
THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME

PRESIDENT RESEARCH PACKET

The Issue of Organized Crime and Drug
Trafficking in Venezuela

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Introduction

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is in the northern part of Latin America. Venezuela is a mineral-rich state where it possesses a large amount of oil within its territory, with the 5th largest population in Latin America. Venezuela is a resource-rich country. This made Venezuela establish trade alliances with states such as Argentina, China, and Mexico.

Venezuela is suffering from a political and economic crisis where sanctions by the United States have hindered the social development of Venezuela where the state now witnesses a high rate of social disobedience. This includes the formation of cartels which contribute to drug trafficking and organized crime, most South American states suffer from this drug trade where it has expanded itself beyond the continent into the United States.

While this issue has triggered another crisis at the Colombian border, migrants from Venezuela are escaping the violence and crossing over migrating to bordering states such as Colombia. Violence has many sides to it including cartels, government forces, anti-government movement forces, and individuals who have all taken part in violent acts including kidnapping, street skirmishes, and finally drug trafficking.

Background Information

The United States of America has sanctioned Venezuela under the Trump administration in 2019 which has hindered the process of Economic development in Venezuela where it saw a drop in Gross domestic product throughout the years and reached an all-time low in 2016.

Colombia houses the largest number of Venezuelan refugees within its borders with an estimated two and a half million refugees within Colombia. Colombia does not have the capabilities to house all these refugees according to Gilberto Zuleta Ibarra, UNODC's National Project Coordinator in Colombia.

In neighboring Brazil, the desperation many migrants face is putting them at risk of exploitation. "In most cases of trafficking, we don't see the use of deception as an enticement strategy but the abuse of vulnerability," says Graziella do Ó Rocha from the Brazilian Association for the Defense of Women, Children, and Youth (ASBRAD).

What did the UN do to solve the issue?

Ever since 2014 - 10 June 2020, over 5 million Venezuelan citizens were forced out of their country in order to escape political, economic, and social crises. Men, women, and children arrive in countries throughout the region in desperate need of aid. In response, UNODC as well as the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons in the U.S. Department of State began a three-year initiative. Their goal is to strengthen criminal proceedings and help cases of trafficking with Venezuelan migrants.

The project, with the name of 'TRACK4TIP', is being executed in around eight countries in South America and the Caribbean, being: the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Colombia, Curaçao, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, and Aruba.

"The overall objective is to support the relevant authorities in these countries to identify victims and respond to human trafficking cases. We are working with police officers, prosecutors, and judges," Carlos Perez, Program Officer for Latin America at the UN's Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The UNODC criminal justice will supervise and guide the victims of trafficking through legal processes. Moreover, they will expedite cooperation among police officers and prosecutors to further support them and build strong cases that cohere with international standards. A further aim of the project is to ameliorate the coordination between authorities who deal with trafficking cases in destination countries for Venezuelan migrants.

"The alliance with UNODC, through TRACK4TIP, is fundamental to achieving our objectives and will allow us to make advances in the pursuit of criminals and the protection of victims," says Alejandra Mangano, from REDTRAM.

Guiding Questions

- Why is the US placing sanctions on Venezuela?
- Does corruption play a role in facilitating violence?
- Is Venezuela capable of solving this problem on its own?
- Does the economical situation facilitate this?
- Why is Venezuela lacking in social and economical development?
- Which countries are affected by this issue?
- Is the issue escalating?

Relevant Sources

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