

Forum:*Advisory Panel*

Issue: *The Venezuelan Crisis (Humanitarian)*
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Position: *Chair*

1. **Introduction**

Riots, protests, and political corruption have struck in the nation of Venezuela, contributing to various consequences within the region, including a humanitarian crisis. The Venezuelan crisis began with the presidency of Hugo Chavez, and continued with the current President Nicolas Maduro, who maintains the same policies as his predecessor. Venezuela is currently suffering a major food and medicine shortage, a humanitarian crisis. A large number of people are in desperate need of medical help but face extreme difficulties in acquiring such facilities due to the corruption and ongoing crisis. Having undergone an 85% shortage in medicines as well as a 90% shortage in medical supplies, Venezuela is working its way up the list of the world’s top poorest countries.

The nation had already been facing inconsistent food and medicine shortages, and since then, the issue has developed, progressed and worsened after Nicholas Maduro was elected as president of Venezuela. Although this crisis has had many negative effects on the economy, Venezuela is also currently facing a major humanitarian crisis. The people of Venezuela are suffering of various diseases and health risks due to the lack of resources, high costs of food, and shortages in food and medicines. This has resulted in increased child death rates, tuberculosis, malaria, as well as whooping cough. In 2016 there were around 240,613 affirmed cases of malaria; a 76% increase from 2015.

Furthermore, Venezuela is currently facing a refugee crisis. Due to the increased shortages in food and medicine as well as poor humanitarian conditions, around 2.5-3 million people sought refuge in other countries in search for a better and safer life. The reason behind this is simple, the corruption in the Venezuelan government. Venezuela is losing hundreds of thousands of citizens every year and this has led to a major downfall in the economy and government as a whole.

1. **Definition of Key Terms**

Malnutrition

Malnutrition is the lack of proper nutrition, caused by the absence of proper and adequate nutrients in the human body. Often caused by food shortages.

Food shortage

Food shortage is when the food and agriculture produced within the nation does not compensate and isn’t enough for the population as a whole. Causes behind food shortages include environmental conditions (such as natural disasters and climate change) as well as economic issues and corruption in governments.

Medical aid

Medical aid is a form of insurance usually provided by governments or NGOs (non-governmental organizations) providing professional treatments for illness or injuries.

Migrant

Person who moves from one place to another, usually looking for better living conditions and opportunities. The decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual, unlike in the case of a refugee, where factors like persecution and war, force the person’s movement. Furthermore, migrants may decide to leave their homes as a result of poor humanitarian conditions and corruption within their government.

Refugee

Person who is forced to flee from one place to another due to many factors including persecution and war force.

Corruption

 Corruption is the misuse of power for personal gain. This results in major issues within countries governments as well as the citizens to suffer.

1. General Overview – Background information

**History**

The history of the Venezuelan crisis begins with the discovery of oil, a crucial source of energy used in the modern-day world. Oil is especially significant in this situation as Venezuela’s main source of income and profit comes from the trade of oil. In the middle of the 20th century, Venezuela was able to leave behind decades of dictatorships and past dictators to become a democracy. At the time, the country was is in a good position, it was both politically and economically strong since it has the largest reserves of oil in the world and can use the revenue from its exports to grow economically and develop. However, problems started to arise when oil prices took a downfall during the 1980s. Venezuela had failed to diversify its economy beyond oil. The government’s attempts to implement austerity measures end up hurting the middle and lower classes the most.

**Authority and Power**

Hugo Chavez first attempts to rise to power through a coup in 1992, however, it miserably fails. Around six years later, he is elected president. One of the first things president Chavez promises the Venezuelans is to put an end to poverty and bring social justice to the forgotten lower classes. Chavez’s first years in power begin to show his attitude towards government. He implements laws to redistribute wealth and benefit small farmers and uses the revenues from oil exports to carry forward programs to alleviate poverty. Furthermore, president Chavez makes an effort and nationalizes many crucial industries, most importantly the oil industry, which gives him a greater control over the economy. Despite of many failures such as his defeat in the 2007 referendum, Chavez was able to progressively accumulate power in the government and in his own hands.

