

COMITEE: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural (SOCHUM)

QUESTION: Promoting the rights of civilians in Venezuela

STUDENT OFFICER: Melina Rizk

POSITION: President

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Personal introduction

Dear delegates,

My name is Melina Rizk, I am a 16 year old student at the LFHED. I am incredibly honored to have been assigned the responsibility of being your President this year in the Social, Cultural and Humanitarian committee at the LFHMUN of 2025. It has been a pleasure to work alongside my co-chair, Anna Gardaire, who will be the Vice-President of this committee.

This study guide will hopefully help you familiarize yourself with the topic, as well as prepare you for the debates that will arise during these couple of days.

The three topics that we will be debating during this session's MUN are crucial for a better and wider understanding of the modern world's issues, as you will have to represent your assigned country by broadening your political perspective.

The MUN is the ideal environment to step out of your comfort zone, engage in debates with fellow delegates, and develop your public speaking skills.

Throughout the preparation process, collaboration and diplomacy will remain the key. Moreover, along the way, you'll create lasting memories and build proper critical thinking abilities, making this an unforgettable experience.

From advancing the rights of civilians in Venezuela, to ensuring access to education in conflict zones and tackling world hunger as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals in 2030, these pressing matters offer urgency to tackle. With such issues at hand, we are sure to have engaging and insightful debates.

General Introduction:

The promotion of civilian rights in Venezuela has become an urgent issue due to the country's deep political, economic, and humanitarian crisis since 2010. Venezuela's crisis is deeply rooted in its 20th-century history, where the country's wealth was built on its vast oil reserves, making it one of the richest in Latin America. However, this reliance on oil led to corruption, inequality, and an over-dependence on oil exports, leaving the country vulnerable when oil prices fell. The country has faced severe economic collapse, skyrocketing poverty, and widespread political repression under Nicolás Maduro's government. Maduro and his United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) have been accused of manipulating elections, suppressing opposition, and consolidating power undemocratically. Opposition groups like Popular Will (VP) and Justice First (PJ) have fought for democratic change but faced persecution and violence, worsening the situation.

Hyperinflation has rendered the local currency almost worthless, unemployment is rampant, and access to basic goods like food and medicine has become a daily struggle for most citizens. These issues have intensified the country's crisis, deeply affecting the livelihoods and well-being of ordinary Venezuelans.

During Nicolás Maduro's presidency, Venezuela's socioeconomic challenges have only worsened, severely impacting everyday life. Prison conditions have deteriorated, marked by overcrowding, inadequate food and medical care, and abuse of detainees. Between 2014 and 2023, approximately 15,700 arbitrary arrests were reported, many involving individuals detained without due process or a fair trial. Despite acknowledging 455 enforced disappearances between 2015 and 2022, the government has not provided any information on the victims' whereabouts or held anyone accountable.

These issues are part of a broader pattern of human rights violations in Venezuela, including unlawful killings, unwarranted arrests, and torture, especially during political unrest. These violations are direct results of the government's systematic efforts to suppress any opposition to its regime, further exacerbating the country's crisis.

More than 25% of Venezuelan households suffer from food insecurity, and 74.5% lack access to safe drinking water. Public health services are near collapse, and most people are unable to afford basic goods and needs. Women and girls face heightened risks of gender-based violence, while Indigenous Peoples, especially in the Orinoco Mining Arc, continue to face violations due to the governments' illegal mining and military operations.

The government represses political participation and freedom of expression, with human rights defenders and opposition figures facing targeted persecution. Despite international condemnation, the Venezuelan government's actions remain largely unchecked, making urgent action for the UN to protect its people's rights more critical than ever.

Key words:

Civilian Rights: Rights that protect individuals' freedoms and ensure their participation in society, including the right to life, liberty, security, and equality before the law.

Humanitarian Crisis: A situation where a large population is in urgent need of assistance due to extreme challenges such as food shortages, health issues, or displacement caused by conflict or political instability.

Arbitrary Arrests: Arrests made without a legitimate legal reason, typically involving detaining individuals without due process, a fair trial, or access to legal counsel.

Political Suppression: Actions taken by a government to restrict or eliminate opposition to the ruling political power, often involving censorship, repression, or violence.

Censorship: The suppression or restriction of information, ideas, or expression that is considered objectionable or sensitive, typically by governments, organizations, or other authorities.

Food Insecurity: The state in which people are unable to access sufficient, nutritious, and safe food to meet their dietary needs due to factors like poverty, lack of resources, or conflict.

Public Health Collapse: The breakdown of public health systems, leading to inadequate access to healthcare services, essential medicines, and medical care.

Gender-based Violence: Violence directed at an individual based on their gender, often affecting women and girls, and includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

Indigenous Population: The original inhabitants of a region, with unique cultural and historical ties to the land. They often face challenges like land loss, marginalization, and rights violations, especially in areas impacted by resource extraction and conflict.

Marginalization: The process by which certain groups or individuals are pushed to the edge of society, often resulting in limited access to resources, opportunities, and power, leading to social exclusion and inequality.

Displacement: The forced movement of people from their home or community, often due to factors like conflict, natural disasters, or economic hardship, leading them to seek refuge in other areas.

Mining Activity: The process of extracting minerals, metals, or other geological materials from the earth, often leading to environmental impacts such as deforestation, pollution, and disruption of local communities.

International Condemnation: The official disapproval or denunciation by international organizations, governments, or human rights bodies of a country's actions or policies.

Orinoco Mining Arc: A large area in southeastern Venezuela rich in natural resources, particularly gold, diamond, and other minerals. This region has been the focus of extensive mining activity, often illegal, leading to environmental destruction, displacement of Indigenous populations, and violations of human rights.

Political Unrest: A situation in which a country or region experiences widespread dissatisfaction, protests, or instability due to disagreements with the government, policies, or social conditions. This often leads to public demonstrations, strikes, or even violence as people demand change or express opposition to the ruling authority.

GPPSB: Simón Bolívar Great Patriotic Pole is a left-wing socialist and Chavista electoral alliance/popular front of Venezuelan political parties created in 2012 to support the re-election of Hugo Chávez in the 2012 presidential election.

MUD/ PU: The Democratic Unity Roundtable - the opposition to the ruling party.

Operation Tun Tun: A government operation launched after the 2024 presidential election to arrest many protesters and government critics, aimed at intimidating opponents and suppressing the 2024 protests, according to human rights groups.

