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# ANALYSIS ON THE VENEZUELAN CRISIS: RISE IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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## ABSTRACT

Venezuela is a country which has been governed by one party for almost 20 years, the PSUV party. After the death of Hugo Chavez, who was the President of Venezuela from 1999 to 2013, his right-hand man Nicolas Maduro succeeded him. The PSUV party gained influence and control over most of the countries institutions like the judiciary and the electoral council during their more than 20 years in power. Under President Maduro, the country suffered shortages of the most basic supplies which resulted in economy collapse of the entire country.

Due to this economic and political unrest, the Venezuelan economy sank and almost 94% of Venezuelans went into poverty. Relentless poverty, violence, lack of human rights, high unemployment rates and civil turmoil were some of the reasons which forced Venezuelans to flee their country. In the period between 2014 and 2016 there was an estimated 300% increase in human trafficking. The Maduro administration utilized Misiones, government social aid programs, to tackle such high rates of human trafficking but failed due to lack of anti-trafficking laws. In 2019, Venezuela criminalised select forms of trafficking but with insufficient penalties, prevention, reporting and protection of vulnerable groups.

Majority of the country's population prevail without access to the most basic supplies and there has been an 8000% increase in the Venezuelan population's persuasion for refugee status in the past six years. Not only are Venezuelan women and children particularly vulnerable to the risk of human-trafficking while crossing the borders to neighbouring countries but also without any authorization to stay in these countries, even arriving Venezuelans are susceptible to trafficking because of desperate need for money, shelter, documentation and medical attention. This paper focuses on the history of the economic crisis in Venezuela, the failures of the Maduro Administration in tackling human-trafficking, the status of the Venezuelan people at present and the steps taken by international institutions to curb the problem.

**Keywords:** Venezuela, crisis, South America, economy, refugees, migrants

## Research Methodology

Regarding methodical approaches, the present study can be classified as an analytical study.

### Aim

- To study the cause of the Venezuelan crisis.
- To analyse the history of oil in Venezuela.
- To analyse the effects of the crisis.
- To inspect the rise in human trafficking in the area.
- To examine the international aids provided to the migrants.
- To explore the ways to improve the situation.

## Research Design

Regarding research design approach, the present study can be classified as a descriptive research design study.

## Introduction

Venezuela, once a stable democracy possessing world's largest crude oil reserves, was one of Latin America's fastest growing economy. The nation was so rich in the money coming from crude oil that the former socialist government under President Hugo Chavez spent large sums of money on social programs and even delivered free heating oil for impoverished Americans. But, the South American nation started collapsing since 2014. Due to the corruption and mismanagement of funds by the President Maduro and his socialist government, Venezuela suffered a rapid decline in their Gross Domestic Product even more so than that of the United States during the Great Depression. Soon after such decline in their Gross Domestic Product came inflation in the economy. As a result of this, nearly 32 million Venezuelans became unable to afford food and other basic commodities. Even hospitals in Venezuela did not have proper resources and could not afford antibiotics and soaps.<sup>1</sup>

Gradually, due to this unrest in the economic and political situation in the country, almost 94% of the country's inhabitants went into poverty. The inflation rate as estimated in the year 2020 was at about 15000 percent. The majority of the Venezuelan population could not afford their

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick J. Kiger, *How Venezuela Fell From the Richest Country in South America into Crisis* (May. 09, 2019), <https://www.history.com/news/venezuela-chavez-maduro-crisis>.

minimum daily essential needs. There have been reports that people had to stand in front of supermarkets for 10 hours to buy food and also that about 3 million people in Venezuela suffered from malnourishment. Declining political freedom along with systematic state violence, pro-regime paramilitary groups threatening people and basic services such as running water, electricity and healthcare collapsing, Venezuelans had no other option other than fleeing their country.<sup>2</sup>

This mass exodus of Venezuelans to neighbouring countries made them fall prey to human trafficking. Human trafficking or exploiting people for sex, servitude, labour and slavery, was already prevalent in South American countries but increased since the mass Venezuelan migration started. Venezuela did not have any anti-trafficking laws till 2019 and since then it has only criminalised some forms of trafficking without sufficient penalties, reporting, protection and prevention of vulnerable groups. The most vulnerable group susceptible to human trafficking consists of women and children especially while migrating to neighbouring countries. On top of that, without proper authorization to stay in these countries, Venezuelan people are forced into human trafficking to earn money for their basic needs. According to UNHCR, there has been an 8000 percent increase in Venezuelans pursuing refugee status since 2014. Venezuela is still a Tier 3 country as the Maduro administration has not done enough to curb this rising problem of human trafficking.<sup>3</sup>

