

# VANCOUVER YOUTH MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2020



UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

BACKGROUNDER A

South Africa

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South Sudan



## VANCOUVER YOUTH MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2020

### **United Nations Security Council**

*Director: Mikael Borres*

*Chair: Renee Gao*

*Assistant Chair: Arman Kassam*

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Dear delegates,

My name is Mikael Borres and it is my utmost honour to be directing the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), one of the most esteemed bodies of the UN. In these times of uncertainty across the world, I hope that your experience in this committee will be an impetus for reflection and analysis of global politics. In consideration of the new online format VYMUN will pursue in the fall, the UNSC will uniquely tackle a pressing and developing issue in the 21st century: the Crisis in Venezuela.

The topic concerns the Crisis in Venezuela, a political and economic conflict between the administration of Nicolás Maduro and the ardent dissenters of his policies. After the collapse of the world price of oil, Venezuela's main export, the socialist government failed to manage the nation's finances and refused to cut spending on generous social safety nets. Hyperinflation, sanction from Western democracies, and corruption committed by the wealthy and powerful amalgamated into the economic malaise Venezuela currently experiences. This led to the starvation of millions and violent upheaval. The international community, divided due to their relationship with Venezuela, must respond to this crisis with conviction to ensure the wellbeing of Venezuela's people and the stability of their government.

For this year's iteration of VYMUN, the UNSC will break with tradition to become a crisis committee. In the interest of safety and wellbeing for delegates and those involved in the conference, it is imperative to take precautions to meet those interests. As stated by VYMUN's Secretary-General, the conference is working hard to create an online experience that ensures an "immersive and engaging online experience" for delegates to enjoy.

Regardless of format, the committee will strive for delegates to delve into diverse aspects of modern-day crises. This committee will not only be an experience of learning but one of passionate debate and exhilarating fun. I hope that your time in the UNSC will be a memorable and special one.

Should you have any questions regarding the committee, do not hesitate to contact me through email at [unsc@vymun.com](mailto:unsc@vymun.com). Myself, along with my fellow dais members Renee Gao and Arman Kassam, gratefully welcome you to the UNSC. We look forward to meeting everyone this October.

Warmly,

Mikael Borres

Director of UNSC | VYMUN 2020

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **Crisis Topic: Crisis In Venezuela**

Questions to Consider	4
Overview	4
Timeline	5
Historical Analysis	7
Current Situation	13
Past Action	15
Initiating Crisis	16
Possible Solutions	17
Bloc Positions	18
Sources Cited	19

# Crisis in Venezuela

## Questions to Consider

1. What kind of economic policies should Venezuela implement to recover its economy?
2. How can overthrowing the Maduro government affect the stability of Venezuela?
3. Why have political and economic sanctions failed in pressuring Maduro to stop the mistreatment of his people?
4. What can the international community do to end Venezuela's refusal of humanitarian aid?

## Overview

This iteration of the UNSC concerns the struggle between proponents of socialism and anti-Western sentiment and opposition that supports democratic reform and centre-right politics. From 1998 to 2013, the charismatic revolutionary Hugo Chávez transformed Venezuela by implementing social welfare expansion and a foreign policy that antagonizes the United States and its allies.<sup>1</sup> His approach to government divided the nation; he was praised for his efforts to combat poverty, but criticized by his political enemies for the rampant corruption within his government.

After Chávez died in 2013, his successor Nicolás Maduro led the nation at a time of economic downfall. By this time, the prices for oil, a commodity that Venezuela utterly depends on, fell drastically. That resulted in the government earning less revenue to spend. Despite lower revenues, Maduro insisted on continuing expensive social programs, ramping up debt and heightening inflation, hence deepening the economic malaise.<sup>2</sup> The opposition has been vocal in its insistence of ousting Maduro from office. Maduro has only responded harshly by ousting critics from politics and arresting them.

Amid the crisis, Juan Guaidó emerged as the face of the opposition against Maduro. Backed by the United States, Canada, and several European nations, the new leader proclaims himself as the rightful president of Venezuela and calls for democratic reforms such as restoring the National Assembly and guaranteeing free and fair elections.<sup>3</sup>

All things considered, the only people who suffer are the Venezuelan people themselves. Many lack the necessary tools and goods, such as food and water, to survive. A significant portion of the population is severely malnourished, causing the death of the vulnerable people of society: children, mothers, the disabled, and seniors. Knowing that life outside of their country is possibly better than their current predicament, millions have left the country, creating a refugee crisis comparable to the Syrian refugee crisis.

## Timeline

**April 14th, 2013:** Nicolás Maduro narrowly wins the Venezuelan presidential election, succeeding his mentor and former president Hugo Chávez.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/place/Venezuela/The-presidency-of-Nicolas-Maduro>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/15/nicolas-maduro-wins-venezuela-election>

**June-December 2014:** After a stable 2-year period of oil prices, the expansion of oil and natural gas production leads to a shock in oil prices.<sup>5</sup>



*Average global crude oil prices, 2010-2015.<sup>6</sup>*

**April 4th, 2014:** Opposition leader Leopoldo López is charged with public incitement, property damage, arson, and conspiracy. This comes after violent anti-government protests in February.<sup>7</sup>

**December 6th, 2015:** The Democratic Unity Roundtable, a coalition of anti-Maduro political parties, wins nearly two-thirds of the National Assembly, removing the socialist coalition led by Nicolás Maduro from power in the legislature.<sup>8</sup>