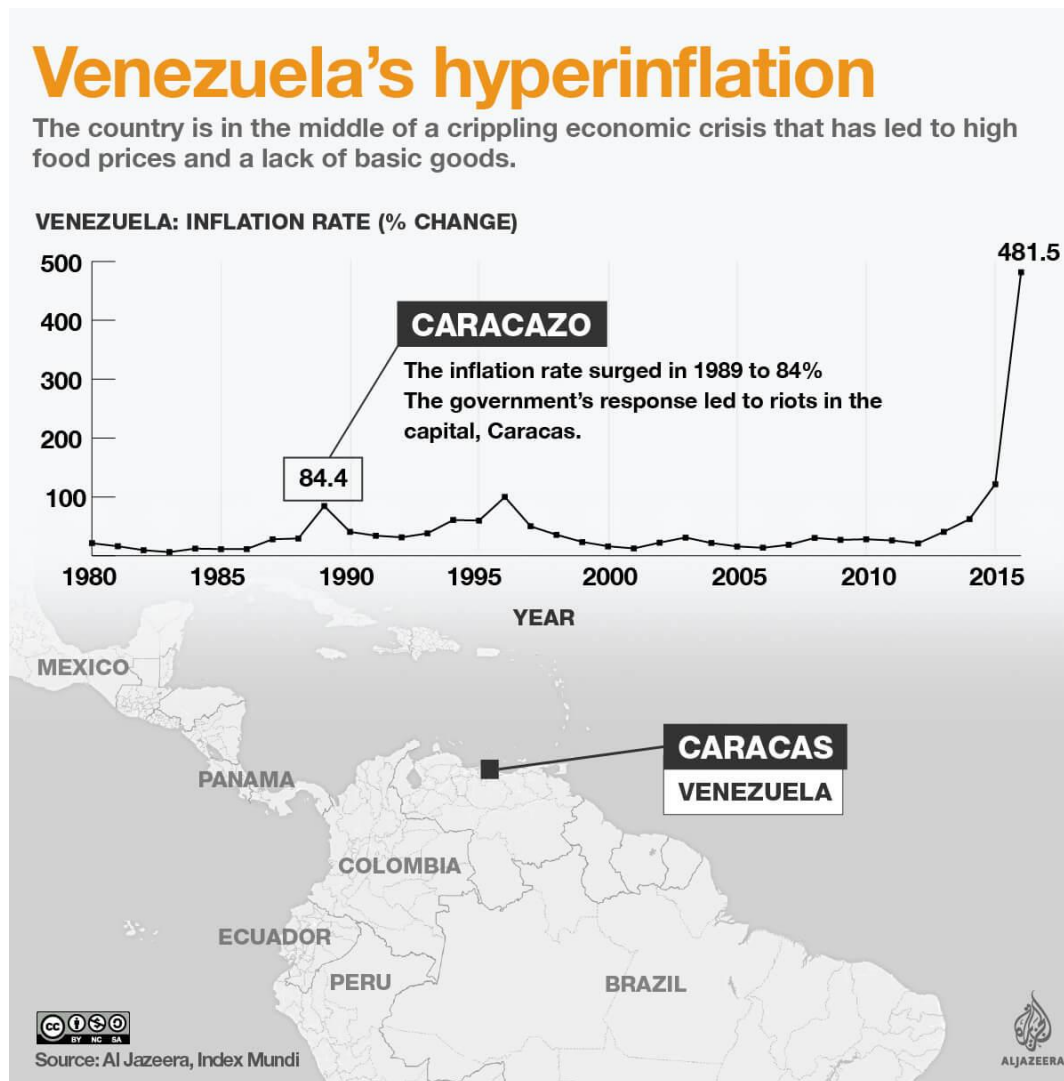
General Overview

The Venezuelan Regime: a threat to freedom of expression.

Causes

- **Humanitarian Crisis:**

Since the 2010s, Venezuela's economy has collapsed due to mismanagement, corruption, and reliance on oil revenues, worsened by global oil price crashes in 2014–2016. Hyperinflation and a collapsing healthcare and food distribution system have made basic goods inaccessible, leading to massive food insecurity, unsafe drinking water access for 74.5% of households, and the world's third-highest food price inflation.



Map showing Venezuela's evolution of hyperinflation throughout the years

- **Government Failures and Repression:**

After Hugo Chávez's death in 2013, Nicolás Maduro's government increasingly centralized power, dismantled democratic checks and balances. Despite humanitarian agreements in 2022, the regime prioritized political survival over reforms, continuing to suppress dissent violently, using arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings to maintain control.

- **Prison Conditions and Rights Violations:**

Prisons in Venezuela have historically been overcrowded and violent, but conditions worsened dramatically after 2015 amid budget cuts and rising authoritarianism. Indigenous peoples' rights have been systematically ignored since illegal mining intensified in protected areas like the Orinoco Mining Arc from 2016 onward, exposing Indigenous groups to violence and displacement.

- **Education and Employment:**

Economic collapse since 2014 led to underfunded public services, including education. By 2023, teacher strikes, school closures, and mass child absenteeism reflected years of neglect and mismanagement. Union leaders were increasingly targeted as political dissenters rather than protected workers' advocates.

- **Repression of Political Participation and Freedom:**

Since opposition victories in the 2015 legislative elections, Maduro's government has systematically dismantled political competition by disqualifying candidates, dissolving opposition parties, and taking over institutions like the Red Cross. New NGO laws aimed to silence civil society were part of an effort to control all political spaces ahead of the 2024 elections.

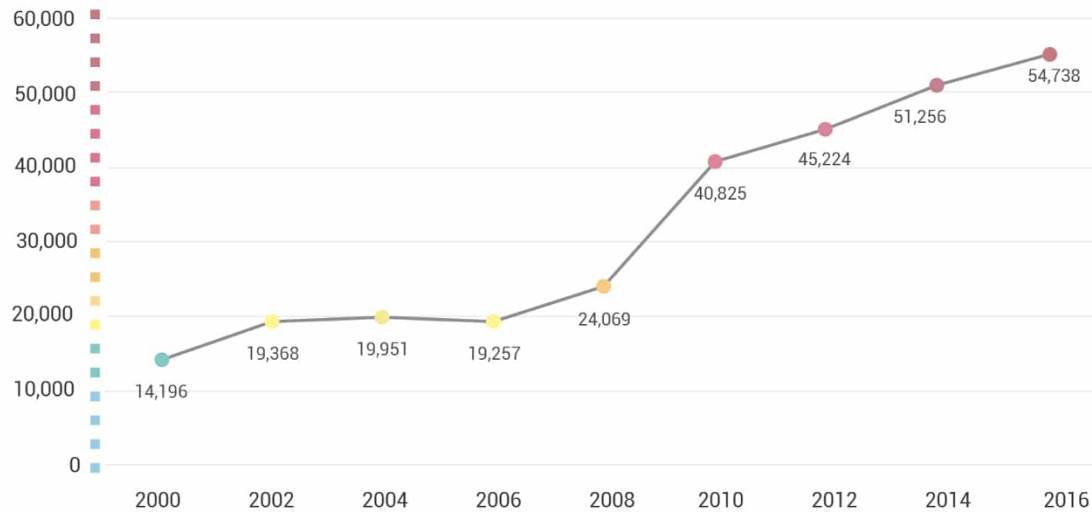
- **Freedom of Expression and Assembly:**

The Venezuelan government began tightly controlling media after Chávez passed laws restricting private media in the early 2000s. This intensified after 2017, with widespread attacks on journalists and violent crackdowns on protests demanding economic and social rights — a pattern that continued through 2023 with 6,956 protests facing harsh repression.