**The Explosion of a Crisis**

The economy began to crash when the prices of oil began to crash as well. Maduro’s government was heavily dependent on oil, having it their main source of income, and if the prices of oil dropped, then so will the government of Venezuela. Venezuela went from being a nation developing in trade and the economy into a country with a weak economy and high amounts of debt. During this time, Maduro was facing a crisis in attempt of maintaining the management of a government, as well as social policies to sustain his support in order for him to stay in power. Thus, it is without a doubt that this economic crisis has resulted in incredibly high inflation (in the order of 10.000% a year). Venezuelans started losing jobs and unemployment rates increased.

In attempt to resolve the issue, Maduro makes attempts at devaluations, price controls, austerity programs and even the launching of a cryptocurrency. On top of that, the US actually imposed economic sanctions on Venezuela. It is without a doubt that the economic crisis in Venezuela has been one of the most tragic and haunting downfalls in the world of economics.

Along with the economic crisis in came social and political repercussions, Venezuela was now facing a humanitarian crisis as well. Although president Maduro still has a loyal base who kept on supporting him, the opposition started gaining public opinion, clearly angry at the economic failures of Maduro’s government. As a result, protest movements took place and the opposition managed to win legislative elections. However, president Maduro was not ready to give up his power just yet and shows that he is not willing to give up power by bypassing the National Assembly, controlled by the opposition, with a newly formed constitutional assembly.

As a result of all of this greed, power and corruption, the consequences of the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela started increasing and people started suffering.

Venezuelan’s are suffering a major food and medicine shortage, a humanitarian crisis. A large number of people are in desperate need of medical help but face extreme difficulties in acquiring such facilities due to the corruption and ongoing crisis. Having undergone an 85% shortage in medicines as well as a 90% shortage in medical supplies, Venezuela is working its way up the list of the world’s poorest countries. Furthermore, the people of Venezuela are suffering of various diseases and health risks due to the lack of resources, high costs of food, and shortages in food and medicines. This has resulted in increased child death rates, tuberculosis, malaria, as well as whooping cough. In 2016 there were around 240,613 affirmed cases of malaria; a 76% increase from 2015.

Furthermore, this has resulted in Venezuela facing a refugee crisis. Due to the increased shortages in food and medicine as well as poor humanitarian conditions, around 2.5-3 million people sought refuge in other countries in search for a better and safer life. The reason behind this is simple, the corruption in the Venezuelan government. Venezuela is losing hundreds of thousands of citizens every year and this has led to a major downfall in the economy and government as a whole.

1. Major Parties Involved and Their Views

**The Government of Maduro**

The government of Maduro’s main aim is to maintain its position of power and stay in control. Despite the chaos he is to blame for in the country, Maduro holds an approval rating of around 30%. Throughout the years, the government has gained and accumulated more and more power in the figure of the president, enabling him to use force and violence to achieve this aim. Furthermore, the Venezuelan government continues to blame the US and other countries for their problems due to the arrogance of president Maduro. Moreover, although the country has been facing a major humanitarian crisis, the government has not accepted any aid as president Maduro continues to refuse and deny the acceptance the fact that the country is facing various problems.

**The Venezuelan Opposition**

The opposition is a movement that completely goes against Maduro’s ideologies and say of ruling. Although the opposition has had more failures than successes during the Chavist rule, in 2015 the opposition was able to defeat Maduro’s PSUV in the legislative elections, which gave the opposition new hopes of change. This hope quickly faded, as Maduro maneuvered to bypass the opposition controlled National Assembly and opposition leaders like Leopoldo Lopez have been jailed, and their protests repressed. Today, after divisions on issues like whether to participate in regional elections or not, the opposition is internally fractured. This benefits Maduro, since there is no single force that clearly represents those against him.

**The United States**

When president Hugo Chavez first rose to power, he criticized the US heavily, as he saw it to be an imperialist power that posed a threat to his socialist model. Tensions between the US and Venezuela rose. Chavez accused the US of fomenting a coup attempt in 2002, and Venezuela was included in Bush’s “axis of evil” for a period of time. After the reports of human rights abuses and the breach of democracy in Venezuela, the US imposed economic sanctions on high-ranking officials in 2014. With Trump’s arrival to the US presidency, relations have further strained. Trump intensified the economic sanctions on the country. He has also suggested the possibility of using military force to intervene in Venezuela, however Maduro responded to with global rejection due to his arrogance and lack of acceptation tp the issue. The US imports hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil per day from Venezuela, although imports have been decreasing for some time. Thus, it has an interesting in maintaining Venezuela as a source for this energetic resource. Both ideologically and strategically, Maduro’s government is a nuisance for the US.