**December 23rd, 2015:** The outgoing pro-socialist National Assembly members tamper the Supreme Tribunal in the government's favour by appointing pro-Maduro justices.<sup>9</sup>

**January 15th, 2016 - Present:** President Maduro declares an economic emergency, which gives him the power to govern without the consent of the National Assembly for 60 days. The permission to rule by decree is repeatedly extended by the Supreme Tribunal.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/030315/why-did-oil-prices-drop-so-much-2014.asp>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.crysolenergy.com/low-oil-prices-today-may-not-mean-tighter-supplies-tomorrow/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2017/06/13/americas/leopoldo-lpez-fast-facts/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/09/venezuela-election-opposition-coalition-secures-supermajority>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-idUSKBN0U626820151223>

<sup>10</sup> <https://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/31577452/venezuela-tense-as-protesters-march-against-president/>

**December 1st, 2016:** Venezuelan membership of the South American economic group Mercosur is revoked, citing the Maduro government's failure to protect human rights and violating democratic practices in Venezuela.<sup>11</sup>

**July 30th, 2017:** Elections for the Maduro-decree Constituent National Assembly are held. Foreign governments and international organizations condemn the new legislature as 'illegitimate.'<sup>12</sup>

**May 20th, 2018:** Nicolás Maduro wins a second six-year term as president. Nations such as Germany, the United States, and Japan refuse to recognize the results, citing irregularities and lack of independent oversight.<sup>13</sup>

**January 23rd, 2019:** The National Assembly declares Juan Guaidó as the interim President of Venezuela.<sup>14</sup>

**February 2019:** Maduro secures its shared borders with Brazil and Colombia to prevent the Red Cross-led coalition to give humanitarian aid to Venezuelans.<sup>15</sup>

## Historical Analysis

### A Chaotic Venezuela before Chávez & Maduro

A discussion about Venezuela's current crisis cannot begin without acknowledging the decades-long history and the people that precedes the current situation. It is important to understand the causes of the nation's collapse, as well as recognize how Venezuela's past governments have reacted to crises of similar calibre. Although many historical factors contribute to the issue, the global economy during the 1970s to the early 1980s can be used as a contemporary starting point for the topic's historical analysis, beginning specifically in the years 1973-1975, the period that signified an end to the post-World War II economic boom.<sup>16</sup>

A few years before the recession of 1973-1975, Venezuela had a relatively stable economy. From 1972-1974, tensions heightened between Israel and the Arab countries, which resulted in the Yom Kippur War of 1973. Middle Eastern members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) — which included Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Libya — issued an embargo of oil exports against Israel and pro-Israel nations such as Canada, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom.<sup>17</sup> The embargo was supplemented by a decrease in monthly production, and an increase in oil prices. Due to limited access to oil to these oil-producing nations in the Middle East, embargoed countries began expanding their oil production and sought out other nations to trade. Venezuela, which did not join the embargo despite being a founding member of OPEC, capitalized on the crisis by tripling its oil prices.<sup>18</sup> This in turn increased oil revenues around the same tripled rate during the war. Carlos Andrés Pérez, Venezuela's president at the time, used the new revenue

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<sup>11</sup><https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-mercosur/mercosur-suspends-venezuela-urges-immediate-transition-idUSKBN1AL0IB>

<sup>12</sup><https://globalnews.ca/news/4918836/venezuela-crisis-timeline-maduro-guaido-chavez/>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Juan-Guaido>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2019-venezuela-key-events/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/recession-1970s>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/opec-enacts-oil-embargo>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/place/Venezuela/The-Andinos#ref32707>

to invest in industrial diversification (increasing production of non-oil electricity, ore minerals, metals etc.).<sup>19</sup> He also increased public works and provided funding for national social welfare; higher spending eventually led to government debt ballooning.<sup>20</sup>

Venezuela's economic boom was short-lived. The increase in oil prices contributed to larger operating costs for producers, leading to higher unemployment. This trend continued into the 80s as exports, employment, and oil prices decreased.<sup>21</sup> Despite lower revenues, Pérez and the succeeding government of Luis Herrera Campins continued the high spending on infrastructure and social welfare, which only increased the debt significantly.

To curb Venezuela's debt, Campins' successors implemented strict austerity measures — the economic policy of cutting spending while increasing taxes.<sup>22</sup> After his 1989 election to return to the presidency, Andres Perez continued the implementation of austerity measures and proposed deeper cuts in public services such as education and transportation. These austerity measures were proven to be ineffective, as they could not combat the continuous global oil price shocks. Additionally, rampant corruption within the government countered the progress made through austerity measures. The policy was also unwelcomed, as the cuts directly affected the living standards of Venezuelans and the wellbeing of families. Its ineffectiveness and unpopularity contributed to demonstrations from the public against austerity through labour strikes and divisive political discourse. The protests then evolved to more violent actions as looting and riots became widespread in cities.

### **Hugo Chávez Rises To Power**

The instability of Venezuela and distrust against the democratically-elected government gave rise to many revolutionaries, the most prominent being Hugo Chávez. Initially working as a second lieutenant for the Venezuelan army, he was tasked to search and capture dissenting leftist guerilla fighters. He then came to support the people he was tasked to undermine and eventually left the army in 1977 to join them. In 1982, along with other sympathizers within the Venezuelan army, *Chávez* founded the Bolivarian Movement 200 (MBR 200).<sup>23</sup> The goal of this secret organization was to initiate a military coup d'état, overthrowing the government of the time. To achieve this goal, the movement tried to influence the ranks within the Venezuelan army with pro-leftist sentiments. As the social fabric of the nation was further disturbed by political ineffectiveness, corruption, and economic malaise, support for Chavez gradually grew.

