



UTOPIA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

'19

United Nations Security Council



*Agenda: Examining The
Venezuelan Crisis*





A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Delegates,

It is a pleasure to have you on board at UMUN '19. It is an honor to be serving as the Executive Board of the United Nations Security Council at UMUN '19.

Please consider that the aim of this guide, as the name suggests, is to provide you with the background of the agenda solely. Your real research lies beyond this guide and we hope to see strong content and debate in the conference.

The topic under discussion is, "Examining the Venezuelan crisis."

The agenda at hand is a highly sensitive and relevant issue, and a successful discussion on it would entail the collective participation from all of you. As far as the direction of the committee is concerned, it shall be entirely your prerogative.

Apart from the simple knowledge of facts and figures you gain from your research and analysis, it is important to connect to the same on a more intellectual and emotional level, while approaching a crisis like this.

Lastly, put your best foot forward as you research into the varied aspects of the agenda and display the best of your diplomatic courtesy. Feel free to revert back to the executive board for any queries or for any form of assistance that you may require. Wishing you luck for the conference.

Looking forward to meeting you all!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Committee Description
2. Acceptable Sources
3. General Information
4. Background Information
5. Further Reading
6. Questions to Consider
7. Bibliography

COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

The United Nations Security Council is one of the main organs of the United Nations, it is comprised of five permanent members and ten occupying two-year rotating membership status. The UNSC also allows nations that it deems are affected by the crisis at hand to sit in the council if they agree to forego their voting rights. It is the only committee that is non-recommendatory in nature and can issue actionable directives. It is so organized so as to be able to function continuously, to that end a representative of each of its members must be present at all times at United Nations Headquarters, but the council may also meet elsewhere.

The Security Council has primary responsibility, under the Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security.

When a complaint concerning a threat to peace is brought before it, the Council's first action is usually to recommend to the parties to try to reach an agreement by peaceful means. In some cases, the Council itself undertakes investigation and mediation to that end it may appoint special representatives or request the Secretary-General to do so or to use his good office.

When a dispute leads to fighting, the Council's first concern is to bring it to an end as soon as possible. On many occasions, the Council has issued cease-fire directives which have been instrumental in preventing hostilities. It also

sends United Nations peacekeeping forces to help reduce tensions in troubled areas to keep opposing forces apart and create conditions of calm in which peaceful settlements may be sought. The Council may decide on enforcement measures, economic sanctions (such as trade embargoes), or collective military action.

In addition to several standing and ad hoc committees, the work of the council is facilitated by the Military Staff Committee, Sanctions Committees for each of the states under sanctions, Peacekeeping Forces Committees, and an International Tribunals Committee.

Historical Context

Like the UN as a whole, the Security Council was created following World War II to address the failings of a previous international organization, the League of Nations, in maintaining world peace. In its early decades, the Security Council was largely paralyzed by the Cold War, though it had authorized interventions in the Korean War and the Congo Crisis and peacekeeping missions in the Suez Crisis, Cyprus, and West New Guinea. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, UN peacekeeping efforts increased dramatically in scale, and the Security Council authorized major military and peacekeeping missions in Kuwait, Namibia, Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia, and Sudan.

COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

Functions and Powers

Under the Charter, the functions and powers of the Security Council are:

- To maintain international peace and security in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations;
- To investigate any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction;
- To recommend methods of adjusting such disputes or the terms of settlement;
- To formulate plans for the establishment of a system to regulate armaments;
- To determine the existence of a threat to peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken;
- To take military action against an aggressor;
- To recommend the admission of new Members;
- To exercise the trusteeship functions of the United Nations in "strategic areas";
- To accept changes to the charter of the United Nations;
- To recommend to the General Assembly the appointment of the Secretary-General and, together with the Assembly, to elect the Judges of the International Court of Justice.



Fig 1: Security Council Chamber at the United Nations Headquarters.

ACCEPTABLE SOURCES

News Sources

- Reuters (<http://www.reuters.com/>) – Any Reuters article which clearly makes mention of the fact or is in contradiction of the fact being stated by a delegate in council.
- State-operated News Agencies – These reports can be used in the support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any Country as such but in that situation, they can be denied by any other country in the council. The Executive Board shall remain neutral towards the credibility of these reports.

