



**Issue:** The question of the Venezuelan crisis

**Forum:** Unión de Naciones Suramericanas

**Position:** President

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## Introduction

Venezuela is a country in South America with a population of over 31 million people. It has one of the largest oil reserves in the world. However, over the past few years Venezuela has been facing several issues. Venezuela is in the midst of a socio economic crisis. The country is facing hyperinflation, mass immigration, hunger, high crime and disease rates.

The Crisis began under the presidency of Hugo Chavez and the situation kept on deteriorating with rising protest across the country. Nicolas Maduro has been elected for his second term which has caused an uproar among the crowds. There have been reports of several human rights violation. There have been reports of government oppressing freedom of speech. The country is also suffering from lack of proper resources and economic mismanagement.

The international community has offered help on several occasions. However, the Venezuelan government has refused to accept any aid from the international community. Due to the rising issues and protests in Venezuela the international community believes it is important to tackle the situation.

## Definition of Key Terms

### **UNASUR**

Union of South American Nations is an intergovernmental organisation consisting of twelve countries to build integration in the cultural, economic, social and political areas while respecting the current situation of each of our member nations.

### **PDVSA**

Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. is the Venezuelan state-owned oil and natural gas company. They are really important for the economy of Venezuela. The company was nationalised under President Chavez.

## **UNHCR**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is a UN mandate to protect refugees.

## **Sanctions**

The international community can use sanctions to change the behaviour of a country or regime, in cases where that country or regime is violating human rights, waging war or endangering international peace and security.

## **Famine**

Widespread scarcity of food caused by several factors like war, crop failure, population imbalance, inflation etc.

## **Mass migration**

Mass migration is when large group of people move from one location to another.

## **Bolivian Diaspora**

It is the largest refugee crisis in America. The emigration of millions of Venezuelans leaving their country under the presidency of Chavez and Maduro.

## **Hyperinflation**

Hyperinflation is extremely fast or out-of-control inflation. Hyperinflation occurs when price increases are so wild that the concept of inflation is meaningless.

## **Chavismo**

A political ideology established by Hugo Chavez which includes socialist and left wing ideology populism, Bolivarian elements, patriotism and Latin American integration as its main components

## **General Overview**

Venezuela is suffering from several issues simultaneously like economic, political, humanitarian and refugee crisis. After Maduro was elected for the second term protests across the country increased. The population is facing the lack of necessities such as food

and medicines. The government refuses to accept aid from the international community or address the issues. With violation of several human rights, Venezuelans are fleeing the country. The crisis started several years ago and has worsened over the years.

## History

The economy of Venezuela heavily relies on its oil reserves. During the 1973 war Venezuela's economy benefitted heavily and became stable. However, after the drop in oil prices negatively impacted the economy causing the government to cut spending. After Hugo Chavez was elected in 1998 he made promises to reduce poverty and corruption in Venezuela which were serious issues.