Under the assumption that it is possible to overthrow President Carlos Andrés Pérez, Chávez led the MBR 200 to attempt a coup d'état in February 1992.<sup>24</sup> The plan was to capture communication channels, the Miraflores Place (the official residence of the President in Caracas), and several military buildings. The coup d'état failed, as Chávez was not able to successfully capture Andrés Pérez. As a result, he willingly surrendered to the government and later gave a nationally-televised speech to Venezuelans and his military faction. Chavez ordered his men to end hostilities with the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hugo-Chavez>

national army immediately, citing that they cannot take control at the time.<sup>25</sup> Although his statement was only two minutes long, it was memorialized as the “for now” (*por ahora*) speech, for its empowering tone that symbolized the Venezuelan people’s aspirations for change.

Hugo Chávez was charged for attempting a coup against the government and arrested for around two years. In 1994, he was released by the new president, Rafael Caldera, due to pressure from the public. Capitalizing on his growing popularity, he founded the Movement of the Fifth Republic and ran for president in 1998. He and his party’s influence continued to expand its reach by presenting themselves as anti-establishment with a party-line centred around the common people, and calling for the eradication of corruption in Venezuelan politics. This was proven to be successful as Hugo Chávez won the presidential election against his opponent in the 1998 presidential election, taking 56% of the vote.<sup>26</sup>

### **Venezuela Under the Chávez Presidency**

Chavez’s presidency can only be described as ‘eventful’ because he radically reformed the government of Venezuela. He introduced his signature policy of Plan Bolivar 2000, an initiative aimed at tackling the corruption within the government and combat extreme poverty in the country. One of those reforms was the creation of a new constitution that was popularly favoured by the public in 1999.<sup>27</sup> It extended the president’s terms to six years and gave the president more executive powers. Plan Bolivar 2000 also provided more spending for infrastructure and housing and expanded public health programs such as low-cost or free vaccination.<sup>28</sup>

Although his domestic efforts were lauded by the Venezuelan press, Chávez’s foreign policy was subject to international controversy for its anti-Western sentiments, which were mostly aimed against the United States. He believed that the South and Central Americans must coalesce as one unit against the supremacy of the United States and their allies.<sup>29</sup> An example of such antagonism was his address to the United Nations General Assembly in 2006. During his speech, he made the following statement to describe his hostility towards then-American President George W. Bush:

*“...The devil came here yesterday... Right here. And it smells of sulphur still today. Yesterday, ladies and gentlemen, from this rostrum, the president of the United States, the gentleman to whom I refer as the devil, came here, talking as if he owned the world. Truly. As the owner of the world.”<sup>30</sup>*

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<sup>25</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/1992/02/05/world/venezuela-crushes-army-coup-attempt.html>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.thoughtco.com/biography-of-nicolas-maduro-president-of-venezuela-4783508>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-15240081>

<sup>30</sup><https://library.brown.edu/create/modernlatinamerica/chapters/chapter-8-venezuela/primary-documents-with-accompanying-discussion-questions/document-21-address-to-the-united-nations-by-hugo-chavez-2006/>



*Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez addresses the United Nations General Assembly, 2006.*<sup>31</sup>

Alongside his campaign against the US, he pursued friendlier relations with traditional enemies of the West. He visited nations such as Russia, Iran, and Cuba to sign agreements regarding oil investment and military cooperation, as well as mutual condemnations of American foreign policy.<sup>32</sup> He also attempted stronger integration between South and Central American nations by making generous trade deals with Cuba and Nicaragua, and joined regional organizations such as Mercosur in 2012.<sup>33</sup>

From his election in 1998 to 2013, the Chávez presidency prevailed in the face of challenges from both domestic and foreign criticism, a failed 2002 coup d'état by the military — which temporarily removed him from the presidency – to multiple protests by the opposition calling Chávez to resign for the government's corruption and nationalization.<sup>34</sup> Despite those conflicts, a majority of Venezuelans extended Chávez's presidential mandate for a total of four elections, which signalled approval of his policies. By his fourth election victory in 2012, political observers coined him as a 'Teflon,' a term to describe a politician who is still popular despite numerous scandals.<sup>35</sup> At this point in history, it seemed like nothing could stop him and his socialist agenda for Venezuela.

Although political upheaval and national crises only strengthened Chávez, there was one thing that ultimately brought him down: his own health. In June 2011, he announced that during one of his visits in Cuba, a cancerous tumour was removed and he would require multiple visits to the country.<sup>36</sup> Many questioned whether voters should re-elect a leader going through a serious illness. Despite fighting cancer and running a close race for president against Henrique Capriles Radonski, a then-popular governor of Miranda, he still won the October 2012 election by a healthy margin of 54%-44%.<sup>37</sup> However, the celebrations were short-lived, as two months later, he announced that his

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/background/hugo-chavez-world-tour>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-15240081>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hugo-Chavez/The-Chavez-presidency>

<sup>35</sup> <https://politicaldictionary.com/words/teflon-president/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/venezuelas-chavez-era>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

cancer returned. His struggle against his illness would continue until March 4, 2013, when it was declared that Hugo Chávez had passed away.