Government Reports

These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country. However, the essential difference is that if a government report is being denied by a certain country, it can still be accepted by the Executive Board as a credible source of information.

- Government Websites like the State Department of the United States of America <http://www.state.gov/index.htm>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of various nations like India (<http://www.mea.gov.in/>), People's Republic of China (<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/>), France (<http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/>), Russian Federation (http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/main_eng)
- Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Reports:
<http://www.un.org/en/members/> (Click on any country to get the website of the Office of its Permanent Representative.

United Nations Reports

- All UN Reports and publications are considered as credible sources of information.
- UN Bodies: Like the SC (<http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>), GA (<http://www.un.org/en/ga/>), HRC (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/HRCIndex.aspx>) etc.
- UN Affiliated bodies like the International Atomic Energy Agency (<http://www.iaea.org/>), International Committee of the Red Cross (<http://www.icrc.org/eng/index.jsp>), etc.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Venezuela, officially known as the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, is a federal republic located on the northern coast of South America with Caracas being its capital city. Spanish colonization began on the northeast coast in 1521 and ended in 1810, with Venezuela declaring its independence from Spain. Until 1958, Venezuela was under military rule. After that, Venezuela was a democracy, with President Hugo Chavez elected in 1998. Hugo Chavez led the country from 1998 until 2013 when he died at the age 58 after a battle with cancer. His government was marked by a socialist ideology that became known as Chavismo. After his death in April 2013, Nicolas Maduro, Hugo Chavez's chosen successor, was elected president by a narrow margin, illustrating the lack of extensive support that Maduro would have liked to have received.

Venezuelan citizens enjoyed prosperity for much of the 20th century financed by oil wealth. Between 1940 and 1948, Venezuela's per-capita GDP grew at 6.8 percent per year. In the 1960s and the 1970s, the government in Venezuela spent large amounts of money on social programs which allowed them to keep the citizens content. Venezuelan workers were known to have the highest wages in Latin America. However, the situation in Venezuela dramatically changed when oil prices collapsed during the 1980s. The economy contracted and inflation levels rose, remaining between 6 and 12 percent from 1982 to 1986. The inflation rate surged in 1989 to 81 percent. Venezuela's GDP contracted by -8.3 percent in 1989. At the same time, wages stagnated and unemployment was high. By the mid-1990s, Venezuela saw annual inflation rates of 50-60 percent, and an inflation rate of 100 percent in 1996. The country also suffered a severe bank crisis. When Chavez first took office as president in 1999, almost half the population was below the country's poverty line.

We shall proceed to examine the rule of Chavez in more detail in the following section.

Rule of Chavez (1999 – 2013)

Hugo Chávez was a former military officer of notable reputation who rose to prominence in a failed military coup in 1992. Later in 1998, he was elected as the president of Venezuela. His promises as the presidential candidate included fighting poverty and social disparity by putting the nation's oil resources to the right use. Once in power, Chávez replaced the existing Congress by creating a new National Assembly, which he controlled. He used his new National Assembly to rewrite the constitution to keep himself in power.

The presidential periods were originally five-year terms without the possibility of immediate reelection. Former presidents could run again only after two terms had passed. The National Assembly changed it to six-year terms, with unlimited reelections, and extended these new parameters to governors and other elected officials.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Chavez was fortunate in that oil prices rebounded under his tenure, bringing in much needed revenue to the country. Chavez spent the money that came to him on implementing his socialist policies in the form of Chavismo. From 2000 to 2013, spending as a share of GDP rose from 28% to 40%, a much bigger rise than in Latin America's other large economies.

Chávez increased public spending on social programs, expanded subsidies for food and energy, and enacted price controls.

Venezuelans felt the results, in higher incomes and improved standards of living. Under his rule, Venezuela's unemployment rate halved, income per capita more than doubled, the poverty rate fell by more than half, education improved, and infant mortality rates declined. Chavez was seen as a national hero and was loved by the country's poor and working classes.

He aligned himself with the Marxist governments of countries like Cuba. However, a country cannot succeed purely based on handouts. In order to maintain these standards of living, it is necessary to have a strong economy. Chavez did not support the development of a strong private sector. He attacked private firms, which left the country short of expertise and money to develop these resources. He expropriated oil assets, factories, and property. Nobody wanted to do business there anymore.

