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Venezuelan National Assembly

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Colegio Episcopal de Panamá

Advisor: Laura Pollock

Topic 1: Safety and Security in Venezuela

Throughout Latin America, safety and security has been an issue of great concern. Various governments have tried to come up with new strategies to try and control violence in their streets. Sadly, this is also a concern in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Crime and violence has always been present in the streets of Venezuela, even before the Bolivarian Revolution. The reason why this has remained a problem is the corrupt government that encourages this type of behavior. I, Freddy Guevara Cortes, a deputy of the National Assembly for Circuit 2, stand strongly against the current government and will do everything in my power to improve our country's situation for the sake of our people.

In order to address the matter at hand, we need to see the problem from the root. The cause of mostly all of Venezuela's problems is the government. Our governors have been clearly guilty of corruption towards the administration of the national budget, causing a nation-wide restlessness, thus crime and violence. In a rating of the 50 most violent cities on Earth, five are Venezuelan and the capital, Caracas, is the second most dangerous city in the world. We are also the most weaponized country in the world; there is roughly one gun for every two Venezuelans. This nation was founded on the ideals of liberty of Simon

Bolivar, to have a great and overall independent country; we must live up to those expectations.

One of the main reasons why there is so much violence is because Venezuela has poorly trained, paid and under-equipped police officers because most of the country's income goes to support the army and not the police. Since the National Assembly does have a power when it comes to the Venezuelan's budget, we can administrate the money better and make sure the national security gets financial support from the State. This might be a long-term solution since the executive organ is the one that distributes the income, and in order to get that done, first, we need to fight the corruption in the government. Now, short-term solutions are also needed, since we need a way to rapidly ensure the safety of the people.

Over the past few years, I have led projects to ensure the safety of our citizens. For example the Metropolitan Council of Safety and Security is a permanent institution in Caracas that allows safety workers to propose ideas to help the people of Caracas. Along with it, the Metropolitan Observatory of Safety and Security complied with this project and it also guaranteed a space for NGOs with an extensive trajectory for the improvement of safety worldwide, and the national Committee of Citizen Safety and Human Rights to unite and discuss ways to fulfill the people's wishes.

Violence is easily spread in an unstable country, and a way to fight back the negative behavior is to encourage positive behavior. An effective way to do so is through campaigns against violence and about peace and respect to the other citizens. This legislator

conducted a national television program called “No Te Engoriles” (Don’t Get Riled Up), which promoted civic coexistence and love. As a result, agreements of cooperation between communities and private sector actors were made.

As the members of the highest legislative power of Venezuela, and most of us being opposition, we now have the power to make a true change. The situation in this country keeps worsening and we need to guarantee the citizens the safety that they need. We need to work as a united country, and leave our personal interests behind. The National Assembly is the entity that works as the representation of the people, thus we work for their wellbeing. Venezuela is in crisis, and as members of the Assembly we need to call for action.

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Topic 2: Venezuela's Economic Crisis

An economic crisis occurs when the demands of the country are much greater than the general income. Sadly, this is exactly what's going on in Venezuela. Ever since the massive oil deposits were found in Lake Maracaibo during World War I, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has remained highly dependent on oil revenues. They comprise almost all export earnings and nearly half of the government's revenue. Ever since the Bolivarian Revolution, Venezuela has encountered difficult times when administrating the money. I, Freddy Guevara Cortes, consider that the only thing this government has done is to steal money in name of the poor.

The situation in Venezuela is not because the country doesn't have income. The Bolivarian Republic has the most oil reserves in the world (77.5 billion barrels), and it's ironic that this nation would be lacking money. Venezuela produces 3.02 million oil barrels/day. The problem resides on the corrupt government's mismanagement of the national currency. According to IMF statistics, Venezuela will soon come to a hyperinflation.

Venezuela's budget has had a deficit of -41.1% of their GDP. Also, we have the world's worst negative growth rate (-8%), and the worst inflation rate (482%). Electricity

can't be run daily, and governmental institutions only open twice a week to save energy. A few months ago, Venezuela devaluated its currency as a way to balance the economy. This is enough to say that Venezuela has an economic crisis. Venezuela's currency system dates to 2003, and it contains 3 different exchange rates. In order to obtain a more balanced economy, the exchange rate needs to be unified. We need to find a better system to update the current one, and in this way we might reduce the outcomes of this crisis.