### **Nicolás Maduro: The Succeeding Revolutionary**

At an early age, Nicolás Maduro Moros was exposed to leftist politics through his father Nicolás Maduro García, a trade union leader who fought for workers' rights.<sup>38</sup> His formative youth was also filled with activism. Following in the footsteps of his father, Nicolás pushed for students' rights as his school's president of the student union. Then, Maduro started to train his political skills in Cuba after highschool. He then went on to advocate for the benefits of transit workers when he worked as a bus driver in Caracas.<sup>39</sup>

Maduro's political career was based on protecting socialist-leftist ideals, starting in the early 1990s when he joined the Hugo Chávez-led MBR 200. His prominence in politics began to rise when Chavez and several MBR members were arrested for the attempted coup in 1992.<sup>40</sup> Maduro heavily campaigned for their release from prison, which was successful as Chávez was eventually released. His involvement with the MBR continued, as he supported Chávez's campaign for president in 1998 and helped found Chávez's Movement of the Fifth Republic, a populist political party rooted in the beliefs of democratic socialism.<sup>41</sup>

The support for Chávez has been proven to be beneficial for Maduro's political career. After five years of being part of the National Assembly, Maduro became the speaker of the body from 2005 to 2006.<sup>42</sup> In this role, he oversaw the passing of legislation, such as increasing spending on Venezuela's social safety net, that were key parts of Chávez's platform. After a year of being the assembly speaker, Chávez then promoted Maduro to the position of foreign affairs minister.

His time in the ministerial position was perhaps more controversial, given that he carried out Hugo Chávez's principles in regards to foreign policy. He accused the United States of violating the human rights of Guantanamo Bay prisoners and detainees, citing that the American-owned detention centre in Cuba was "comparable only to the era of Hitler."<sup>43</sup> He also promoted regional unity within Latin America and cooperation between enemies of the United States, meeting with the leaders of Colombia, Libya, and Iran.<sup>44</sup>

After Hugo Chávez's election win in 2012, Maduro was selected as the vice president of Venezuela, a position that he only held for almost five months. As Chávez continued to struggle with his fight against cancer, he endorsed Maduro as his chosen successor.<sup>45</sup> In March 2013, then-Vice President Nicolás Maduro became the interim president of Venezuela, taking over the presidency after Chávez's death.

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<sup>38</sup> <https://www.thoughtco.com/biography-of-nicolas-maduro-president-of-venezuela-4783508>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nicolas-Maduro#ref339717>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.jta.org/2007/06/04/default/guantanamo-compared-to-era-of-hitler>

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2013/04/26/world/americas/nicolas-maduro-fast-facts/index.html>



*Anti-Maduro protesters blocked by the Venezuelan police during a demonstration for an election recall, April 2013.<sup>46</sup>*

His mandate as the interim was only limited to a few months, as a special election was scheduled to elect Chávez's formal successor — an election that Maduro won. The legitimacy of this election, however, was questioned by Maduro's campaign rival Henrique Capriles (who ran against Chávez in 2012) due to reports of poll workers masking their interference through assistance in booths.<sup>47</sup> Protests from the opposition began to swarm cities in Venezuela, and Maduro's response only ratcheted up their dissent into violent upheaval. The Venezuelan police and military began using tear gas and rubber bullets on protestors, as well as arresting prominent opposition leaders.<sup>48</sup> These critics included Leopoldo López, an outspoken critic who called on the public to protest against the government. He was arrested and charged with crimes such as incitement of violence and conspiracy in 2014. He was found guilty for those charges in 2015 and was under a strictly-surveilled house arrest.<sup>49</sup>

### **The Opposition Rebukes Maduro**

Alongside the harsh crackdown of the opposition came the collapse of the Venezuelan economy. Since the time of Hugo Chávez, spending ballooned to supplement his socialist policies of welfare and poverty reduction. Due to his economic plans, inflation rates rose to 50% — making everyday goods such as milk, toiletries, and flour far more expensive.<sup>50</sup> Although the economic development of the country has been questioned due to the high deficit and unfavourable trends, it has been able to barely keep afloat because of a stable and high level of oil prices. That stability would then end in the spring of 2014. By that time, the global oil price was around USD 100 per barrel. By

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2013/04/venezuelas-disputed-election/100498/>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/04/30/venezuelas-imprisoned-opposition-leader-reappears-amid-uprising/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/place/Venezuela/The-presidency-of-Nicolas-Maduro>

October of 2015, the price would hover around USD 40-50 per barrel.<sup>51</sup> The overreliance of oil furthered Venezuela's economic malaise, as the oil crash ballooned the deficit and exponentially skyrocketed inflation to 170%.<sup>52</sup> Shortages of goods were also prevalent, as inflation made it harder for businesses to produce necessities or important goods from foreign countries.