- **Arbitrary Detention and Unfair Trials:**

Political arrests spiked after major protests in 2014 (following the “La Salida” opposition movement). Between 2014 and 2023, arbitrary arrests became a systematic tool to intimidate activists, with the judiciary increasingly politicized and fair trial guarantees routinely violated.

The Growing Prison Population in Venezuela



Source: Institute for Criminal Policy Research (ICPR)

insightcrime.org

Graph showing the increasing prison inmates in Venezuela

- **Enforced Disappearances:**

Since 2015, security forces have used enforced disappearances as a tool against political opponents and protesters. Despite acknowledging 455 cases, the government rarely investigated these crimes, reinforcing a climate of impunity and fear.^{III}

- **Extrajudicial Executions:**

Venezuelan police units like FAES, created in 2017, were responsible for thousands of extrajudicial killings, particularly in poor neighborhoods accused of being opposition strongholds. Even after FAES's "dissolution" in 2022, these practices continued under new names and structures.

- **Right to Truth, Justice, and Reparation:**

Since mass protests in 2017, victims and families have demanded accountability for human rights abuses, but Venezuela's justice system, heavily controlled by the executive, refused to investigate or prosecute high-level offenders, leading to international interventions like the ICC investigation into crimes against humanity.

- **Inhumane Detention Conditions:**

Historically poor, Venezuela's detention system collapsed further after 2015 due to economic crisis and policy neglect. Prisons were often controlled by inmates (pranatos) rather than authorities, creating a violent, lawless environment until temporary military interventions like the 2023 operation to regain control.

- **Indigenous Peoples' Rights:**

Since Chávez's "21st-century socialism" expanded resource extraction in the mid-2000s, Indigenous territories were increasingly invaded by illegal mining. The 2016 creation of the Orinoco Mining Arc formalized environmental destruction and Indigenous displacement, exacerbated by military involvement in 2023 operations like the eviction from Yapacana.

- **Human Rights Defenders:**

After 2014, the Maduro government intensified its harassment of human rights NGOs and activists, branding them "foreign agents" or "terrorists." Arbitrary detention of defenders like Javier Tarazona became common as a way to dismantle independent monitoring efforts.

- **Refugees' and Migrants' Rights:**

Venezuela's mass migration crisis, beginning around 2015, became the largest refugee crisis in the Western Hemisphere. As international patience waned, countries like the U.S. and Iceland began deporting Venezuelans, often violating their rights and exposing them to further persecution upon return.

- **Women's and Girls' Rights:**

The economic collapse deepened gender inequalities: women increasingly took informal, low-paid jobs and faced higher rates of domestic violence and food insecurity. Structural sexism in institutions remained unaddressed despite international pressure.

- **Sexual and Reproductive Rights:**

Despite international human rights standards, Venezuela retained harsh criminalization of abortion from the 19th century. The crisis worsened access to contraception and maternal healthcare, resulting in one of the region's highest maternal mortality rates.

- **Violence Against Women and Girls:**

Gender-based violence surged after 2016 amid worsening economic hardship and the breakdown of public protection services. Few state resources were devoted to protecting victims or investigating femicides, even as reported femicides rose sharply year after year.

- **LGBTI People's Rights:**

Homophobia remained embedded in Venezuelan institutions and society, and political repression increasingly targeted LGBTI individuals. Police abuses and arbitrary detentions in 2023 continued a history of discrimination and invisibilization dating back decades.

- **Right to a Healthy Environment:**

Environmental degradation accelerated during the Chávez and Maduro years, especially after the 2016 launch of the Orinoco Mining Arc project. Despite ratifying global climate agreements, Venezuela's focus on increasing oil production contradicted its stated environmental commitments.

Consequences:

- **Humanitarian Crisis:**

Years of economic collapse, government mismanagement, and dependence on oil after 2014 caused hyperinflation, food shortages, and the breakdown of healthcare, pushing millions into poverty and hunger.

- **Government Failures and Repression:**

Since Nicolás Maduro's rise to power in 2013, the Venezuelan government increasingly relied on violence, repression, and ignoring humanitarian agreements to maintain control.

- **Prison Conditions and Rights Violations:**

From 2015 onwards, Venezuelan prisons suffered extreme neglect, overcrowding, and underfunding, while illegal mining activities expanded into Indigenous territories under the state's watch.

- **Education and Employment:**

After 2014, Venezuela's economic collapse defunded schools, causing teacher strikes, child absenteeism, and a generation of youth losing access to education and stable employment.

- **Repression of Political Participation and Freedom:**

Since 2015, political opposition was dismantled through disqualifications, imprisonments, and attacks on NGOs, eliminating democratic competition and strengthening Maduro's grip.

- **Freedom of Expression and Assembly:**

Freedom of the press shrank from Chávez's time onward, with Maduro accelerating media censorship, cracking down violently on protesters, and jailing independent journalists.

- **Arbitrary Detention and Unfair Trials:**

Starting after 2014 protests, mass arrests targeted activists and ordinary citizens, with courts manipulated by the government to legitimize political persecution.

- **Enforced Disappearances:**

Disappearances of activists and dissidents became a tool of fear and intimidation since 2015, with authorities rarely investigating or punishing those responsible.

- **Extrajudicial Executions:**

The FAES and other security units, operating since 2017, carried out killings against civilians, continuing abuses even after the FAES was supposedly dissolved.

- **Right to Truth, Justice, and Reparation:**

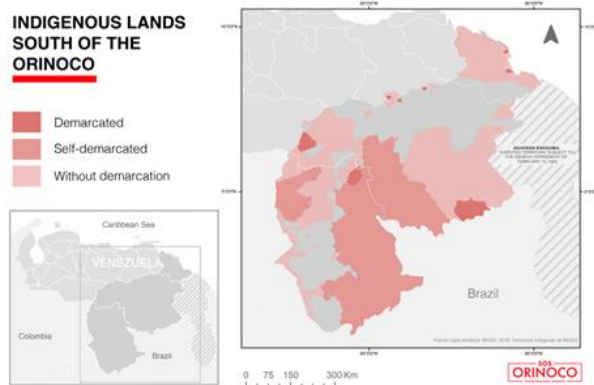
Despite international pressure since 2017, Venezuelan victims of abuse saw no justice, as the judicial system remained tightly controlled by the executive branch.