These poor economic moves undercut the wealth of oil that funded these government programs. In 2000 Venezuela had enough reserves to cover more than seven months of imports; that dropped to under three months by 2013. In December 2012, Hugo Chavez appointed Nicolas Maduro as his vice president. Chavez had already won his next election, but was headed into his 4th cancer surgery, and he intended Maduro to take over should he not survive. During Chavez' recovery period, Maduro took over as interim president. When Chavez was not healthy enough to return for his inauguration, a special election was held, which Maduro won and became the president on April 13, 2013. Chavez died from cancer on March 5th, 2013.

The Presidency of Nicholas Maduro (2013 – Present)

Maduro, who had served under Chavez as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2006 to 2013 and as his Vice President from 2012 to 2013, won the presidential election and is now running the country.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Throughout Maduro's presidency, the economic situation in Venezuela has not changed: high rates of unemployment, and criminal activities continue to harm the country at its core. The black market is constantly rising and exactly because of that the shortage of food and energy has worsened. The government's efforts to manage the shortages have included moving clocks forward half an hour, closing schools on Fridays, and sending civil servants home three days a week. The state has tried to ration basic foodstuffs as well as set their prices, but the consequence is they have simply disappeared from the shops into the black market.

Nicolas Maduro inherited a country with an unstable economy and has up until now done nothing effective to tackle the problem. His few actions include printing money, which fueled more inflation. He is running through the country's gold reserves to pay its international debt service and finance at least some basic imports, but those reserves are now dwindling, and Maduro will either have to default or stop importing food.

Recently, in January 2017, he announced a 50% hike in the minimum wage and pensions – the fifth increase over the last year, to help shield workers from the world's highest inflation rate. The core of the problem, though, is not being addressed, and the economic crisis continues to torment Venezuela's society.

One thing that has changed is the amount anti-government protests under Maduro. Protests throughout 2017 have left over a hundred dead and many more injured. Venezuelans are unsatisfied with the government's approach to managing the economy and increasingly concerned about the current regime's attacks on democratic institutions. The government has repeatedly blocked any attempts to oust Maduro from power by a referendum vote. It has also delayed local and state elections. The last vote held in Venezuela, the parliamentary election of 2015, gave the opposition a majority.

Critics say elections have been delayed because Maduro is afraid of the outcome.



Fig 2: Protests held in Venezuela against the Maduro government.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Situation for Venezuelans during the Maduro Government

Currently, Venezuela is in complete chaos and crisis. Food shortages have become severe. Venezuelans have endured weeks, in some cases months, without basics such as milk, eggs, flour, soap and toilet paper. When there is food on the shelves, prices are so high that few Venezuelans can afford it. Many have taken to eating out of the trash. Medicine remains in short supply, too. Venezuelans hunt for penicillin and other remedies at pharmacies everywhere, often without success. Public hospitals have fallen apart, causing people, including infants, to die because of the scarcity of basic medical care.

Venezuela asked the United Nations for help to relieve serious shortages of medicines. The country is spiraling further into a humanitarian disaster spurred by the government's economic policies, which have caused the currency, the bolivar, to plunge in value and prices to skyrocket. By 2017, the bolivar had lost 96% of its value. On August 13th 2018 the Bolívar Fuerte had an exchange rate of 4,010,000 VEF/USD. The Bolívar Fuerte has since been replaced by the Bolívar Soberano due to hyperinflation as 100,000 Bolívar Fuerte = 1 Bolívar Soberano. By 24 August 2018, the introduction of the bolívar soberano had not prevented hyperinflation. According to inflation analyst Steve Hanke, between 18 August and 21 August 2018, the inflation rate increased from 48,760 percent to 65,320 percent.

Maduro's main actions have been attempts to postpone the next election. While the opposition party is growing, Maduro's support is dwindling. The elections were set to happen in April of 2018, but were originally planned for December 2016. Critics say these delays are due to the fact Maduro is worried about his re-election, as his approval ratings were at a low 23%.