The violent skirmishes between protesters and the armed forces, as well as the failing economy, culminated into political losses for Nicolás Maduro. On December 6, 2015, a coalition of opposition parties, known as the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), won nearly two-thirds of the National Assembly.<sup>53</sup> The opposition's victory comes after the multiple interferences made by the Maduro government in rejecting international monitors to observe and verify the results of the election and keeping polling stations open for two additional hours so that Maduro supporters could find uncommitted voters and pressure them to vote for the government.<sup>54</sup>

In response to the loss, Maduro actively attempted to undermine the powers of the National Assembly. Before the end of 2015, the outgoing socialist majority in the National Assembly stacked the Supreme Tribunal, the highest judicial court of Venezuela, with judges that are loyal to Maduro and his party. This action created an imbalance of the government's branches of power, with the executive and judicial branches siding with Maduro and the legislative National Assembly primarily controlled by the opposition. This division is seen when the judicial branch actively limited the powers of the National Assembly. For example, on January 15, 2016, the Supreme Tribunal granted Maduro the right to rule and govern by decree when he declared an economic emergency.<sup>55</sup> This gave the President the right to bypass the legislative body when passing orders. Although the grant was initially only limited to 60 days, the Supreme Tribunal has repeatedly extended his powers for several months.<sup>56</sup> At the time of writing the background (July 2020), the President retains the power to rule without the consent of the legislative branch.

### **Constitutional Crisis of 2017**

In March 2017, the Supreme Tribunal ruled that the National Assembly was "in contempt" for disobeying the court's rulings on several occasions.<sup>57</sup> This led to the dissolution of the National Assembly.<sup>58</sup> The ruling was widely panned by the public, opposition leaders, and even members of President Maduro's inner circle, who called it a power-grab and degradation of democracy in Venezuela. The ruling only fuelled the ongoing protests against the President, which resulted in the injury and death of a small portion of protesters. After weeks of consideration, the Tribunal reversed its decision and gave the National Assembly its authority.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> <https://www.crystolenergy.com/low-oil-prices-today-may-not-mean-tighter-supplies-tomorrow/>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2015/12/08/three-things-to-know-about-the-venezuela-n-election-results/>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/09/venezuela-election-opposition-coalition-secures-super-majority>

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> <https://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/31577452/venezuela-tense-as-protesters-march-against-president/>

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nicolas-Maduro/Attempts-to-remove-Maduro-from-office>

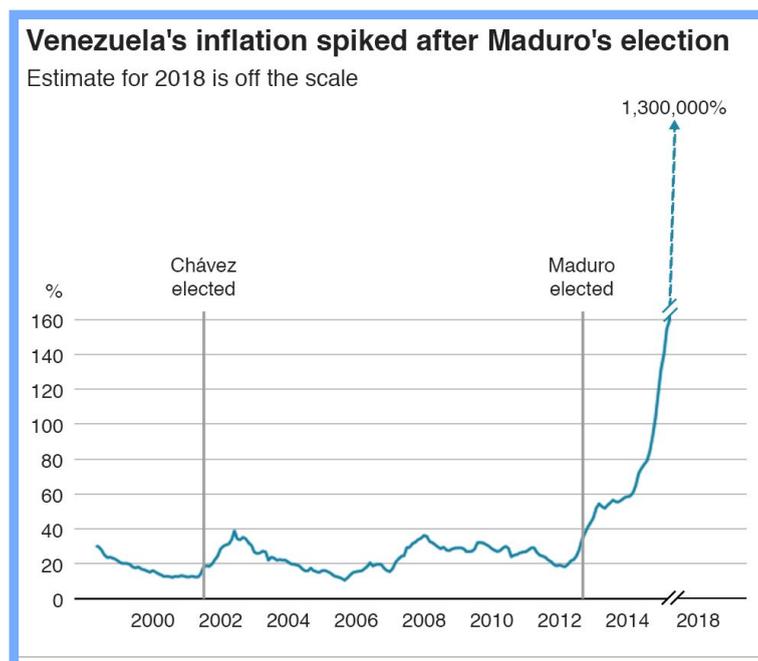
<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-39468045>

The failed power struggle did not stop Maduro from undermining the opposition. In May 2017, he called for the election to form a Constitutional Assembly, a temporary body that would create a new constitution.<sup>60</sup> This action was legal considering that it was part of the Venezuelan constitution under article 347.<sup>61</sup> However, many fear that the new Constitutional Assembly would replace the National Assembly — making the three government branches under control of the President. In response, the opposition discouraged supporters and the rest of the Venezuelan people from voting in the election as a protest. Only 43% of the eligible voters participated, with most votes going for the government.<sup>62</sup> The Constitutional Assembly went on to further clamp down on arresting opposition leaders and barring them from running in elections.

## Current Situation

### Economic Meltdown



*Venezuela's rate of inflation, 2000-2018.*<sup>63</sup>

To quote an article written by Anatoly Kurmanaev, a reporter for the New York Times, “Venezuela’s fall is the single largest economic collapse outside of war in at least 45 years.”<sup>64</sup>

The effects of the 2014 drop in oil prices have been cited as one of the main reasons for Venezuela's economic meltdown. Since Maduro’s first presidential election in 2012, the rate of inflation has exponentially increased — going up to 1.3 million percent in 2018.<sup>65</sup> The Gross Domestic Product (GDP), an indicator of national economies’ growth and stability, decreased by an average of 11%

<sup>60</sup><https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/07/venezuela-maduro-constituent-assembly-170729172525718.html>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/16/venezuela-elections-opposition-calls-for-protests-after-socialist-party-claims-win>

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/17/world/americas/venezuela-economy.html>

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-46999668>

from 2014 to 2018.<sup>66</sup> Alongside the drop in oil prices, imposed sanctions only furthered Venezuela's fall. As most nations like Canada and EU member-states place sanctions on individual states, the United States has placed stringent sanctions — banning the export of gasoline and freezing American bank accounts of Venezuelan businesses and government assets.