## Chavez

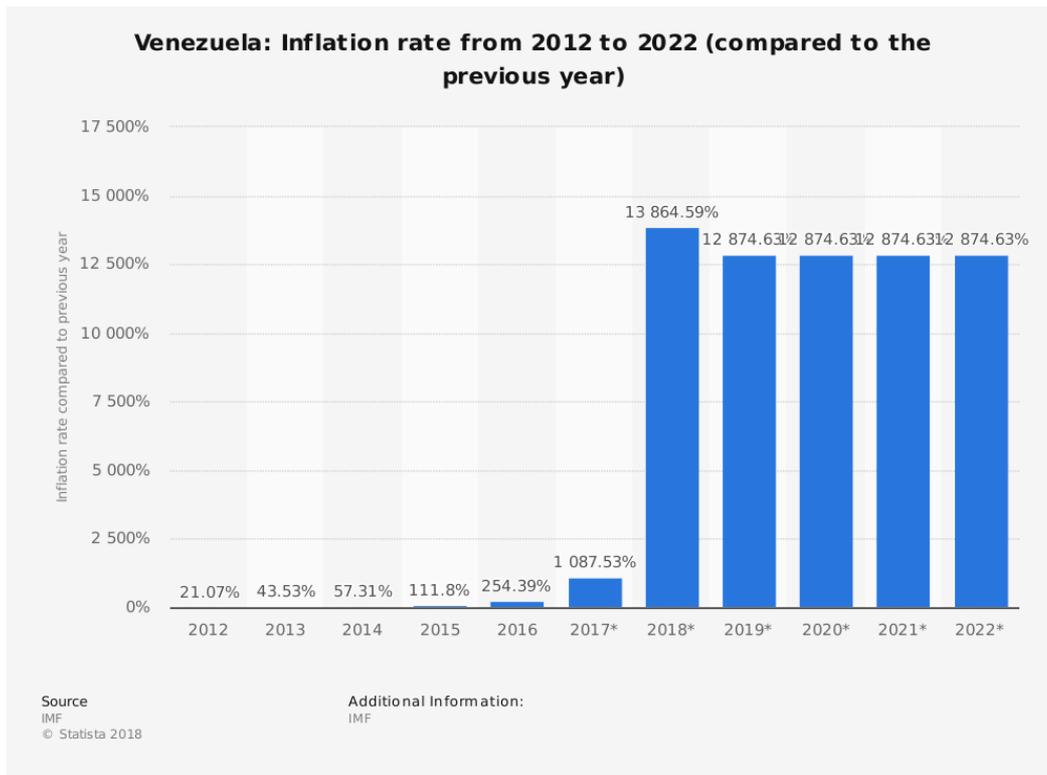
Hugo Chavez ran on a leftist, socialist platform, with an anti-imperialist and anti US tone. His focus was to end poverty and social justice for the lower class. Chavez introduced laws for PDVSA to take control of all oil projects in Venezuela, nationalizing oil industry. He also nationalized several other companies and used the funds on his social policies to lower the poverty rates. He also implemented several laws to redistribute the wealth in the country.

These laws gave him control over the economy of Venezuela. He started oppressing free press and imposing his propaganda. Human Rights Watch accused him for breaking human rights rules.

He also started building his relations with China and Russia while breaking ties with USA. Chavez's policies had both supporters and protesters. Some people did not like the restrictions on the economy as it gave him too much power. By 2013, the social divisions were growing, institutions were weaker and oil prices were dropping. The economic and social situation was deteriorating and amidst the situation Maduro was elected.

## Maduro

Nicolas Maduro had to handle the economic situation while the international oil prices were falling this left the country's economy vulnerable as it depended on oil reserves. Due to this the country had a shortfall of foreign currency. So, managing the social crisis and economic crisis led to the value of the currency falling and Venezuela facing high inflation rates. The economic situation worsened as unemployment, recession and scarcity of goods were rising.



("Venezuela - Inflation Rate 2022 | Statistic." Statista, Statista,  
[www.statista.com/statistics/371895/inflation-rate-in-venezuela/.](https://www.statista.com/statistics/371895/inflation-rate-in-venezuela/))

The rising economic problems also caused social and political problems in the country. Although, Maduro still had loyal supporters, opposition was starting to rise. People started protesting as Maduro failed to handle the economic situation. Maduro refused to give up power and responded by dissolving the national assembly and forming a new assembly to hold power.

The situation kept on getting worse as the population suffered from inflation, unemployment, high crime rates and lack of food and medicine. People started feeling the country to seek refuge in nearby countries. Whereas, Maduro refused humanitarian aid.

## Oppression

Oppression of free speech and opposition are a major human rights violation in Venezuela. The government has gained the legal right to revoke license of private media in Venezuela. They have exploited their power to oppress accurate data and statistics against the government. They manipulate the media to portray that country is in a better condition than it really is and any media company portraying the government in a negative way fears being shut down.



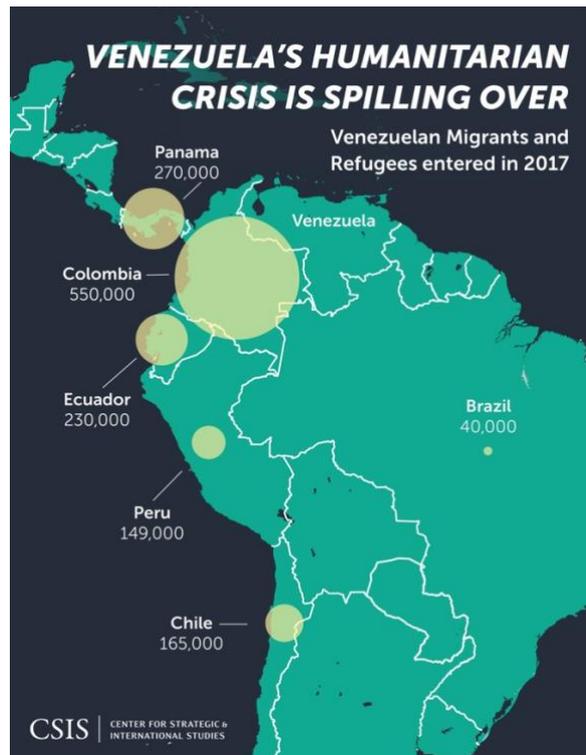
("Venezuela's Crisis." Human Rights Watch, [www.hrw.org/blog-feed/venezuelas-crisis](http://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/venezuelas-crisis).)