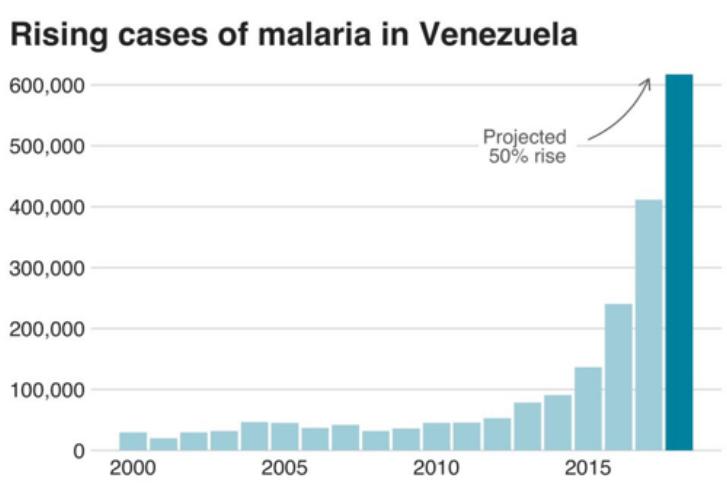


Fig 3: Cases of malaria in Venezuela

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Juan Guaido

Guaido rose from obscurity to the self-declared interim president of Venezuela in a matter of weeks.

The 35-year-old politician was relatively unknown when he was named the president of the National Assembly in early January 2019.

Guaido was born in the port city of La Guaira, in the state of Vargas. He was 15 years old when Chavez came to power in 1999.

After declaring himself interim president on January 23, Guaido, with the backing of the US, laid out his broad plan for Venezuela.

His plan focuses on the opposition's strategy for the economy and oil resources, and examines public services, security, governability and society.

Guaido has also called on members of the military to disavow Maduro, promising all security forces personnel amnesty if they break with the leader.

"The amnesty we're proposing aims to bring those military forces that are linked to the government [closer to the people] we aim to create harmony [among the different powers]," Rachid Yasbek, a leader from the opposition group said.

Maduro's Second Term and Rise of Juan Guaido

On January 10, Maduro was sworn in for a second six-year term, despite opposition from several other Latin American countries. The Organization of American States refused to recognize his new term, with Paraguay announcing it was breaking diplomatic relations with Venezuela.

The US also refused to recognize what it called the "Maduro dictatorship's illegitimate inauguration". Inside the country, opposition leaders branded Maduro's second term illegitimate and called for the opposition-controlled National Assembly to declare the presidency vacant.

Citing Articles 233 and 333 of the Venezuelan constitution, the National Assembly heeded the call. However, the Supreme Court ruled that all actions taken by the National Assembly were null and void.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

But Maduro still enjoys the support of the country's armed services, as well as some of the major world powers, including China, Russia and Turkey. This leaves both Guaido and Maduro partially recognized by the international community.

But the military's highest ranks have declared their loyalty to Maduro. Although Maduro lacks the military pedigree of Chavez, the relationship his late mentor had with the armed services has helped lay the groundwork for its continued support, and this relationship has brought stability to his mandate.

But the situation seems to be changing. On Saturday a high-ranking Venezuelan air force general said he had disavowed Nicolas Maduro and now recognised opposition leader Juan Guaido as interim head-of-state, according to a video circulating on Twitter.

In the video, General Francisco Yanez, a member of the air force's high command, called on other members of the military to defect. He also reportedly claimed that 90 percent of the armed forces no longer support Maduro.

Yanez is the first active Venezuelan general to recognise Guaido since he proclaimed himself president on Jan. 23.

The political scenario is in constant turmoil and is changing rapidly. Guaido is backed strongly by the US. Both China and Russia have blocked the UNSC's bid to support Guaido as the legitimate president.

The following table largely outlines who supports whom:

Maduro Supporters	Guaido Supporters
Countries: Bolivia, China, Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, Russia, Syria, Turkey	Countries: Argentina, Brazil Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, UK, US

Maduro Supporters	Guaido Supporters
Venezuela's military.	Some ranking members of the military.
Government Institutions, including the Supreme Court	EU has called for fresh elections.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The situation for Venezuelans during all this hasn't changed since Maduro's rule. It is still extremely difficult to obtain food and the health sector is crippled. As a result of these conditions, the country is facing what has become the largest exodus in Latin American history. Over three million people have fled the country since 2014, and it is expected to reach 5.3 million by the end of 2019, according to the UN estimations.