### **History of Oil Dependency**

1922, the year oil was discovered in Maracaibo Basin in western Venezuela. The oil well constructed in the basin started pumping 100,000 barrels of oil per day which made Venezuela realise the massive oil reserve they had under the nation's surface. By 1928, Venezuela became the world's second largest petroleum exporter as the country allowed more than 100 foreign oil companies to do business in the country. In 1943, Venezuela introduced a law which required all foreign oil companies to turn over half of their profits. But the money gained by the Venezuelan government was not enough to curb the underlying problems in the country.

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<sup>2</sup> Carlos Scull, *Lifting the veil on the Venezuelan migrant crisis* (Oct. 08, 2020), <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/lifting-the-veil-on-the-venezuelan-migrant-crisis/>.

<sup>3</sup> Violet Chazkel, *HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN VENEZUELA* (Nov. 25, 2020), The Borgen Project, <https://borgenproject.org/human-trafficking-in-venezuela/#:~:text=Venezuela%20has%20established%20human%20trafficking,anti-trafficking%20law%20and%20policy.&text=However%2C%20Venezuelan%20law%20in%202019,and%20protection%20of%20vulnerable%20groups>.

Venezuela never had a highly productive agricultural sector even before the oil industries began to flourish. Most of the land was monopolised back then and only a few powerful families controlled the business. The country lacked infrastructure and did not have a nationally integrated economy. But even with such problems engulfing the country, the oil revenues were underutilised and mostly stayed in the hands of the government.

In 1973, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries or OPEC announced that it would cut oil exports to countries which helped Israel in the Yom Kippur War. This included countries such as the United States.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this oil crisis, oil prices surged and Venezuela became the largest beneficiary. Due to the billions in profit and the increase in the country's per-capita GDP, the President at that time introduced a law nationalising the oil industry. This law created a state-owned oil company called PDVSA and forced foreign companies to give PDVSA a 60 percent ownership share in oil projects.

But during 1980s, oil prices took a heavy fall and Venezuela's foreign debt rose to 33 billion dollars. The country had no option other than to take a loan from the IMF and impose austerity measures. Due to this, there was a sharp increase in the prices of consumer goods and fares for public transport. Venezuelans protested in the streets which turned violent and resulted in a nationwide curfew and suspension of civil liberties.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Cause of the Crisis**

In 1998, six years after a failed coup attempt, former lieutenant colonel in the Venezuelan military, Hugo Chavez was elected as the Venezuelan President. He brought a new socialist government which controlled the nation for decades. Over the next decade after Chavez was elected, the government redirected oil profits to finance education, healthcare, housing programs and food for 30 million Venezuelans. The Chavez administration wanted to reduce the pressing income inequality in the Venezuelan economy. Although, through various social programs, the government was able to reduce poverty in the country but the dependence on oil increased. His government neglected to maintain oil facilities in the country and the production declined. The Chavez administration provided subsidized oil to Cuba in return for the services of Cuban doctors and teachers. The government also sold oil to China and other Latin American

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<sup>4</sup> Anonymous, *OPEC enacts oil embargo* (Feb. 09, 2010), <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/opec-enacts-oil-embargo>.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick J. Kiger, *How Venezuela Fell From the Richest Country in South America into Crisis* (May. 09, 2019), <https://www.history.com/news/venezuela-chavez-maduro-crisis>.

countries at a below-market rate. Throughout the decade, the dependency on exported oil increased.<sup>6</sup>

Chavez was succeeded by his right-hand man Nicolas Maduro after he died of cancer. Chavez's socialist PSUV party ruled the country from 1999 to 2013. Maduro's first term was a failure as his policies caused Venezuela's economy to collapse. Venezuelans faced shortages of basic supplies. Due to the long term rule of the PSUV party, their influence was widespread and gained control over most of the country's key institutions like the judiciary, the electoral council and the Supreme Court. In December 2016, opposition parties won the majority of votes in the National Assembly. In response to that, the Maduro administration created the National Constituent Assembly, which had members whose powers superseded the powers of those in the National Assembly. This new National Constituent Assembly consisted exclusively of those who were loyal to the government.<sup>7</sup>