Inflation has virtually crippled most aspects of Venezuela's life. Prices have skyrocketed to rates that are unaffordable for both businesses and consumers. Businesses and producers had to savagely cut back on costs, as they found it extremely difficult to sell their goods both domestically and internationally. Everyday citizens also cannot cope with such hyperinflation, as the value of the Bolivar (the Venezuelan currency) is constantly devaluing. It is now a common practice to weigh bags of money as a way to determine the value instead of counting the actual value on the bills and coins.<sup>67</sup>

### **Humanitarian Crisis**

Amid the political crisis, a humanitarian one has been the cause of the deterioration of Venezuelan life. Shortages are now considered a more common occurrence in the country, particularly in food and medical care. Due to the lack of medical supplies and medicine in stock and understaffed hospitals, many diseases prevalent in Venezuela like dengue fever and diphtheria are left untreated.<sup>68</sup> As a result, mortality rates of infants and children under the age of five have increased since 2015.<sup>69</sup> Food is also highly demanded by the people, with many malnourished and suffering from extreme weight loss as many have to scavenge food for their families to survive. The lack of stable energy and water source are also scarce in the country, only available for certain portions of the day.<sup>70</sup> That only worsens the food situation as many portions of meat and frozen goods in need of refrigeration are now wasted and unsafe to eat. However, that does not stop many to eat the food anyways — leading to a cycle of sickness in the country.<sup>71</sup>

### **Mass Migration**

The daily suffering that comes with living in Venezuela has forced many in the country to leave their homes in hopes of a better life elsewhere. According to the American think-tank group Brookings Institution, 4.6 million Venezuelans fled the country to move to neighbouring nations like Brazil, Colombia, and Peru.<sup>72</sup> That is comparable to the Syrian refugee crisis, which had 4.8 million left the country by 2015.<sup>73</sup> The number could be even higher, as many refugees and asylum seekers did not retain their documentation. The lack of documentation makes it harder for refugees to receive assistance, such as social welfare and legal protection, from host countries.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/17/world/americas/venezuela-economy.html>

<sup>68</sup> <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/disaster/venezuelan-refugee-crisis/>

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2019/12/09/venezuela-refugee-crisis-to-become-the-largest-and-most-underfunded-in-modern-history/>

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/venezuela-emergency.html>

A majority of those leaving are families, the disabled, and senior citizens — groups who are disproportionately malnourished during their time in Venezuela.<sup>75</sup> These groups are also more susceptible to seek assistance from drug gangs and trafficking groups, since they would find it extremely difficult to navigate through the rough and natural fixtures of South America.<sup>76</sup> Such a trend only emboldens criminals to take advantage of refugees — possibly subjecting them to instances of violence and exploitation, such as human trafficking.

### **Ongoing Presidential Crisis**

In December 2018, the opposition-filled National Assembly sworn in Juan Guaidó as its leader.<sup>77</sup> Before his role, he was only a minor figure in Venezuelan politics, being the founder of a small political party called the Popular Will.<sup>78</sup> However, as many prominent critics and organizers in the opposition were either in exile or arrested, the opposition needed a leader who could mobilize the public and reignite the passions of supporters.

His prominence would then rise on January 23, 2019, when he declared himself as the president of Venezuela and called the 2018 re-election of Maduro “illegitimate,” promising to end the president’s “usurpation.”<sup>79</sup> His role as the president would only be temporary, as he would be leading the government until a leader is elected through free and fair elections.<sup>80</sup> His declaration only created a heated dispute between him and Maduro, causing the two to challenge each other on who is the rightful president. He has since been recognized as the interim president by nations in the EU, the United States, Canada, and nations in Latin America.

### **Past Action**

Although the Security Council has held numerous meetings and briefed nations on the Venezuelan crisis, it has yet to pass any resolution regarding the issue. This is because the P5 nations who hold veto power within the UNSC (China, France, Russia, UK, USA) have been divided over their views of Maduro. A prime example was on February 28, 2019, when both the United States and Russia submitted their own resolutions on Venezuela.<sup>81</sup>

The American resolution called for new elections to legitimately determine what the Venezuelan people want for their nation. During the period before the election, Juan Guaidó would become the interim leader of the country until a new president is elected.<sup>82</sup> Although a majority of nations voted in favour of the resolution (Belgium, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Kuwait, Peru, Poland, UK, USA), it did not pass, as both China and Russia used their veto powers during the vote.

