when Chavez was elected) to 82 per 100,000 in 2014. However, in recent years, the murder rates have decreased – perhaps due to the mass emigration at the time.

The Educational System

Education in Venezuela is compulsory until high school and the classes are conducted in non-sectarian schools. Education is free for all citizens. Although in 2010 Venezuela ranked 59th of 128 countries on UNESCO's Education for All Development Index, many analysts warn of a major educational crisis in Venezuela due to the political unrest. As the country plunges into this conflict, inadequate funding and low salaries have led to a lack of provision for schools and the education system in general. Annual dropout rates have doubled since 2011 and in 2017, in some of the main Venezuelan universities, 50% of students have dropped out. However, Venezuela is one of the countries to have higher literacy rates for women aged fifteen years or older (97.21%) compared to men with 97.04% according to UNESCO. This displays the local and national efforts to maintain equal education for both genders within Venezuela. Despite some of these efforts, there is a massive shortage of trained teachers and employees within the educational sector mainly due to the refugee crisis and low funding. Mariano Herrero, the director of the Centre for Cultural Research and Education, estimates that there is an approximate 40% shortage of necessary teachers. The emigration crisis has removed high numbers of educated citizens, with over 90% of the emigrants being college graduates and 40% having masters degrees.

International Response to the Humanitarian Crisis

Many nations hold completely different attitudes towards Venezuela which in turn hinders the progress that could be made to restore democracy in Venezuela. Whereas nations such as the US encourage other nations to target the Maduro government with sanctions, other nations such as Russia have not imposed these sanctions. Migrants leaving Venezuela have received completely different policies from foreign nations. They are facing obstacles in obtaining health care and jobs as well as vulnerability towards human trafficking and abuse. In 2021, Peru and Colombia began offering Venezuelan migrants Temporary Protected Status (TPS). The United States of America is offering



specific aid to Venezuela to counteract the Humanitarian crisis. They have provided Venezuela with \$1.65 billion in humanitarian aid and provided aid to nations sheltering migrating Venezuelans. During this time period, the US has also offered a total of \$323 million US dollars to strengthen Venezuelan democracy, development and the Health sector, by particularly aiding health workers struggling throughout the crisis. The US's influence can also be seen within Venezuela's 'dollarization of the private sector' which displays a 22.7% increase in salaries for workers working in the private sector. The organisation Transparency International has given Venezuela a score of 14 out of 100 for corruption rates and it ranks at 177 out of 180 countries. For comparison, the US ranks at 27/180.

Major Parties Involved

Venezuela

Venezuela is represented by Maduro's government. Due to the economic and political unrest generated by this election, a humanitarian crisis has arisen. The population is in immediate need of assistance which could be provided by the Venezuelan government but currently is not perhaps due to the deteriorating economy in correlation to a drop in oil prices. Venezuela is also currently facing a massive emigration issue and the health and educational sectors are suffering accordingly.

Other South American Nations

Whilst the emigration crisis has developed and Venezuela continues to suffer, many other nations within South America are providing assistance to the country. Examples include Colombia and Peru who have both offered Temporary Protected Status to migrants coming from Venezuela. The crisis in Venezuela has largely polarised South America and the Latin American community who have to either align themselves with US or Russian views. Colombia for example assisted in the organisation of a coup against Maduro's government which did not succeed.



United States of America

The US has done a lot to ameliorate both the political and humanitarian crises in Venezuela. Before diplomatic operations in Venezuela were cancelled with the US, the US were Venezuela's largest trading partner. Compared to 2019 where bilateral trade was at a total of \$3.2 billion, the bilateral trade now only totals \$1.3 billion. The US has however still offered Venezuela a total of \$1.5 billion in humanitarian aid and \$323 million in other forms of assistance. Having formed a coalition with other nations, such as Brazil, Colombia and the Netherlands, the United States of America is attempting to combat major shortages in the country and bring in essential goods required by the people.

Russia

Russia and Venezuela have a very cooperative relationship with many areas of common concern. Russia and Venezuela also have a similar attitude towards the United States. Venezuela also represents Russia's most significant trading and military ally in South America. Venezuela has also recently been vocal in its support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. There are also numerous Russian Oil companies stationed within Venezuela.

Russia

Timeline of Key Events

Date **Description of event**

March 5th 2013	The death of Hugo Chavez triggers a presidential election within thirty days.
April 14th 2013	Nicolas Maduro is elected president of Venezuela with a narrow victory.
February 4th 2014	Protests in Venezuela commence against Maduro's new governmental policies.
October 26th 2015	Maduro calls a state of emergency in Venezuela giving himself more power.
2018	Hyperinflation and the humanitarian crisis reaches new peaks in Venezuela.
February 2nd 2019	Juan Guaido announces the formation of a new 'Humanitarian Aid Coalition'
February 29th 2019	A joint operation for all the coalition countries attempts to send supplies to



	Venezuela but is blocked.
June 2020	The PAHO agreement is reached.
April 2021	Maduro’s government allows the World Food Program to launch a school lunch program.
May 2021	The National Survey of Living Conditions (ENCOVI) estimates that roughly 94% of Venezuelans live in poverty.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

In the Security Council (SC), two resolutions on Venezuela were drafted. However, none of them passed (“UN Documents”). One of them was vetoed by the Russian Federation and China, and the other one didn’t have enough votes to pass. The UN also promotes the safety of refugees and international protection for refugees with their United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) as well as encouraging the maintenance of basic human rights internationally.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

International assistance to Venezuela as well as aid provided by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has been significant. Examples of such NGOs include the South American Initiative which has raised money to help the most poverty stricken people of Venezuela. Over 356 active charities and NGOs are currently in Venezuela attempting to resolve the crisis.

As well as charities, The United Nations themselves have attempted to resolve this issue on numerous occasions. The issue was discussed in 2019-20 however due to a veto by Russia and general polarisations all efforts have been denied. Despite these polarisations however, UN organisations and agencies are increasing humanitarian relief after having been given approval from both Maduro and Guaido. An example of this is the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organisation for Migration who are coordinating to assist all of the refugees emigrating from Venezuela.

Possible Solutions



There are many possible solutions or recommendations the Venezuelan government could entertain to provide their Nation with as much relief as possible. Firstly, the Venezuelan government should accept far greater foreign help and access from humanitarian actors. This would mean allowing politically impartial agencies to provide assistance to the people of Venezuela. Furthermore, these agencies need to be provided with far greater and more accurate information on the current situation within the Nation. This would be essential to ameliorating and more specifically targeting help towards those that need it most. Further agreements concerning the pandemic and mobilizing the use of funds frozen abroad are massive steps that need to be taken in order to improve Venezuela's economy. Donor countries should substantially fund the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan as well as increase general assistance targeted towards Venezuela. The International community must generally continue efforts to promote democracy and peace In Venezuela.

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