This guide will explore the humanitarian crisis in further detail.



Fig 4: Countries stance on Venezuela

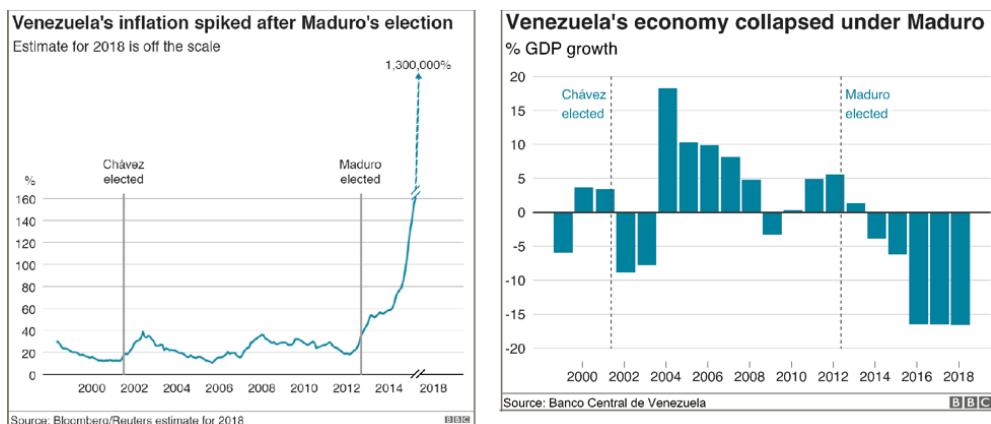


Fig 5: Hyperinflation in Venezuela

Fig 6: Venezuelan GDP Growth

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Financial Crisis

Most of Venezuela's economic issues stem from the political crisis, civil unrest, and humanitarian crisis that it faces. The economy is one of the root causes of the massive instability, and must be addressed to restore peace in the nation to a now desperate nation.

The economic leg of the crisis first began when oil plummeted from over \$100 a barrel to around \$50 today (during the rule of Hugo Chavez). This meant that the subsidies and welfare programs that long funded the economy were gone, leading to massive unemployment and shortages of even the most basic commodities.

In 2014, clothes, technology, and even toilet paper were imported, and still in desperately short supply. Food shortages have meant that over the course of 2013, 74% of Venezuelans lost on average 19 pounds. The Venezuelan gross domestic product (GDP) decreased by 10%, and was a quarter smaller than its 2013 self by the end of 2014.

Currently, the situation hasn't improved in the slightest. Hyperinflation and the subsequent attempts to reduce its affects, sanctions, and continuous decrease in the GDP have contributed to worsening the situations.

Another cause for the economic crisis is: failed diversification. Venezuela never took the time to develop the non-energy sectors of its economy. Most oil-dependent countries build up reserves while prices are high to provide security when prices are low.

Venezuela's rampant government spending during times of prosperity left little money for these emergency fund coffers.

Along with this, the rampant corruption in the government furthers the financial crisis. Officials have embezzled billions of dollars, making Venezuela the most corrupt country in Latin America.

Unemployment was forecasted to reach 44% for 2019; the IMF stated that this was the highest unemployment seen since the end of the Bosnian War in 1995.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Humanitarian Crisis

A UN report estimated in March 2019 that 94% of Venezuelans live in poverty, and that one quarter of Venezuelans need some form of humanitarian assistance. Clearly Venezuelans need aid and assistance at this time, and the international community must band together to supply that aid to them.

More than 70% of Venezuela's food is imported; Chávez gave the military control of food, and nationalized much of the industry, which was then neglected, leading to production shortages. With the military in charge of food, food trafficking became profitable, bribes and corruption common, and food did not reach the needy. Hyperinflation has also caused many Venezuelans unable to afford food as prices have shot extremely high. All this has put people in dire situations. Many even have to eat out of the garbage.



Fig 7: Venezuelans eating out of the garbage

More than 3 million people—about ten percent of the population—have fled Venezuela as a result of political instability, hunger, inflation, poverty and soaring crime rates. It has been described as the largest exodus in Latin America in a hundred years. Four out of five refugees have remained within Latin America and the Caribbean.