On the other hand, the Russian resolution encourages an open dialogue between the government and the opposition, aiming to halt violent and tense hostilities in the country. Another important point was the affirmation that the Venezuelan government should not be coerced into accepting

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Juan-Guaido>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-46985389>

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/01/15/maduro-is-usurper-its-time-restore-democracy-ve-nezuela/>

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/02/1033832>

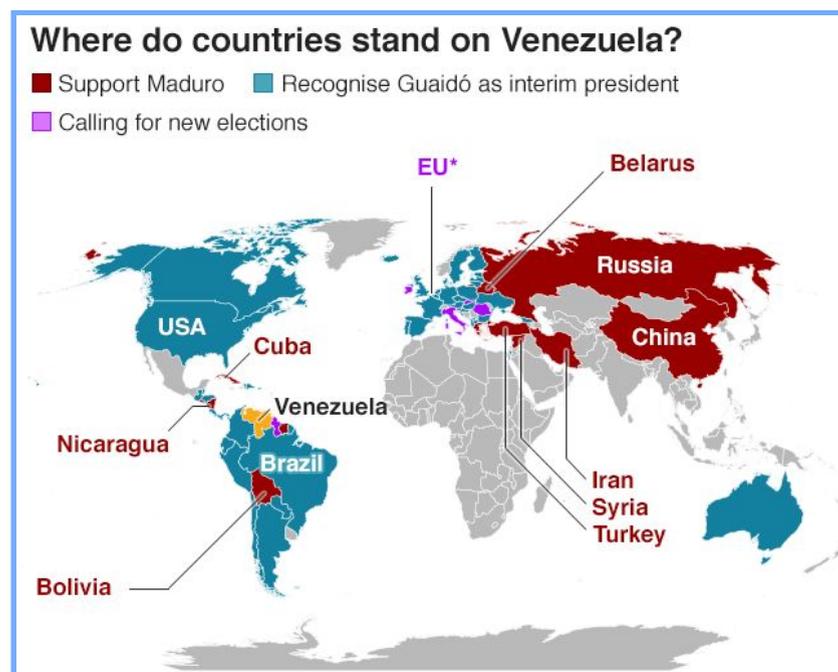
<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

aid from any nation or international organization.<sup>83</sup> This resolution failed to gain a favouring majority of council members, given that only China, Equatorial Guinea, Russia, and South Africa voted in favour. It also did not get unanimous approval from the P5, as France, the UK, and the USA vetoed the resolution.

Most of the international involvement has been in the form of individual action, in which nations have acted on the issue through separate means. Although the EU has only stated its support for new elections, most European nations have indicated their favour for Juan Guaidó as the interim president. Many countries in the Americas have also given their support for the opposition leader.<sup>84</sup> Notable pro-Guaidó states outside of the UNSC include Australia, Brazil, and Canada. When it comes to the support for Maduro, a small but still influential group, consisting of Cuba, Syria, and Turkey, has pledged to aid the socialist leader.<sup>85</sup>

Few nations have actively supported each side through economic and military needs. Maduro is aided by Russia, whose oil companies and banks have propped the Venezuelan state-owned oil reserves and refineries. The Russians have also sent military aid by sending their air force technicians to upgrade and inspect Venezuela's operational military planes.<sup>86</sup> On the side of the opposition is the United States, who has actively campaigned for Juan Guaidó to be the interim president and met with the opposition to discuss strategies to undermine the Maduro government.

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*Maps of countries on their support for Maduro/Guaidó.<sup>88</sup>*

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/02/04/americas/europe-guaido-venezuela-president-intl/index.html>

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-47101291>

<sup>86</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/17/world/americas/venezuela-russia-economy.html?ref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FVenezuela>

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2020/02/06/politics/trump-juan-guaido-white-house-meeting/index.html>

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-47053701>

*The EU as a whole has only stated its support for a new election.*

## Initiating Crisis

Throughout the years of the crisis in Venezuela, the people have suffered through a humanitarian one that includes mass hunger, medical shortages, and an increase in crime in the nation. However, as previously stated, the Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has refused to accept any international aid and has denied that a humanitarian crisis exists, calling it propaganda from the United States. As a result, the people of Venezuela continue to persevere through the suffering.

The crisis begins on February 1, 2019. The opposition leader Juan Guaidó has announced the creation of an international coalition led by the International Red Cross, whose goal is to attempt to deliver humanitarian aid to Venezuela. The coalition of countries consists of Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This coalition also includes three pro-Guaidó nations that neighbour Venezuela: the Netherlands (through the island of Curaçao), Brazil, and Colombia. These nations have provided the coalition with three separate points of storage (Cúcuta, Curaçao, Boa Vista). These points of storage will be where all the coalition's humanitarian aid for Venezuela will be placed, as well as points where all humanitarian delivery into Venezuela will begin. At the beginning of the crisis, these points are fully supplied with aid from the coalition.



*Map of coalition countries' points of aid.<sup>89</sup>*

In response to the announcement, Nicolás Maduro made a televised address to the nation. He repeats his claim that the United States is fabricating a supposed crisis in Venezuela in order to make him a culprit. Maduro also made a threat to the coalition countries; he warns that “if any foreign delivery truck is spotted in Venezuela, [he] will act with the most fire and fury the world has ever seen.” This was perceived as an attack against the United States as it references an infamous comment made by the American president when he was discussing another matter. Although

<sup>89</sup> <https://news.yahoo.com/venezuela-military-backs-maduro-alert-border-violations-195710168.html>

Maduro's words are vague, one can infer that he will use violence against foreign intruders to prevent foreign aid from coming into Venezuela."

At the beginning of the crisis, the coalition does not have a clear route that their aid trucks and military support can use to move to Caracas, the country's capital. As a result, the Maduro bloc has yet to finalize a strategy that deters the coalition from entering Venezuela. Therefore, it would be in the best interest for both sides to gather more intel to determine their first course of action.