- **Inhumane Detention Conditions:**

Economic collapse and corruption worsened detention centers, where criminal groups dominated prisons and brutal conditions persisted until efforts to regain control in 2023.

- **Indigenous Peoples' Rights:**

After 2016, illegal mining in places like the Orinoco Mining Arc displaced Indigenous communities, polluted lands, and sparked violence, often with state complicity.



Map showing the mining impacts on indigenous communities

- **Human Rights Defenders:**

Since 2014, activists faced growing harassment, arrests, and smear campaigns, with the government framing human rights work as subversive and criminal.

- **Refugees' and Migrants' Rights:**

The deepening crisis after 2015 forced millions to flee Venezuela, many facing unsafe conditions, deportations, and discrimination in host countries.

- **Women's and Girls' Rights:**

Women were especially hurt by the humanitarian crisis, facing greater economic dependence, heightened violence, and little state support to protect their rights.

- **Sexual and Reproductive Rights:**

Strict abortion laws combined with the healthcare collapse to worsen maternal mortality and deny women access to basic reproductive health services.

- **Violence Against Women and Girls:**

With the social safety net falling apart after 2016, femicides and gender-based violence increased dramatically, leaving many without recourse or protection.

- **LGBTI People's Rights:**

The government continued its long-standing discrimination against LGBTI people, with widespread police abuses and little legal protection from harassment or violence.

- **Right to a Healthy Environment:**

Despite promises, the government prioritized oil drilling and illegal mining, accelerating deforestation, pollution, and environmental degradation across protected areas.

Case study: The Venezuelan Government enacts the Constitutional law to suppress political opposition.

The Venezuelan Constituent National Assembly unanimously enacted the Constitutional Law Against Hatred, for Peaceful Coexistence and Tolerance, or simply the Law Against Hatred. It was published in Gaceta Oficial 41,274 on November 8, 2017.

See image below:

GACETA OFICIAL

DE LA REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA

AÑO CXLV - MES I

Caracas, miércoles 8 de noviembre de 2017

Número 41.274

SUMARIO

ASAMBLEA NACIONAL CONSTITUYENTE

Ley Constitucional Contra el Odio, por la Convivencia Pacífica y la Tolerancia.

PRESIDENCIA DE LA REPÚBLICA

Decreto N° 3.150, mediante el cual se acuerda una modificación presupuestaria con cargo a la partida rectificaciones, por la cantidad de nueve mil doscientos treinta y siete millones quinientos setenta mil quinientos cuarenta y nueve Bolívares (Bs. 9.237.570.549,00), para el Presupuesto de Egresos 2017 del Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Comunicación e Información.

Decreto N° 3.151, mediante el cual se acuerda una modificación presupuestaria con cargo a la partida rectificaciones, por la cantidad de tres mil ochocientos ochenta millones de Bolívares (Bs. 3.880.000.000,00), para el Presupuesto de Egresos 2017 del Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Comunicación e Información.

Decreto N° 3.152, mediante el cual se acuerda una modificación presupuestaria con cargo a la partida rectificaciones, por la cantidad de Trescientos Millones de Bolívares (Bs. 300.000.000,00), para el Presupuesto de Egresos 2017 del Ministerio del Poder Popular del Despacho de la Presidencia y Seguimiento de la Gestión de Gobierno.

Decreto N° 3.153, mediante el cual se crea la Vicepresidencia Sectorial de Comunicación y Cultura.

Decreto N° 3.154, mediante el cual se nombra al ciudadano Jorge Jesús Rodríguez Gómez, como Vicepresidente Sectorial de Comunicación y Cultura, en condición de Encargado.

COMISIÓN PARA LA VERDAD, LA JUSTICIA, LA PAZ Y LA TRANQUILIDAD PÚBLICA

Resolución mediante la cual se nombra al ciudadano Manuel Antonio Jiménez Herrera, como Director de la Dirección Gestión Administrativa de esta Comisión, en calidad de Encargado.- (Se reimprime por fallas en los originales).

MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR DEL DESPACHO DE LA PRESIDENCIA Y SEGUIMIENTO DE LA GESTIÓN DE GOBIERNO

Fundación "Misión José Gregorio Hernández"
Providencia mediante la cual se constituye, con carácter permanente, la Comisión de Contrataciones de esta Fundación, integrada por las ciudadanas y ciudadanos que en ella se mencionan.

CONAPDIS

Providencia mediante la cual se constituye, con carácter permanente, la Comisión de Contrataciones de este Organismo, integrada por las ciudadanas y ciudadanos que en ella se indican.

INASS

Decisión mediante la cual se declara la Responsabilidad Administrativa de la ciudadana Lourdes Aleida Ruiz de Burguillos, y se le impone multa por la cantidad que en ella se señala.

Decisión mediante la cual se declara la Responsabilidad Administrativa de la ciudadana y el ciudadano que en ella se mencionan, y se les impone multa por las cantidades que en ella se especifican.

MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR PARA RELACIONES INTERIORES, JUSTICIA Y PAZ

Resolución mediante la cual se reforma parcialmente la Resolución N° 260, de fecha 30 de julio de 2013, contenitiva de las Normas Sobre el Concurso de Buenas Prácticas Policiales.

MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR PARA RELACIONES EXTERIORES

Resolución mediante la cual se nombra al ciudadano Edgar Alejandro Lugo Pereira, como Director General del Despacho del Viceministro para América Latina, de este Ministerio.

MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR DE ECONOMÍA Y FINANZAS SENIAT

Providencias mediante las cuales se designan a la ciudadana y a los ciudadanos que en ellas se mencionan, para ocupar los cargos que en ellas se especifican, de este Organismo.

MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR DE PLANIFICACIÓN

Fundación Escuela Venezolana de Planificación
Providencias mediante las cuales se designan a las ciudadanas y los ciudadanos que en ellas se indican, para ocupar los cargos que en ellas se señalan, de esta Fundación.

MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR DE PESCA Y ACUICULTURA

Resolución mediante la cual se designan a las ciudadanas y los ciudadanos que en ella se mencionan, como Miembros Principales y Suplentes del Directorio del Instituto Socialista de la Pesca y Acuicultura (INSOPESCA), adscrito a este Ministerio.

INSOPESCA

Providencia mediante la cual se delega en el ciudadano José Manuel Sequeira Do Sacramento, en su carácter de Gerente General Encargado de este Instituto, las atribuciones y firma de los actos y documentos que en ella se indican.

Providencia mediante la cual se designa a la ciudadana María Cindy Quiroz Navas, como Gerente de la Oficina de Planificación, Presupuesto y Evaluación de Gestión de este Instituto, y se le delega las competencias y firmas de los documentos que conciernen y competen a la Oficina a su cargo.

MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR PARA EL PROCESO SOCIAL DE TRABAJO

Resoluciones mediante las cuales se designan a la ciudadana y al ciudadano que en ellas se mencionan, para ocupar los cargos que en ellas se especifican, de este Organismo.

Resoluciones mediante las cuales se otorga la Condecoración Orden al Mérito en el Trabajo, a las ciudadanas y los ciudadanos que en ellas se especifican.

INPSASEL

Providencia mediante la cual se delega en la ciudadana y los ciudadanos que en ella se señalan, las atribuciones otorgadas en los Numerales 15, 16 y 17 del Artículo 18 de la Ley Orgánica de Prevención, Condiciones y Medio Ambiente de Trabajo (LOPCYMAT).

Providencias mediante las cuales se designan a las ciudadanas que en ellas se indican, para ocupar los cargos que en ellas se especifican, de este Organismo.

MINISTERIO DEL PODER POPULAR PARA EL TRANSPORTE

Resolución mediante la cual se designa al ciudadano Miguel Felipe Flores Rondón, como Director Estatal de Monagas, Encargado, de este Ministerio.

BAER, S.A.

Providencia mediante la cual se designa al ciudadano Nicolás Alfonso Ochoa Stepusyszyn, como Gerente General del Aeropuerto Nacional "Paramillo", ubicado en San Cristóbal, estado Táchira.

President Nicolás Maduro proposed the law to the Assembly on August 10, 2017, and the discussion began on September 4. The law imposes penalties that could involve 20 years of imprisonment, media shutdown, and fines for companies.

This law inhibited controversy and has been by extension very criticized in Venezuela. Its critics argue that it is indeed intended in order to suppress political

opposition by criminalizing it, limiting personal freedom, and encouraging self-censorship. The lack of powers of the Constituent Assembly to legislate has also been pointed out. Null and void, is what the National Assembly of Venezuela declared it as, "in rejection of the hate- and intolerance- generating instrument promoted by Nicolás Maduro and the fraudulent Constituent [National Assembly]", shedding light on the supposed violation of Articles 49, 51, 57, 58, 62, 68 and 202 of the constitution.

Personal accounts: Ronald Güemes and Erika Palacios, Ricardo Prieto and Carlos Varón.

Ronald Güemes and Erika Palacios were the first to face charges under the Law Against Hatred on January 3, 2018. Following a neighborhood protest against Nicolás Maduro's regime, they were both taken into custody by the Maguanagua police command. Luis Armando Betancourt, coordinator of Foro Penal for Carabobo, denounced that the complaint was based on statements by police officials who indicated that they had expressed messages of harm against the president and described the judicial process as irregular because the detention was arbitrary, since "they were committing no actual crime against him [Maduro]". Additionally, Betancourt said that a violation of law via home invasion occurred; the municipal police raided the homes of both Güemes and Palacios without any warrant order or authorization issued by a court, which is in violation of Article 196 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. According to the file, blank rounds, molotov bombs and grenades were seized, notwithstanding the victims' denial during the hearing. Palacios' family reported that she had been tortured by police officers: they explicitly pointed out that she was handcuffed to a desk, and that for four hours they threw cold water on her body.

On September 12, 2018, military counterintelligence officials detained Ricardo Prieto and Carlos Varón, two firefighters from Mérida state, for posting a video depicting President Nicolás Maduro as a donkey. They were accused with extreme incitement of hatred, and Judge Carlos Márquez ordered their trial on September 16 for violating the Law Against Hatred. According to the defendants' attorneys, the firefighters created the video as a lighthearted prank rather than to stir up animosity. Additionally, during a news conference on September 18, Nicolás Maduro insulted a journalist from Agence France-Presse (AFP) when the journalist asked him about his thoughts on the arrests.



Caricature made by Arcadio Esquivel 19/9/2018

Recollection of personal experiences of unfair military abuse

On May 20, 2018, the day of Venezuela's presidential elections, DGCIM police detained physician José Alberto Marulanda. Four days later, he was brought before Fort Tiuna's military courts to face charges despite being a civilian. The director of Foro Penal, Alfredo Romero, claims that Marulanda was denied the opportunity to present a defense. He faced allegations of treason and inciting hatred by the military judge. Officials have allegedly abused Marulanda while he has been in custody, causing him to lose feeling in his hands and become deaf in his right ear after being struck over the head. His hearing was postponed six times by November 2018, six months after his arrest.

In addition, Olga Mata was the subject of an arrest warrant following the release of a hilarious video on TikTok three years prior, in which she listed various arepas along with the names of high-ranking government officials and the sort of filling they had. Both were accused with "promotion or instigation to hatred" and her son was also taken into custody. Tarek Attorney General William Saab established the Special 4th Control Court "with competence in cases related to terrorism" after being appointed by the 2017 Constituent National Assembly. After Olga apologized in a video that William Saab later made public, the Special Court and the Public Prosecutor's Office decided to take preventative action against her.

Case study: mass immigration in Venezuela

7.77 Million Venezuelans Have Left the Country Since 2015

Estimated number of Venezuelan refugees, migrants and asylum seekers according to host government sources*



* Top ten hosting countries. Latest available data as of May 2024. Totals are likely even higher as sources do not always count Venezuelans without regular immigration status.

Source: National agencies via R4V Platform



statista

Map showing Venezuelan population who has since sought refuge in the top 10 hosting countries.

Since 2014, around 7.7 million Venezuelans have fled their country, with roughly 6.5 million of them relocating to Latin America and the Caribbean. Due in part to visa restrictions that essentially blocked safer routes, the number of people crossing the Darién Gap, a hazardous jungle on the Colombia-Panama border, surged. In January 2022, more than 440,000 Venezuelans traveled across the Darién Gap in October 2023. A large number of Venezuelans were escaping difficult economic circumstances. Some were fleeing persecution, including that of gangs and security agencies. Many continue to go north due to discrimination and xenophobia, unemployment or low income, and the inability to regularize their immigration or refugee status. The United States declared in October that direct deportations of Venezuelans would resume.

Testimony of Isabel and Darlys: Venezuelans who have crossed into Colombia:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=oyZ95jp3pG8&t=74s&pp=2AFKkAIB>

<https://youtu.be/kskhp1qglWE>

Isabel and Darlys are two of the 1.4 million Venezuelans who have crossed into Colombia. They do not know each other. They made their ways to leave separately, but there is something that unites them: they are both mothers of sick children who needed urgent medical assistance.

"At first I came here alone from Venezuela because of my son's health", Darlys explains. He has a kidney disease. "Later I decided to bring my children because his situation was critical and you couldn't get medicines or medical care in Venezuela", Darlys continues, who lives with her two children in Maicao's Integrated Assistance Centre, opened by UNHCR to cater to the urgent needs. Maicao, near the Venezuelan border, is a city that has seen more than 30.000 new arrivals in 2019.