**Russia and China**

 Both Russia and China provide significant support for the Maduro regime. The countries have strong military ties: Venezuela is the second largest importer of Russian weapons in the world. Whereas China and Venezuela have close economic ties, having undertaken joint economic programs in the energy, industry and transport sectors. Furthermore, both Russia and China have helped Venezuela repay loans and aided the economic crisis. As the economic crisis worsened in Venezuela, China provided favorable repayment plans for the many loans that it had previously provided to the country and Russia accounted to as much as 13% of the country’s total exports.

1. **Timeline of Events**

**1998**- Hugo Chavez is elected president.

**2001** - President Hugo Chavez uses enabling act to pass laws aimed at redistributing land and wealth. President Chavez is attempting to grow economically and politically.

**2002**(April) - Armed forces rebel over violent stand-off between Venezuelan government and state oil monopoly after appointment of new board.

**2005**(January) - President Chavez signs decree on land reform to eliminate Venezuela's large estates and benefit rural poor. Ranchers say move is attack on private property.

**2005**(December) - Parties loyal to President Chavez dominate parliament after opposition parties boycott election.

**2006**(July) - President Chavez signs a $ 3 billion arms deal with Russia, including an agreement to buy fighter jets and helicopters, marking a re-orientation away from US arms supplies.

**2006**(December) – President Hugo Chavez won president for his third term with 63% of the vote, the largest margin since the 1947 election.

**2007**(January) - President Chavez announced that key energy and telecommunications companies will be nationalized.

**2007**(June) - US oil companies refused to hand over majority control of their operations to the Venezuelan government, which then expropriates them anyways.

**2007**(December) - President Chavez suffers his first defeat at the ballot box, when a referendum narrowly rejects proposals to increase government control over the Central Bank and the power to expropriate property.

**2008**– The first Venezuelan telecommunications satellite were launched from China.

**2009**(February) – Voters in a referendum approve plans to abolish limits on the number of terms in office for elected officials. This allows President Chavez to stand again when his term expires in 2012.

**2010** (January) – The devaluation of the Bolivar currency by President Chavez in order to boost revenue from oil exports after the economy shrank 5.8% in last quarter of 2009.

**2010**(September) - Parliamentary elections took place. Opposition made significant gains.

**2012**(April) - Government extends price controls on more basic goods in the battle against inflation. President Chavez threatens to expropriate companies that do not comply with the price controls.

**2012**(July) -After a six-year wait, Venezuela becomes a full member of regional trading bloc Mercosur and is given four years to comply with the bloc's trading regulations.

**2012**(October) - President Hugo Chavez won a fourth term in office.

**2013**(April) - President Hugo Chavez dies at age 58 after a long battle with cancer. Nicolas Maduro, his chosen successor, is elected president by a narrow margin. The opposition contests the result.

**2014**(March) – Around 30 people died in suppression of anti-government protests.

**2014**(November) – Venezuelan Government announces cuts in public spending due to the decrease of oil prices reaching a four-year low.

**2015**(December) - After 16 years of Socialist Party control, Opposition Democratic Unity coalition wins 2/3 majority in parliamentary elections.

**2016**(September) - Hundreds of thousands of people take part in a protest in Caracas calling for the removal of President Maduro, accusing him of responsibility for the reason behind the economic crisis.

**2017**(July) - Controversial constituent assembly elected in the face of an opposition boycott and international condemnation.

**2018**(May) - Opposition contests the official victory of President Maduro at presidential elections.

**2018** (August) - Two million Venezuelans have sought refuge in neighboring countries in search of a better and safer life.

**2019**(February) - Opposition leader Juan Guaidó declares himself interim president, appeals to military to oust President Maduro on the grounds that the 2018 election was rigged.

1. UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The Security Council has not issued any resolutions regarding the crisis in Venezuela. This is because, in November 2017, many nations, including Russia and China refused a Security Council meeting to discuss the issue. However, other UN bodies have gotten involved in different ways such as;

The United Nations has offered humanitarian aid to Venezuela more than once. However, president Maduro refused every time as he claims to be afraid of the international community interfering in the country.

