



Security Council (SC)

Topic 2: The democratic downfall and civilian rights crisis in Venezuela

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1. Definition of key terms

Authoritarianism: The shift from democratic governance to centralized, autocratic control under Nicolás Maduro, where power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the president and the military, undermining democratic institutions.

Electoral fraud: The manipulation of elections, such as the 2018 presidential election, which was widely criticized for lack of transparency, irregularities, and claims of illegitimacy.

Economic collapse: The impact of mismanagement, sanctions, and the collapse of oil revenues, which has exponentially increased poverty, led to shortages of food and medicine, and driven millions of citizens into migration.

Bolivarian political process: This refers to the political and social movement in Venezuela that began with the leadership of Hugo Chávez and was named after the revolutionary figure Simón Bolívar, who fought for the independence of several South American countries from Spanish colonial rule. The Bolivarian process aimed to establish a new social and political order in Venezuela, based on ideas of socialism and anti-imperialism.

2. Introduction

The current crisis in Venezuela originates from a series of factors that have built up over the past few decades, including vertiginous inflation and political tensions within the country. Currently, the economy is in a dire state despite efforts to restore it. Another major difficulty is the presidential instability due to a president who has been a known abuser of civilian rights and has ruled for the past 12 years.

In the 2024 elections, Maduro was again declared the winner by the Venezuelan electoral council,

though most countries and many Venezuelans recognize his opponent, Edmundo Gonzales, as the legitimate president. Maduro has once again been accused of electoral misconduct, including manipulating the electoral council. He has also been denounced for repressing democracy, manipulating public votes, and arresting his opponents during the election process. These actions have tarnished his reputation among many other countries, which are now supporting Gonzales in his fight against Maduro's abuses and electoral fraud. Tensions and hostilities are escalating within the country, with opposing political views and their supporting parties causing further challenges to international relations and complicating efforts to solve the nation's economic issues.

3. Timeline of events

1999: The democratic downfall in Venezuela began in 1999 with the election of President Hugo Chávez. During his first year in office, he promulgated a new constitution, which did not in fact reduce human rights but significantly increased his power. His goal was to implement a reform program aimed at developing a socialist economy, following the Cuban model, while also taking critical positions against the USA.

April 11, 2002: On April 11, 2002, the first attempted coup d'état against Chávez's Bolivarian political process occurred. His reforms made him many enemies, especially among the affluent Venezuelan class, who profited from the income derived from oil and other raw materials with which the country is abundantly endowed.

April 14, 2002: At first, the coup seemed successful. Chávez was imprisoned at a military base, and Pedro Carmona Estanga was declared the new temporary president. However, on this day, popular mobilizations in the streets of the country convinced the coup plotters to release Chávez and restore him to his presidential duties.

2010: The government promulgated a law that limited media autonomy, introducing new restrictions on television, radio, and internet content, thereby increasing state control over information. Government control over media, the judiciary, and political institutions reached its peak. Criticism was heavily suppressed, and political opponents were persecuted. Power became highly centralized in Chávez's hands.

2013: Hugo Chávez died, and Venezuelan presidential elections were held on April 14. The winner was the interim president, Nicolás Maduro, from the United Socialist Party of Venezuela. Maduro continued the restrictive policies of his predecessor but faced growing economic and social challenges.

2015: Protests against Maduro's government erupted due to inflation and shortages of essential goods. The government responded with violence and repression, arresting numerous protesters and opposition leaders. The opposition achieved a significant victory in the legislative elections of December 6, 2015, securing a majority in the National Assembly.

2017: Maduro's government refused to recognize the new assembly and its authority. He created a National Constituent Assembly, a parallel body intended to replace the elected National Assembly, despite international and domestic protests.

2018: The highly contested presidential elections confirmed Maduro's hold on power, but the opposition and numerous countries accused him of being illegitimate, viewing his government as a dictatorship. This worsened Venezuela's isolation on the international stage, as the lack of democratic legitimacy undermined Venezuela's credibility.

4. Background information

The democratic downfall and civilian rights crisis in Venezuela is a sensitive topic that has its roots in events spanning several decades. Venezuela has always been a country with opposing political views, but for most of the last century, it managed to maintain internal stability.

President Maduro completed his six-year presidential term in 2018. During these years, the country faced numerous problems, primarily inflation and the devaluation of the national currency, caused by poor economic policies that did not improve the situation.

The 2018 elections marked a turning point for Maduro's future. In the preceding years, he had faced sanctions from multiple countries, including the United States and Canada, accusing him of human rights abuses and the repression of democracy. Maduro was re-elected in a process denounced by many states as opaque and manipulated. In the months leading up to the elections, Maduro ensured that his main opponents would not challenge him by placing them under house arrest or even exiling them. These actions led some countries to refuse to recognize him as president. Juan Guaidó, in fact, is recognized as the acting president by the US and other neighbouring countries.

In the years following the election, Maduro has governed a country that is struggling not only politically but also financially and demographically. One-tenth of the population, around 6 million people, has left the country since Maduro's first election in 2013. This emigration has been the largest in Central American history, illustrating how much of the population opposes Maduro's governance. Economically, the country is facing one of the steepest hyperinflations in history. In recent months, Maduro's actions have been described as "one of the most acute human rights crises in recent history," with unprecedented levels of repression. His crimes include the arrest of hundreds of people and even 25 fatalities during the re-elections. Victims of abuse and persecution from 2018 to 2024 are primarily individuals under 30, but also many children, continuously violating human rights. In the months leading up to the last election, from late 2023 to early 2024, many people were detained under accusations of being conspiracy theorists with no evidence to support the claims.