Isabel crossed the bridge between Venezuela and the Colombian city of Cucuta. As she could not afford transportation, she walked for days with her four children. One of them, Jeremías, had to be hospitalized with malnutrition. *"My children went an entire day without eating. He weighed 7 kilos at age 3. He was going to die", she remembers. Isabel has found a temporary haven in a municipal shelter supported by UNHCR, but she still longs for a home. "If things were to get better in my country, I would like to go back home. To be there with my children, so that they can go to school, and live their lives and have a normal childhood, like the one I had".*

Personal statement from Ana Mayora, an immigrant who immigrated to Ecuador

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=AXS7UiD4Nh8&t=2s&pp=2AECkAIB0gcJCdgAo7VqN5tD>

When Ana Mayora first arrived in Ecuador with her child, she was unable to accompany her father. Ana would give him as much money as she could save to assist the payment for his medicine, knowing that he would not live long if he remained in Venezuela due to a lack of access to medical treatment. *"I feared the day I would get a phone call telling me to stop sending money for his medicine and instead send money for his urn", she recounts with tears. Fortunately, with IOM aid, Ana was reunited with her father in Quito.*

Case Study: Extrajudicial Killings and the "Operación de Liberación y Protección del Pueblo" (OLP)

Since the establishment of the Special Actions Force of Venezuela (_Fuerza de Acciones Especiales, _FAES) as a branch of the Bolivarian National Police in 2017,

officers in the force have committed major human rights breaches with impunity. Its abusive policing practices in low-income communities are consistent with a pattern discovered in 2016 by Human Rights Watch and Provea, a Venezuelan human rights organization, of widespread allegations of abuses by security forces of ordinary citizens during what was known as the "Operación to Liberate and Protect the People" (Operación de Liberación y Protección del Pueblo, OLP), a prominent operation which was launched in 2015 as part of the government's anti-crime offensive. During the OLP operations, security forces were accused of committing widespread human rights abuses, including extrajudicial executions, torture, and forced disappearances.

The operations were often conducted in poor neighborhoods, where civilians were targeted without due process. Amnesty International reported that many victims were killed in their homes or streets, often under the guise of anti-crime operations.

"In the midst of an economic and humanitarian crisis that is hitting the poor the hardest, Venezuelan authorities are resorting to egregious abuses in low-income communities that no longer support the Maduro regime," said José Miguel Vivanco, Americas director at Human Rights Watch. "In a country where the justice system is used to prosecute opponents instead of to investigate crimes, Venezuelan security forces are taking justice into their own hands, killing or arbitrarily arresting people they say have committed crimes, without showing any evidence."

Since 2016, police and security personnel in Venezuela have killed approximately 18,000 individuals in claimed "resistance to authority" incidents. Interior Minister Néstor Reverol stated in December 2017 that there were 5,995 similar cases in 2016 and 4,998 in 2017. According to government estimates, Venezuelan security personnel killed roughly 7,000 people in situations attributed to "resistance to authority" in 2018 and the first five months of 2019.

All of those interviewed are identified by pseudonyms for their protection: Juan Diego Rodríguez (pseudonym)

Ana Lucía Rodríguez reported to Human Rights Watch that she heard someone breaking down her front door about 1 p.m. in January 2019. An officer clad in a black FAES outfit entered and stated that a criminal was lurking in the neighborhood. A neighbor later told her that a Special Actions Force officer had earlier shown a photo of a group of young men, including her son, and inquired about their whereabouts. She informed the police that the only other people in her home were her daughter, son, and her daughter's two children. She and her daughter waited as they were led outside, where an officer seized the little children and placed them on the front doorstep. Her son was still inside. An officer questioned her about him, including his occupation. She claimed he was a computer and phone repairman. An officer informed her that the people inside were merely taking her son's statement.

Juan Diego's mother reported that a senior Special Actions Force officer arrived, went to his room, and exclaimed that the door was closed. She offered to talk with her kid and allowed the senior officer to break down the door as long as he did not harm him.

The officers outside instructed her, her daughter, and the children to go to a neighbor's house since her son was providing a statement. A Special Actions Force officer informed the neighbor that her son was wanted for 20 drug trafficking counts. "They heard six shots," the mother stated. Officers took a snapshot of Rodríguez's lifeless body next to a gun. Human Rights Watch discovered a photo of a gun in media coverage, which referred to Rodríguez as a criminal.

Officers placed the body into the back of their car and drove it to the hospital. According to the postmortem report, Rodríguez had two bullet wounds: one in the heart and one in the right side. Human Rights Watch analyzed the death certificate, which listed the causes of death as "cardiogenic shock" and "cardiac injury" inflicted by a gunshot.

Ana Lucía Rodríguez testified before investigative police officers soon after the killing. As of August – seven months later – neither she nor any neighbor, to her knowledge, had been asked to testify to prosecutors about the case. She said she wants justice for the extrajudicial execution of her son. "They can't decide who lives and who dies," she said.

Moreover, a study addresses Amnesty International's concerns regarding Venezuela's failure to comply with the Convention's provisions, including Articles 1, 2, 4, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 16. It expresses the organization's concern about reports of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment (other ill-treatment) during arrest, imprisonment, and in the context of disproportionate use of force by law enforcement personnel in response to social protests. Amnesty International says that Venezuela should also take steps to address gender-based violence, ensure and improve the judiciary's independence, and maintain and increase efforts to remove impunity for human rights breaches.

Political divisiveness has continued to destabilize Venezuela. Those responsible for fatalities and injuries during the failed coup on April 11, 2002, were not held accountable, shedding light on the liability of the judicial system. There have been ongoing reports of extensive unlawful executions and torture of criminal suspects by police. Inmates repeatedly protested the poor and overcrowded circumstances in prison. A human rights defender was killed, and several more faced threats. There have been instances of journalists being harassed. Political assassinations were recorded along the Colombian border, and many people fleeing the Colombian violence remained at risk.

Concerned Countries and Organizations

Countries

United States: The U.S. has imposed economic sanctions on more than 150 Venezuelan individuals and institutions involved in human rights violations since 2015. In March 2025, the U.S. acted as an advocate of a UN resolution in the Human Rights Council calling for "immediate release of political prisoners" in Venezuela. The U.S. also

evacuated five protesters from the Argentine Embassy in Caracas in May 2025, offering shelter. The U.S. contributes funding to NGOs working with Venezuelan civil society, including the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

European Union (and Member States like Spain, France, Germany, Italy): The EU voted in favor of renewing the authorisation of the UN Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on Venezuela in 2024. In October 2024, the European Parliament passed Resolution 2024/2981(RSP) condemning repression after the presidential elections. The EU has imposed individual sanctions (travel bans and asset freezes) on 55 Venezuelan officials. The European Commission allocated €40 million in 2023–2024 to fund humanitarian and civil rights programs in Venezuela.

