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## **Topic 1: Safety and Security**

One of the foremost responsibilities of the Venezuelan government is to keep its citizens safe. But at the moment, we are falling. While the opposition's plans will weaken the state and promote crime, the government has begun to implement important programs to address our terrifying crime rate.

As our great President Maduro has said, capitalist values such as individualism, consumerism, and a quest for easy wealth, mixed with drug trafficking and a violent culture are the primary causes of criminal violence in Venezuela.<sup>1</sup>

Firstly, we need to ensure our justice system works. From police officers to justices, we need to ensure the judicial structure is strong and able to prosecute criminals. The government cannot be seen to tolerate criminal activity. Today, criminals are free to murder without the fear of being arrested, prosecuted and convict. More than 90% of murders go without punishment.<sup>2</sup> That must change. We must ensure our police are better funded and equipped with proper resources. Courts must be able to operate smoothly and prosecutors need to convict guilty criminals. If there is any chance to lower or crime rate and stabilize the country, we need to ensure or justice system is operational.

In the short term, we must approach China and Brazil for police equipment and training. The community policing model can be implemented wherever possible to help communities protect themselves. In high-crime areas, establishing a curfew can reduce violent crime. The president's National Pacification Plan, which engages communities across Venezuela, must continue to be implemented.

However, the long term goal must be to continue on the Chavismo path. By lifting the poor out of poverty and ensuring all our fed and can find work, the capitalist values that create crime can be terminated from our country.

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<sup>1</sup>Robertson, By Ewan. "Venezuela's Maduro Proposes Solutions to Violent Crime." *Venezuelanalysis.com*. N.p., Jan. 2014. Web.

<sup>2</sup> "Crime and Impunity." *The Economist*. The Economist Newspaper, 08 Jan. 2014. Web.

## Topic 2: Economic Crisis

Without question, the economic crisis in Venezuela is the most pressing issue facing the National Assembly. Global capitalism has nearly destroyed the economy, leaving our citizens struggling to acquire basic necessities. The United States and her allies, such as Saudi Arabia, have deliberately worked to sink the oil market. Policies of the current and past Bolivarian governments have made our country stronger and more equal. However, at this current time of crisis, we must accept the need for reforms if socialism is to survive in Venezuela.

The biggest problem facing our nation is the great economic issue of scarcity. Our industries need to import factors of production but our weak currency makes imports very expensive. This has caused cost-push inflation and mass scarcity for staple goods. Our great leader Nicolas Maduro has made important strides in solving this crisis. Raising the minimum wage and providing food stamps has begun to ensure wealth is distributed across the economy.<sup>3</sup> The opposition, however, have proposed no real solutions. After pressuring Maduro to lift price controls in order to eliminate shortages, food prices skyrocketed and immediately became unaffordable.<sup>4</sup>

At this point in time, we cannot afford to lift restrictions on foreign currency exchanges. That would lead to the further depreciation of our currency, making imports even more unaffordable.

In order to solve this crisis, we must have a balanced approach and look to China for inspiration. China's past and present leadership can help us greatly. Long ago, China realized that the path to communism is flexible, and in order for socialism to survive, market-based reforms must be instated at times. We must learn from their experience and find common sense reforms.

Furthermore, China's current leadership must help us. The United States, who controls the IMF, has blocked our hopes of a loan deal or foreign stimulus in our economy. China has a great strategic ally to gain in the western hemisphere by helping us.

In the short term, we must go to allies for support. We must negotiate with China and Brazil to allow the cheap imports of foodstuffs and basic factors of production. Capital from China can help us to pay government salaries and stabilize the economy with loans. As a negotiating partner, China can help us to renegotiate our debt repayment terms so that it can be paid over a longer time. In addition, we can stop threatening to nationalize foreign companies as leverage.

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<sup>3</sup> "Venezuela Hikes Minimum Wage 40% -- to \$67 a Month." *CNNMoney*. Cable News Network, n.d. Web.

<sup>4</sup> "Venezuela's Food Prices Skyrocket as People Go Hungry." *CNNMoney*. Cable News Network, n.d. Web.

In the intermediate term, we must work to raise the price of Oil. Venezuela must put more pressure on OPEC to decrease output in order to raise oil revenues. Russia and Iran can be valuable allies in working to adjust the oil market. As Saudi Arabia's economy is currently struggling, forcing them to adopt austerity measures and fire their longtime finance minister, it is the opportune time to push OPEC to raise oil prices.

In the longer term, some limited market reforms must be enacted. Tariffs must be lowered to allow for imports of factors of production. Large scale government spending and subsidies can be temporarily slowed in order to decrease debt. Most importantly, the economy must look for places to specialize in, outside of petroleum. There are many possibilities in technology and the government must set up a national committee to determine possible areas of specialization to invest in.

Venezuela's economy and the great Bolivarian movement can be saved, with clear and common-sense plans for the short and long term.

### **Topic 3: Social and Political Division**

As a country suffering from dire security and economic issues, the social unrest and divisive political rhetoric we see in Venezuela is not surprising. However, it can and must be addressed. To see the consequences of such a divisive political system, especially with two central parties, all one must do is turn to the US. Blue and Red has torn apart that country and Venezuela must learn from the harmful effect of division (and capitalism) on Democracy.

Mass protests has become an almost daily occurrence in Venezuela. Encouraged by the opposition and the United States, hooligans march the streets, causing chaos and preventing the use of important infrastructure. Our government cannot solve the problems facing citizens if this continues. The opposition must call for an end to these protests and instead present concerns in a civil manner. The government is prepared to engage in political debate but not in street violence.

The government's program of local governance with over 4,000 communal councils has successfully boosted civic engagement and helped address the needs of average citizens.<sup>5</sup> Grassroots programs such as this must be further implemented to address the civil unrest currently being seen. Furthermore, the political division between government and opposition must be quelled on a grassroots level as well. Communal councils can be a positive space for debate and cooperation between the two factions.

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<sup>5</sup> Federico Fuentes,. "Power to the People: Communal Councils in Venezuela." Venezuelanalysis.com. Green Left Weekly, Apr. 2006. Web.

The Supreme Court is the constitutionally appointed body to hold government in check. The court has been a valuable institution in maintaining democracy and human rights in Venezuela. While little change is needed to this system, it could be valuable to allow the opposition to appoint a limited amount of justices to the court. The government sees this as an opportunity to ensure our governing bodies represent all Venezuelans.

Lastly, the socialist platform of the Bolivarian movement is best prepared to deal with division and inequality. For decades we have ensured that the average Venezuelan gets their fair share of the country's wealth. On the other hand, capitalist policies from the opposition will only increase inequality and division.

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