To summarize, thousands of people have been, and are currently, victims of human rights violations under Maduro's oppressive government. Investigations by organizations and the UN are ongoing, but an immediate response from member states is necessary to address this violation of human rights and human dignity.

5. Major countries involved

United States of America

Diplomatic relations with the United States have never been good. In 2015, the Obama administration signed an executive order imposing sanctions on Venezuelan officials. The White House stated that the Venezuelan government was responsible for violating human rights, persecuting political opposition, and engaging in corruption. In response, Maduro organized a collection of signatures against Obama's order and declared an "Anti-Imperialism Day" in schools to oppose the United States' government.

Russian Federation

Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin supports Maduro economically, politically, and militarily; they share a common adversary, the United States of America.

China

Maduro reached agreements with China for economic assistance, with China channelling aid to

Venezuela through multiple loans. China is Venezuela's second-largest trading partner, with two-thirds of Venezuela's exports to China consisting of oil. As part of the agreement, the Venezuelan army imported armaments from China, which were used against demonstrators during the 2015 protests.

6. UN involvement

The United Nations has played a crucial role in addressing the democratic downfall and human rights crisis in Venezuela. Since Nicolás Maduro rose to power as president in 2013, Venezuela has faced severe human rights abuses and continuous political instability. The abuse of power and corruption have led to the repression of democracy in the country and the manipulation of votes during elections. Additionally, Venezuela has faced serious economic difficulties and extreme inflation. The UN has been actively seeking solutions to the crisis, providing humanitarian aid to the population, ensuring that human rights are respected, and addressing key diplomatic issues in the country.

In recent years, UN committees have actively debated the issue of Venezuela, addressing problems such as one of the greatest emigration movements of the past decades and a critical shortage of basic needs due to inflation in the food sector. The aid provided by the UN to Venezuelan migrants has been hindered by the Venezuelan government, which argues that it is a violation of their sovereignty and an abuse of power. Nonetheless, the UN has continued to find ways to support citizens fleeing the country and monitor the protection of human rights.

Despite the UN's strong efforts to resolve the crisis, the possibility of ending the democratic decline and human rights abuses has been obstructed by the corrupt government and Venezuela's importance in many international bodies and organizations. The country's strong alliances worldwide also influence the real actions the UN can take, as these are limited by such cooperation. Maduro is also strongly opposed to the UN's involvement and assistance within his country. He further attempts to minimize international affairs and agreements, making it increasingly difficult for aid organizations to intervene with his consent.

In conclusion, the UN plays a central role in tackling the crisis, though it faces recurring issues such as a lack of communication and several challenges in acting within the country. However, it is clear that its aid has helped thousands of Venezuelans seek better conditions in nearby assisting countries. Its interventions have also been crucial in protecting human rights from the abuse of power by the re-elected president, Maduro, and in reducing corruption within the electoral council.

7. Official documents and treaties about the issue

- Resolution 42/25 was passed in the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in 2019 and addressed the widespread human rights violations by President Maduro following the elections of the previous year. It highlighted the need for humanitarian and financial aid to citizens under Maduro's government and protection against physical abuse, which was suspected to be one of the methods used by the government to retain power.
- A UN Fact-Finding Mission report on human rights violations, published in September 2024, shared facts about the crimes committed by the government. These include the persecution of seemingly unrelated episodes that are actually part of a plan to silence objections to the government from rising opponents. Many politicians opposed to Maduro have been imprisoned, exiled, or oppressed, which is why intervention is deemed necessary.

- The Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance and the Crisis in Venezuela, ratified in 2019, includes 19 Western Hemisphere countries that actively debate issues related to the Americas, with a recent focus on Venezuela. They discuss and pass resolutions, such as in September 2019, with the goal of investigating Maduro's actions, corruption, crimes, and terrorism.

8. Impact of the issue

The democratic downfall and human rights crisis in Venezuela have not only caused immense suffering for the Venezuelan people but also destabilized the region, leaving the country mired in political, economic, and social turmoil.

The economic collapse has left millions of Venezuelans struggling to meet basic needs. The situation is not improving, with thousands of Venezuelans migrating abroad, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries and beyond. This mass migration has put significant strain on many nations, including, but not limited to, Colombia, Brazil, and other Latin American countries. It is one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world today.

Venezuela's government situation has led to international condemnation, with countries like the United States and several European nations imposing sanctions on Venezuela's leadership. Many Latin American countries and organizations, such as the OAS (Organization of American States), have denounced Maduro's government and promoted his isolation, which has worsened the country's economic struggles and limited its diplomatic options.

Today, the repression of civil rights continues with arbitrary arrests and other human rights violations.

9. Bibliography and useful links

- [venezuela - U.S. Department of State Search Results](#)
- [Venezuela: A Democratic Crisis - United States Department of State](#)
- [Nicolás Maduro](#)
- [Protests against Nicolás Maduro](#)
- [From Friend to Competitor: How Russia's War Has Strengthened Venezuela's Hand | Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)
- [World Report 2024: Venezuela | Human Rights Watch](#)
- [Crisis in Venezuela: A timeline of political chaos](#)
- [How Venezuela got here: a timeline of the political crisis | Reuters](#)
- [Venezuela election, as it happened: Maduro declared winner, González claims victory | AP News](#)
- [The UN's Role in Addressing Venezuela's Crisis](#)
- [Venezuela election results: Nicolas Maduro and opposition both claim victory](#)
- [Unprecedented Venezuela repression plunging nation into acute human rights crisis, UN Fact-Finding Mission says | OHCHR](#)
- [Venezuela: Rights probe points to 'unprecedented' repression | UN News](#)
- [The Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance and the Crisis in Venezuela](#)