The people are also not granted freedom of protest as Maduro arrests the opposition leaders and many people have lost their jobs because of this. In 2014, the government responded to protests in a violent manner. Security used force on un armed civilians trying to protest against the government. People detained were kept for long duration of time periods and some even suffered torture. There have been clear violation of human rights by the Venezuelan government.

### **Humanitarian and Refugee crisis**

Venezuela is facing a serious shortage of food and medicine. This is depriving the population of proper healthcare since local hospitals have a shortage of basic drugs. This has caused the mortality rates to go high as there is no proper healthcare. The population also has a shortage of food and it is harder for people to afford food due to inflation. The majority of the population is starving and the government refuses to accept humanitarian aid or address the issue.

The living standards in Venezuela have forced several people to leave the country in search of better life. Around 2 million people have left Venezuela to seek refuge in other Latin American countries. This crisis is also known as Bolivarian Diaspora. The situation has escalated so much that countries like Colombia and Brazil are having problems to accommodate the refugees. It is also harmful for Venezuela as it is losing its workforce.



(“Venezuela’s Crisis Is Now a Regional Humanitarian Disaster.” Nuclear Stability in a Post-Arms Control World | Center for Strategic and International Studies, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 26 Feb. 2019, [www.csis.org/analysis/venezuelas-crisis-now-regional-humanitarian-disaster](http://www.csis.org/analysis/venezuelas-crisis-now-regional-humanitarian-disaster).)

So, the situation in Venezuela is very widespread as the economy is still deteriorating as inflation is increasing. The social and political situation is not any better. Hence, it is extremely important to address the issues.

## Major Parties Involved

### Venezuela (Maduro’s Government)

Maduro is the president of Venezuela for the second term which was called fraudulent by several nations. The main objective of Maduro is to stay in power. They have shown that they can use force to oppress any opposition they face. The government has refused to accept humanitarian aid from international aid which shows that the country refuses to acknowledge the crisis. Maduro’s government has repeatedly blamed the problems on foreign government (USA). Despite the opposition and protest they still manage to hold the power with the help of nations like Russia and China.

### The opposition in Venezuela

Maduro’s government is facing a lot of opposition from inside Venezuela. The protests have been rising over the past months especially after Maduro was elected for his second term.

Maduro has repeatedly tried to oppress and arrest his opposition, imprisoning many opposition leader and protestors.

The main objective of the opposition parties is restoring human rights, holding free and fair elections, ending political imprisonment. However, due to Maduro bypassing the opposition controlled national assembly it is extremely hard for them to have any political power as Maduro has exploited and bended rules to stay in power.

### **The Lima Group**

The Lima Group was established after the Lima declaration in 8 August 2017. It consists of 13 Latin American countries. It is an ad-hoc group of governments dedicated to finding the solution of the issue of Venezuela. The countries from Lima group have refused to recognize the Maduro government and will bar high-ranking Venezuelan officials from entering their territory as much as their domestic laws allow.

### **United States of America**

Both government of Maduro and Chavez have heavily criticized and blamed the US government for interference.

Under Trump's presidency US have also imposed further sanction on Venezuela straining their relations. USA also imports oil from Venezuela which has been reduced over the past years.

### **Russia**

Venezuela has had close political and military ties with Russia under the Chavez presidency. Venezuela is the second largest importer of arms from Russia. Venezuela has also received loans from Russia which were usually in exchange of oil supply to Russian companies. Russia also has its nuclear bombs in Venezuela. The relation also gives Russia a loyal ally in the American sphere of influence.