The unemployment rate is at 17% right now. People are resorting to violence in order to get their basic resources, and shortages of domestic products increase. President Maduro's methods of distributing food are not effective, because he is not attacking the problem at the root. The citizens are demanding a referendum to remove President Nicolas Maduro from office. Even if this does happen, methods of adjusting the economy should be made without affecting the people. A viable solution would be to set up a system to make sure basic resources such as food and medicine are available at affordable prices. For example, many governments offer citizens a system of stamps in which they can acquire food.

As a member of the National Assembly, we need to put the people first. We are going through a crisis in every possible way; a social, political and economic crisis. The first people that are always affected are the ordinary people. In June, Carlos Ocariz, the mayor of Sucre municipality and a top figure within "Primero Justicia" (First Justice) (a leading opposition party) said: "There can be no economic change without political change." I couldn't agree more, it is mandatory for this meeting that we compromise to improve this situation and fulfill the people's wishes.

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Topic 3: Social Division and Venezuelan Politics

All over the world, there have been cases of popular discontent of the people towards their government. It has happened in Egypt, Syria, Russia, and in many other countries. Devastatingly, Venezuela is one of those countries. There's crisis in every possible way in the Bolivarian Nation. There are food and basic resources shortages, in which ordinary people cannot even acquire this without justification. Our economy is in a current crisis, and we might even reach hyperinflation. There is crime and violence in the streets, causing an unsafe environment to our citizens. My name is Freddy Guevara; I represent the opposition and was elected deputy of the National Assembly in the State of Miranda, Circuit 2. I strongly believe that the only reason Venezuela has come to this situation is because of the extremely corrupt government.

Social division occurs when restlessness and intolerance become frequent in a region. Venezuela has become divided because of the demand for a change in the executive body. Ever since April 2013, President Nicolas Maduro has clearly demonstrated that he's not capable of running a country. He has allowed corruption to happen many times, by stealing much of the people's money by keeping it all to himself and the rest he gives it to

the army. He does not invest in the national police, or in basic resources. Not to mention the acts of corruption made by other members of the government. I recently stated in January 2016 that: "My duty rests on creating laws to get back the lost capital and the investigation of cases of corruption considered emblematic, like the 25 billion dollars denounced by the ex minister Giordani." We clearly need a change in government, and us, the opposition, will fight for that.

All of my previous projects for the national security remain the same. Such projects are: Metropolitan Council of Safety and Security, Metropolitan Observatory of Safety and Security, and the television program against violence "No Te Engoriles" (Don't Get Riled Up). These projects were taken place in the capital, Caracas. We need to implement these methods to not only Metropolitan areas, but also nation-wide. If we promote tolerance between citizens, it might help ease the tension of the people.

The Chavez-influenced government and unreliable officers have to be changed. The people demand a recall referendum to remove the president from office. If we do so, that will ease the people and we will create an image of improvement. With this image, nations can start trusting us again and we might build trade-relationships again. If protesting is what it takes in order to pressure the President to quit, then I will do it. Just like in 2008 when I participated in the protest against the Constitutional Referendum that would've reformed 69 articles of the 1999 constitution and declared a Socialist Nation).

In order to make an honest government we need non-corrupt government officers. To do so, we need to thoroughly investigate politicians suspicious of committing illegal

acts, and if they're found guilty then that violates the constitution and they need to be imprisoned immediately. The judicial system is extremely crooked since many people are being thrown into prison without a proper trial. Sadly, one of those examples lies on my partner and friend Leopoldo Lopez. He was the president of the same political party that I form part of. He was imprisoned just for being one of the strongest characters of the opposition. There's no doubt cases like this have happened numerous times. This has to be brought to justice, and we need to get out the innocent people out of prison. The president assigns the magistrates of the judicial system. We need to call for new elections and appoint new magistrates.

The main point of every legislative assembly is to make sure the people's voices are heard. Not only the voices of a few, but of everyone. I will make sure that the voices of the Venezuelans that are suffering will be noticed. I believe that if the people fight for a common cause, a sense of nationalism will rise and the stronger the voices of Venezuelans will get. As I have researched on ways to solve the entire crisis in Venezuela, nothing can be done without eliminating the current government.

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