Crime is rampant in Venezuela. Escalating violent crime, especially murder, had been called "perhaps the biggest concern" of Venezuelans during the crisis.

The U.S. Bureau of Diplomatic Security says most of the violence comes from organized street gangs, and attributes criminal activity to four factors: "often corrupt" underpaid police, an "inefficient and politicized judicial system", problems in the prison system, and widespread availability of weapons. Most crimes that are committed go unprotected.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The colectivos (irregular, leftist Venezuelan community organizations that support Nicolás Maduro, the Bolivarian government, the Great Patriotic Pole) were described by Human Rights Watch as "armed gangs who use violence with impunity" to harass political opponents of the Venezuelan government. Despite the Venezuelan government's statements saying that only official authorities can carry weapons for the defense of Venezuela, colectivos are armed with automatic rifles such as AK-47s, submachine guns, fragmentation grenades, and tear gas. They are also involved in food trafficking, selling food on the black market; further contributing to the lack of food. As of 2019, there are dozens of colectivos in Venezuela.

Venezuela's entire healthcare system has collapsed, it is extremely difficult to reach a medical professional and equally as difficult to obtain medicines. In 2018, nearly nine of ten Venezuelans living with HIV registered by the government were not receiving ARV treatment. The TB incidence rate has consistently increased since 2014, reaching 42 per 100,000 in 2017 – the highest in Venezuela in 40 years. Cases of malaria have grown from fewer than 36,000 in 2009 to more than 414,000 in 2017.

The healthcare system is further crippled by power outages that undercut hospitals' ability to operate normally.

More importantly, the Maduro government is largely to blame for the lack of a coordinated international response to Venezuela's crisis. By failing to acknowledge the full scope of the crisis and invite key UN agencies to independently assess the situation and coordinate an effective response to it, Venezuelan authorities are contributing to the suffering of the Venezuelan people.

Interviews with aid workers from UN and other agencies all reflect similar sentiment; that the aid reaching Venezuela is not nearly enough to serve the population's actual need.

These circumstances have caused millions to leave the country. A February 2019 UN reported estimated that 3.4 million Venezuelans have emigrated, and they expect another 1.9 million may emigrate in 2019. Recently the Maduro government closed and then opened the Columbian border causing thousands to flock to the border in search of aid.

The massive exodus of Venezuelans— many of whom fled their country in search of medicines, medical supplies, health providers, and basic health services—is straining services across Venezuela's borders.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Brazil experienced its first cases of measles in early 2018, after no confirmed cases since 2015. More than 10,000 cases have since been confirmed, as of January 2019. The strain of the measles virus (D8) in Brazil is identical to the strain causing the outbreak in Venezuela. In Colombia — the country that has received the largest influx of Venezuelans—the North Santander border area has seen a sharp rise in the number of reported cases of Venezuelans seeking medical care, from 182 in 2015 to 5,094 in 2018. The above are just some examples of the massive problems faced by neighboring nations.

Since the mid-2000s during Chávez's presidency, Venezuela has had a housing crisis. By 2011, there was a housing shortage of 2 million homes, with nearly twenty prime developments being occupied by squatters following Chávez's call for the poor to occupy "unused land". Production of building materials is also at an all time low, stifling the development of homes. The Venezuelan population remain hungry, homeless, and in desperate need of healthcare. They are deprived of their basic human rights; the international community must come to the aid of the population.

FURTHER READING

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Fig 8: Prices of basic commodities in Venezuela

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What political compromises can be reached between the split governments?
2. Is Venezuela in need of new leadership? If a change is necessary, what is the best way to achieve it?
3. How can nations come together to help aid the Venezuelan citizens to provide basic and essential resources to the citizens?
Additionally, what efforts will be taken to make sure the aid is going directly to its intended recipients, and not expropriated by the Venezuelan Government?
4. How can we improve relations between Venezuela and its neighbors to ensure that there is no escalation of their conflicts?
5. Will Venezuela ever be successful if it maintains its policies of Chavismo? How can we help to set Venezuela on a better economic path forward and diversify the economy away from oil?

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