Argentina: Following the siege of its embassy in Caracas in 2024, Argentina filed a formal complaint at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. In September 2024, issued arrest warrants for President Nicolás Maduro and several top officials on charges of crimes against humanity under universal jurisdiction.

Canada: Canada co-sponsored the UN Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/RES/51/29 in 2024 calling for Venezuela to uphold civil freedom and allow UN monitors. It is also a member of the Lima Group, which promotes a peaceful democratic transition in Venezuela. Canada suspended weaponry exports to Venezuela and provided funding to Venezuelan refugee assistance programs.

Colombia: Colombia supported the Barbados Agreement negotiations in 2023 and 2024 and publicly condemned the use of force against protesters. It also participated in regional OAS votes that criticise Venezuela's failure to hold fair elections.

Brazil and Paraguay: Voted in favor of OAS Resolution CP/RES. 1157 (2315/23) in late 2024, which denounced repression of protestors. Brazil provided temporary asylum to several opposition leaders after the July 2024 elections.

Organizations

Human Rights Watch (HRW): HRW has continuously released verified field reports documenting arbitrary arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances in Venezuela. In 2025, HRW submitted an amicus brief to the ICC supporting the reopening of the case on Venezuela. They also provided legal documentation to support Argentina's universal jurisdiction prosecution.

Amnesty International: Amnesty International published a detailed report in August 2024 outlining cases of minors being tortured in custody. It joined 17 NGOs in signing an open letter demanding that the Venezuelan parliament halt the Anti-Solidarity Law. The organization also tracks political prisoner data in collaboration with local NGOs.

Foro Penal: Foro Penal is a Venezuelan human rights organization that tracks political detentions. In 2025, it submitted data to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, citing 2,228 arbitrary arrests since the July 2024 elections. Foro Penal provided evidence for the UN FFM’s 2024 report.

CIVICUS: CIVICUS downgraded Venezuela’s civic space status to “closed” in its 2024 Global Monitor. It has actively campaigned for the repeal of the Anti-Fascism Law and partnered with Latin American NGOs to submit reports to the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva.

FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights) and OMCT (World Organisation Against Torture): These organizations submitted a joint shadow report in late 2024 to the Committee Against Torture in i(CAT) reviewing Venezuela. They also launched a joint global campaign, “Justice for Venezuela,” calling for sanctions against judges and prosecutors complicit in political trials.

International Criminal Court (ICC): In March 2025, the ICC officially resumed its investigation into crimes against humanity in Venezuela. An ICC communications office was opened in Caracas, the first of its kind in Latin America. The investigation focuses on torture, extrajudicial executions, and persecution since 2017.

UN Human Rights Council: Through its Independent Fact-Finding Mission, the UNHRC documented widespread repression and voted in October 2024 (35 in favor, 10 against, 2 abstentions) to renew the Mission’s mandate. Venezuela and allied countries such as Iran, Russia, and China voted against.

Latest Developments

While legislations and international responses continue to be discussed across global platforms, it is important to note that efforts to safeguard civilian rights in Venezuela remain inadequate as repression intensifies.

2017	The Venezuelan government passes the Law Against Hatred, which is later used to imprison journalists, protestors, and social media users for “inciting hate” or criticizing public officials. This law has become one of the key tools of repression.
2018	The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (then Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein) releases a report detailing extrajudicial executions, arbitrary

	arrests, and the erosion of democratic institutions in Venezuela. It marks the first major international report to accuse Venezuelan authorities of potential crimes against humanity.
2019	The UN Human Rights Council establishes the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on Venezuela. Its mandate is to investigate human rights violations since 2014. This body later confirms patterns of state-sanctioned torture, killings, and persecution.
2020	The FFM publishes its first report, concluding that President Nicolás Maduro and high-level officials have committed crimes against humanity, including systematic arbitrary detention, sexual violence, and extrajudicial executions.
2021	The ICC announces a preliminary examination into Venezuela's human rights abuses. This marks the first time the ICC has taken steps to investigate crimes against humanity within the country.
2022	In November, the ICC prosecutor announces the opening of a formal investigation into Venezuela. The government signs a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the ICC but imposes restrictions on local investigations and access.
2023	The Barbados Agreement is signed between the government and the opposition with the support of Norway. Its aim is to establish basic electoral guarantees and ease repression. However, many of the provisions are later violated or ignored by the government.
2024	Following the July presidential elections, reports emerge of mass repression by Venezuelan authorities. NGOs document over 2,200 arbitrary arrests, including 129 minors. Protests break out nationwide and are violently repressed, leaving at least 23 civilians dead.
2024	Argentina invokes universal jurisdiction to file charges against President Nicolás Maduro and key officials. A federal court issues international arrest warrants for crimes against humanity.
February 2025	The Venezuelan government expels the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) after its reporting on arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances.
March 2025	The International Criminal Court (ICC) resumes its investigation into crimes against humanity in Venezuela. An ICC field office has opened in Caracas.

UN Involvement

UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime – Application to Venezuela

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) is a core international legal instrument aimed at preventing and combating organized crime across borders. Though it does not include a Venezuela-specific protocol, it has been referenced in UN reports and resolutions addressing Venezuela's governance and criminal networks.

Encourages Member States to treat corruption, money laundering, and organized criminal group operations, including state-linked armed groups in Venezuela (e.g., colectivos), as serious crimes under Article 2(b) of the UNTOC framework.

Urges cooperation in the extradition and prosecution of Venezuelan officials involved in transnational financial crimes, often linked to human rights violations and suppression of civil society.

In 2022, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), referencing Venezuela, called for:

- Greater regional cooperation against organized political repression backed by criminal networks.
- Cross-border evidence-sharing in cases involving asset concealment and politically motivated persecution.
- The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) continues to monitor Venezuela in relation to international crime and illicit finance but lacks in-country operational access due to government restrictions.

UN Human Rights Council & OHCHR (UN Human Rights Office)

The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have been the main UN bodies addressing systemic abuses in Venezuela.

In 2019, the UNHRC created the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela (FFM) to investigate extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detention, torture, and sexual violence.

In its 2020 and 2022 reports, the FFM found reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity had been committed by state agents under Maduro's command, targeting journalists, protestors, and opposition figures.

In February 2025, the Venezuelan government suspended all OHCHR operations and expelled its staff, accusing it of interfering in internal affairs following the release of a report highlighting the enforced disappearance of rights activist Rocío San Miguel.