## **Timeline of Key Events**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
1973	Oil prices rise due to the Middle East conflict, benefitting the Venezuelan economy.
1983	Drop in oil prices cause a cut in government spending.
1998	Hugo Chavez is elected and he promises to reduce poverty and corruption.
2001	Government enforces a law stating PDVSA will hold majority stakes in all oil projects.

2002	PDVSA workers strike causing a chaos. Attempted coup fails. Chavez fires workers from PDVSA after coup attempt. He starts using energy company to fund the social programmes.
2006	Chavez is re-elected
2007	Chavez nationalizes several companies causing protest in both against and for the decision.
2008	Oil prices peak, Venezuela strengthens its relation with Russia and China.
2010	Congressional elections strengthen the opposition however Chavez still wind with majority.
2012	Chavez is re-elected as president.
2013	Chavez dies due to cancer. Maduro is elected.
2014	Oil prices falls and the economy worsens as there are cuts in public spending.
2016	Protests to remove Maduro start in Caracas.
2017	Maduro dissolves the national assembly causing protests around the country.
April- June 2017	Maduro forms a new assembly and arrests the opposition leader. This causes an uproar of protests
July 2017	Opposition boycotts the assembly elections and Maduro wins.
October- December 2017	Municipal elections take place and Maduro wins. The opposition boycotting the elections are banned. Irregularities in election are speculated.
May 2018	Presidential elections are held and Maduro wins, opposition boycotts and asks the international community for recognition.
10 January 2019	Maduro is sworn in for his second term and opposition leader is arrested for suggested taking control from Maduro.

## Previous attempts to resolve the issue

There have been several attempts to solve the issue by the international community and United Nations. The UN has offered humanitarian aid to Venezuela. However, Maduro has refused to accept aid from other countries and UN.

Several international NGO's have spoken up against the human rights violation in Venezuela. During the 2017 UN HRC session, there were 117 NGO's present and 81 from Venezuela. Organizations like Human Rights Watch have published reports like 'Brutal crackdown on massive anti- government protests' that focuses on the range of the issue. During the sessions the Lima group has condemned the actions of the Venezuelan government. They stated that they will not recognize the Constituent Assembly nor its resolutions.

They have also imposed an embargo on arms sales to Venezuela. The US have also imposed several trade sanctions on Venezuela. The sanctions were a way to weaken Maduro's position and force him into negotiations. However, in the HRC 37<sup>th</sup> session, the sanctions imposed were condemned.

There has also been a wide protest against the Maduro government in Venezuela by the public especially after Maduro was sworn in for his second term. The opposition leader, Juan Guaidó was arrested due to his protests against Maduro. The election has also been called fraudulent by not only by some countries but also by people in Venezuela.

## Possible Solutions

The Venezuela crisis is a complicated issue to tackle, it would require cooperation from the international community and especially the Venezuelan government. It is important to understand that Venezuela is facing several issues such as economic, political, humanitarian and refugee crisis at the same time. All the issues are of importance and need to be addressed separately even though they are interlinked.

It is important that democracy is upheld again in Venezuela and fair elections are held. The mistrust of the election result by the opposition and international community makes it important to supervise that free elections are held properly. There could be an international committee to supervise the elections in Venezuela.

For the solutions to be implemented it is important that Maduro's government cooperates which is highly unlikely. The international community can impose further sanctions on him with the aim to weaken his position and make it harder for him to control his regime. This would force him to negotiate and address issues such as political prisoners, freedom of speech and violation of human rights. It might also convince Maduro to accept humanitarian aid. The aid would be helpful in short term for the lack of food and medicines.

The refugee crisis of Venezuela can be helped by the international community. Better refugee camps could be built with better facilities until the situation is stable. The countries hosting the refugees could be helped by the UN.

In the long term, Venezuela would have to focus on a lot of factors. They would need to work on their policies and laws. They need to make structural changes in the economy to avoid further rise of crime and corruption. The economy relies mainly on its oil resources which might become a problem in the long term so, they should branch out to help their economy.

The crisis in Venezuela could be supervised for the short term crisis to make sure the country is stable to make long term amends.

## Appendix/Appendices

- <https://www.hrw.org/americas/venezuela>
- [www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/24/addressing-human-rights-and-humanitarian-crisis-venezuela](http://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/24/addressing-human-rights-and-humanitarian-crisis-venezuela)
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