After various political and protest movements took place in 2017, the UN’s High Commissioner for Human Rights has found that during the protests, the government was responsible for many grave human rights violations, including arbitrary detention and torture, although no action was taken.

In attempt to resolve the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, in November 2016, the Human Right Council’s Working Group completed a full review on Venezuela and issued a list of 274 recommendations, ranging from poverty and health to political rights issues with the hopes that they would solve the issue. Venezuela responded by arguing that it was already implementing many of the proposed solutions and stated that foreign powers had been trying to undermine its progress regarding human rights. Thus, no action has actually been taking place.

On September 11, 2017, in the 36th Session of the Human Rights Council at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, the topic of the humanitarian crisis and the violation of human rights in Venezuela was addressed. No measures were taken due to the government’s refusal to accept international humanitarian aid.

1. Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

A resolution in the HRC’s (Human Rights Council) thirty-seventh session, which condemned and focused on the importance of economic sanctions against the republic of Venezuela by the United States, Canada, the European Union and their allies. In attempt of resolving this issue, the resolution urged these countries to cut the sanctions on other states since such measures prevent the full realization of the development of nations like Venezuela.

In March 2018, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees published a protection guidance to orient nations receiving and accepting Venezuelan migrants. The document basically tackles the migrants’ basic rights and how they should be respected, and that they should be given possibilities to legally stay in the territories they arrive to without fear of being forced to return to Venezuela.

No other measures or actions have been taken to solve the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela.

1. Possible Solutions

**Raising awareness about the issue –**

Urging the UN to Uphold conferences and press conferences to raise awareness throughout gathering contributions to end this conflict and internationally alert the world of the issue, by having a UN specialist talk in that press conference and raise awareness, so that other counties can contribute to the matter at hand.

Raising awareness can also be done using social media platforms to address this situation, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

**Undergoing changes in the Venezuelan government -**

Hosting re-elections within the nation of Venezuela hosted by the UN to ensure fairness and lack of biasness so that the results cannot be tampered with unlike previous elections.

Completing a full investigation done by the UN in order to determine if the Venezuelan government is in fact providing aid to its citizens. If the government has not been providing aid, economic and trading sanctions will be enforced sanctioning the Venezuelan government until it proves to the UN that it has changed and works on solving its humanitarian crisis.

**Strengthening the humanitarian response in Venezuela –**

Starting an unbiased and transparent organization with the help of the United Nations, World Health Organization (WHO) and others to provide free medical and health care Venezuelan citizens. The organization would be responsible for food donations, which will help in reducing the amount of food-related deaths, drug donations, these should include all types of medical aid, especially vaccines and medications to combat malaria. Furthermore, this organization can focus on building hospitals in Venezuela to support the healing process of the injured and ill.

1. Guiding Questions
2. What is your countries stance and relation to the Venezuelan Crisis?
3. Has your country ever traded/ allied with Venezuela?
4. How can your country aid in the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela?
5. What countries are aiding with the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela? How is your country linked and related to those countries?
6. What has the UN done in attempting to solve this issue?
7. How were humanitarian crises solved through history? Observe a pattern and notice the different methods executes to solve various humanitarian crises in the past.
8. What can be done to decrease the shortages in foods and medicine?
9. Is your country affiliated or allied with any NGO’s or country’s that are willing to aid in this crisis?
10. Is your country a refugee accepting country? If so, can it accept Venezuelan refugees?
11. How are the humanitarian conditions in your own country? Is your country facing a humanitarian crisis?
12. Appendices and useful links
13. <https://www.huffpost.com/entry/venezuela-economic-crisis-explainer_n_57507abde4b0eb20fa0d2c54>
14. <https://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2016/04/29/venezuelas_political_crisis_unfolds_111828.html>
15. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-idUSKCN0XV2JD>
16. <https://www.thenation.com/article/why-is-venezuela-in-crisis/>
17. <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/08/02/americas/venezuela-what-went-wrong/>
18. [http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2016/04/29/venezuelas\_political\_crisis \_unfolds\_111828.html](http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2016/04/29/venezuelas_political_crisis%20_unfolds_111828.html)
19. [http://time.com/4144648/these-5-facts-explain-why-venezuela-is-in-big-trouble- still/](http://time.com/4144648/these-5-facts-explain-why-venezuela-is-in-big-trouble-%20still/)
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