Prior to its expulsion, the OHCHR worked with local NGOs and maintained a presence in Caracas to monitor detention conditions, trials, and protest-related abuses.

UNODC (UN Office on Drugs and Crime)

While UNODC is primarily known for its work in drug policy and wildlife crime, it plays a growing role in addressing Venezuela-related issues under transnational organized crime:

UNODC has not maintained direct programs inside Venezuela but in regional CCPCJ sessions, it has received formal requests from Latin American Member States (notably Argentina, Colombia, and Peru) to assist with transnational investigations involving Venezuela-based actors.

In the 31st session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (2022), Member States called on UNODC to support judicial systems in documenting and prosecuting transnational repression, referencing Venezuelan migration and criminal spillover into neighboring countries.

While Venezuela is a signatory of the UNTOC, it has failed to submit periodic reports or cooperate with UNODC technical missions since 2018, effectively blocking international criminal accountability mechanisms.

UN Development Program (UNDP) & Humanitarian Coordination

The UNDP has supported civil society resilience projects inside and outside Venezuela, focusing on digital literacy, legal aid training, and community-based peacebuilding.

In 2022, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) launched a \$795 million humanitarian response plan, coordinated with UNDP and WHO, targeting displaced persons, food insecurity, and access to basic health services.

Due to limited access in Venezuela, the UN response heavily depends on cross-border operations from Colombia and Brazil, as well as UNDP-managed funds channeled through neutral humanitarian actors.

UN General Assembly & Security Council

1. The UN General Assembly has passed multiple non-binding resolutions on Venezuela since 2018, calling for:

Protection of civilian space.

Release of political prisoners.

International election monitoring.

For example, in 2023, the General Assembly's Third Committee adopted a resolution with 120 votes in favor urging action on Venezuela's human rights crisis.

2. The UN Security Council has convened informal consultations on Venezuela but has not passed binding resolutions due to vetoes by Russia and China. Efforts to escalate the matter to the ICC through the Council have repeatedly stalled.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Human Rights Watch (HRW): Human Rights Watch has actively documented and condemned human rights violations in Venezuela for over a decade. It conducts extensive field research and publishes regular reports detailing patterns of arbitrary detention, torture, and politically motivated trials. HRW has submitted key evidence to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and supports universal jurisdiction cases, such as the legal proceedings launched by Argentina against Venezuelan officials. HRW also engages directly with international bodies like the UN Human Rights Council and calls for targeted sanctions and international accountability mechanisms against members of the Maduro government.

Amnesty International: Amnesty International works closely with Venezuelan human rights defenders and civil society organizations to monitor violations and advocate for international action. The organization has repeatedly called for the release of political prisoners and an end to impunity. It launched urgent action campaigns on cases like that of Rocío San Miguel and others forcibly disappeared or arbitrarily detained. Amnesty has also published legal analyses denouncing Venezuela's use of legislation, such as the Law Against Hatred, to suppress dissent. It continues to urge UN member states to support investigations and ensure cooperation with international legal bodies.

Foro Penal: Foro Penal is a Venezuelan non-governmental organization specializing in legal assistance to victims of political repression. The group maintains a regularly updated database of political prisoners and arbitrary detentions and provides legal representation for hundreds of detainees. It has submitted reports to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and supports survivors seeking justice through international bodies. Foro Penal is widely regarded as one of the most reliable domestic sources for information on state repression in Venezuela.

European Union: The European Union has played a key role in international diplomatic pressure on Venezuela. In 2017, the EU imposed targeted sanctions on senior Venezuelan officials involved in electoral fraud and repression. In 2024, the European Parliament adopted Resolution 2024/2981(RSP), calling for the immediate release of political prisoners and respect for the rule of law. The EU also attempted to deploy electoral observers during the 2024 presidential elections but was blocked by the government. In coordination with its member states, the EU continues to fund civil society programs and supports accountability efforts through the International Criminal Court and UN mechanisms.

Organization of American States (OAS):

The OAS has passed multiple resolutions condemning human rights abuses in Venezuela and calling for the restoration of democracy. It has recognized the deterioration of democratic institutions and electoral legitimacy. In partnership with regional governments, the OAS supported the creation of investigative panels and legal frameworks to document crimes against humanity. Despite Venezuela's withdrawal from

the OAS in 2019, the organization remains active in coordinating humanitarian and legal responses, especially in the context of the Venezuelan migrant crisis affecting neighboring states.

International Criminal Court (ICC):

The ICC has been actively involved in assessing crimes against humanity committed by the Venezuelan state. In 2018, the Office of the Prosecutor opened a preliminary examination into the situation, which progressed to a formal investigation in 2021. In 2025, the ICC reopened its investigation and established a field office in Caracas, enabling direct access for victims and NGOs. The Court is examining widespread abuses such as torture, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings allegedly orchestrated by high-ranking officials.

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC):

The UNHRC created the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela in 2019. The mission's reports have identified patterns of crimes against humanity and urged coordinated action by Member States. These reports have strengthened evidence bases for legal proceedings and shaped the global understanding of the scale and severity of Venezuela's human rights crisis. The Council has voted multiple times to renew the mandate of the mission, despite political opposition from certain countries aligned with the Venezuelan government.

Possible Solutions

- **Legislations:**

- Enforce laws to forbid unlawful detention and torture, all within international human rights standards.
- Revoke oppressive laws such as the Law Against Hatred and block the adoption of the Anti-Solidarity Law, which criminalizes NGO activity.
- Support an independent judiciary and fair legal processes, especially in politically sensitive cases.
- Promote legal changes that support cooperation with international criminal investigations (e.g. ICC mandates).

- **International Community:**

- Apply targeted measures against individuals responsible for human rights violations, including judges, security officials, and government leaders.
- Support universal jurisdiction cases in foreign courts, such as Argentina's, to hold accountable crimes against humanity.
- Ensure the ICC's safe and independent operation in Venezuela.
- Pressure the Venezuelan government to reinstate the OHCHR office and accept UN special procedures.

- **Companies & Social Platforms:**

- Enforce transparency obligations for international firms operating in Venezuela to prevent complicity in state censorship or surveillance technologies.
- **Education and Civil Society:**
 - Fund human rights education campaigns inside and outside Venezuela to inform citizens of their rights and document abuses safely.
 - Support local NGOs with legal training and cybersecurity tools.
 - Promote academic partnerships in Latin America to support education on democracy and the rule of law.
- **Borders and Refugee Protection:**
 - Increase international support for border screening and refugee protection for Venezuelans fleeing repression, especially in Colombia, Brazil, and Peru.
 - Improve cross-border data-sharing on human rights violations to help identify at-risk individuals and prevent forced returns.
 - Ensure UN and IOM-led programs offer legal support and documentation to political exiles and asylum seekers.

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