## Possible Solutions

### Protecting The Maduro Government

In the interest of preserving stability in Venezuela, the committee could consider the option of supporting Nicolás Maduro. Such support could be in the form of military aid: supplying the Venezuelan army with the equipment, intel and possibly manpower needed to quell mass protest and violence. This support can also be through political and diplomatic means such as affirming that Maduro is the rightful head of government or providing economic aid through lifting sanctions and expanding trade with Venezuelan businesses. This option could guarantee government stability because there would be no significant change or uncertainty on who would lead Venezuela in its future. With such stability, Venezuela would be able to realign its priorities from the protest to solving the economic crisis it currently has to manage.

However, international support for Maduro's government would go against the strong dissent and anger of the majority who have revolted against their president's authoritarianism and economic failures. Although nations would turn a blind eye on human rights violations and poor living conditions for expediency, support for Venezuela's government would also further place significant precedence on that fact.

### Placing Guaidó as the Interim President

The Council could also unilaterally support the opposition leader Juan Guaidó and install him as the interim president of Venezuela. Although his role has not been specifically detailed, the general scope of his temporary mandate is to restore Venezuela's democratic systems and oversee the nation's well being until another leader is elected through free and fair elections.

The ousting of Maduro would open concerns of national sovereignty. The role of the United Nations and the UNSC has been to act as a moderating force when resolving disputes between nations but does not go further to reshape a nation's government. This choice indicates that the United Nations and the Security Council are willing to depose a government or a leader who is deemed to be unfit to rule. If the Security Council is going to intervene in a nation's politics through an ousting, that could lead to precedent in which both the UN and the UNSC would be obligated to intervene in other nations' internal crises in the same manner.

### Peaceful Negotiation Between The Government and The Opposition

Regardless of its global implications, it must be noted that the crisis falls mainly in the hands of the Venezuelan government. Many nations, in turn, believe that this internal conflict between Maduro's administration and the opposition should be dealt with in a diplomatic approach rather than violence, revolution, or upheaval of any kind. Through this option, both sides would negotiate on the role of government and possible reforms on those roles, among other matters. A key factor that has to hold for this solution to work is that it has to be peaceful. Therefore, a ceasefire is optimal so

that violence and protest do not cloud the judgements of leaders during negotiations. During these talks, an international entity or unbiased figure would take on the role of the moderator to preside over negotiations. Although the United Nations, especially the Secretary-General, has expressed interest in being the moderator, other prominent leaders are also willing to mediate.<sup>90</sup> For example, Pope Francis of the Catholic Church is willing to be a moderator between the two sides.<sup>91</sup> The role of popes in international conflicts has been a fixture of history, with modern examples such as Pope John Paul II taking on the role during border disputes between Argentina and Chile.<sup>92</sup>

### **Sending Humanitarian Aid**

Considering the humanitarian and economic crisis the nation is currently facing, the nations could consider the idea of sending humanitarian aid to alleviate the situation. The aid could be in the form of monetary payments, medical supplies and services, and food necessities. However, Venezuela would reject any aid from any nation since they do not want to concede on certain aspects of their actions or be tied by strings-attached conditions if they are given aid. It would take strenuous efforts of negotiation and strategy to convince Maduro in accepting aid to Venezuela.

### **Bloc Positions**

**Pro-Maduro** (China, Russia, Saint Vincent And The Grenadines, South Africa, Vietnam)

These nations have indicated that they will support the current Venezuelan administration of Nicolás Maduro by protecting his government through military or diplomatic support. For example, the Venezuelan ally of Russia has sent military staff support to South America, as well as striking down anti-Maduro actions made by the opposition, regardless if it is from the Coalition countries or the local opposition led by Guaidó. The bloc would ensure that any directive or resolution passed in the UNSC will not be detrimental to the rule of Maduro. They cite the interference by nations such as the United States as an affront to national sovereignty.

At the beginning of the session committee, they will counteract the pro-opposition coalition countries' attempts to deliver. Their position is not to deliver aid to countries in need, but they believe that this aid would have strings attached that may force Maduro to make concessions to the opposition. In the interest of protecting the Venezuelan government, the pro-opposition would aid Maduro's military escalation in the land border with Brazil and Colombia.

**Pro-Opposition/Coalition Countries** (Belgium, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Germany, France, United Kingdom, United States of America)

Holding onto their values of protecting human rights and democracy, this bloc would favour the installation of Juan Guaidó as the interim president, ousting the authoritarian from office and giving back the power of the democratic institutions that were either removed or weakened. This bloc would actively monitor the country to ensure that free and fair elections are established during the transitional government led by Guaidó.

During the beginning of the crisis, these nations would strongly support the immediate creation of a coalition of nations that will send aid to Venezuela. This would include composing a comprehensive plan to transport humanitarian aid from the points of storage to major cities.

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<sup>90</sup> <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13719.doc.htm>

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/05/world/europe/pope-francis-abu-dhabi-maduro.html>

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

However, this bloc must understand the ramifications of the possible fallout if they were to fail in being undetected by the Venezuelans or the pro-Maduro countries.

**Neutral/No Position** (Indonesia, Niger, Tunisia)

These nations have either opted to be neutral on the issue or have yet to give an official statement regarding the crisis. Although this bloc only consists of two nations, it holds the balance of power because the previous blocs are of similar size; Members of this bloc can side with a bloc they believe aligns with their values most closely. For instance, if a neutral nation has been consistently progressing its democratic freedoms may be more inclined to support the opposition. Conversely, if a neutral nation tends to dismantle its own human rights and government institutions, it would likely support Maduro.

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