In 2018, Maduro was re-elected as the President after highly controversial polls which many opposition parties boycotted. Many candidates were barred from running in the election and many were jailed. President Maduro with the help of his dictatorial administration secured his second term but the opposition parties argued that the polls were not free or fair. The National Assembly which consisted of the opposition parties did not recognize Maduro's re-election and argued that the presidency was vacant. Following the Constitution of Venezuela, the leader of the National Assembly, Juan Guaido declared himself the acting president. Many countries including the United States recognised Mr. Guaido as the president of Venezuela but Maduro remained in his presidential palace and in charge of the country. Russia and China supported President Maduro. Due to grave human rights violation and suppression of democracy in the country by the Maduro administration, the United States imposed sanctions on Maduro, his inner circle and the oil industry. This resulted in the collapse of the Venezuelan oil industry and worsened the country's condition. Due to the heavy dependency on oil, the Venezuelan economy crippled and the ongoing economic crisis in the country was intensified with hyperinflation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Patrick J. Kiger, *How Venezuela Fell From the Richest Country in South America into Crisis* (May. 09, 2019), <https://www.history.com/news/venezuela-chavez-maduro-crisis>.

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous, *Venezuela crisis: How the political situation escalated* (Dec. 03, 2020), BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36319877>.

<sup>8</sup> Anonymous, *Venezuela crisis in 300 words* (Dec. 03, 2020), BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-48121148>.

## **Effects of the Crisis**

Due to the sanctions imposed by the United States on Venezuela, its primary business, the oil industry collapsed. The sanctions focused on limiting the export of oil from the country. Most of Venezuela's revenue came from oil export. From that oil revenue, the Venezuelan government used to import basic necessities like dairy products, cereal, electrical machinery and medicines, instead of developing the countries' infrastructure and finding other natural resources to depend on. Since, the exports decreased, the Venezuelan government could not import the basic goods and as a result, foreign investors started looking for an alternative to Venezuela. Also the demand for the Venezuelan currency, bolivar, declined.

The revenue from the oil was also used to sponsor social aid programs for the people of Venezuela. As the revenues decreased, the social programs became less feasible and food subsidies were also reduced. The Maduro administration also expropriated most private companies and as a result, the manufacturing and production sectors experienced huge decline. What followed was hyperinflation which worsened the country's condition.

In 2017, the National Survey of Living Condition was conducted by three universities from Venezuela. One of the observations from the report was that about three quarter of people who were surveyed reported losing almost 19 pounds of weight during 2015-16. The report also mentioned that about one-third of the nation had to skip meals for not being able to afford three meals per day. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, more than 21% of Venezuelans were undernourished from 2016 to 2018 and the percentage has been steadily increasing from 2013. Healthcare facilities in the country has also suffered with hospitals not having enough doctors and medicines to treat people. There have been reports of patients having to bring their own medicines, latex gloves, syringes and even water. Diseases which had been previously eradicated from the country have re-emerged and treatable diseases, without proper medicines, have become more challenging to cure.

In 2018, the government introduced a new currency, replacing the old one, to control the hyperinflation but it was of no use. According to IMF, the inflation rate of the country in 2020 was 10 million percent. Due to not having any purchasing power, lack of basic supplies and food, high unemployment rates, crippling economy, gross human rights violation and suppression of democracy by the Maduro regime, Venezuelans have had no other option than

to leave the country. This mass exodus of Venezuelans to neighbouring countries in search of a better life have made them extremely susceptible to horrific crimes like human trafficking.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Migration**

Due to the harsh conditions in their own nation, the people of Venezuela have had to leave their land to settle in neighbouring countries. Till date, almost five million Venezuelan people have left the country and are living as refugees or migrants. Out of the five million almost 4.2 million have stayed within South America. The neighbouring countries like Brazil, Columbia, Chile, Peru and Ecuador are hosting the Venezuelan refugees. This mass exodus of the people of Venezuela has turned out to be the largest refugee crisis in the modern history of South America. The largest number of refugees are being hosted by Columbia, followed by Peru and then Chile.<sup>10</sup>

Most Venezuelan refugees travel via foot to the neighbouring countries. The route is brutal as the refugees have to travel for days walking or hitchhiking. But due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the brutal route to the closest cities of Bogota, Cali, Quito and Lima has gotten even tougher due to lack of vehicles providing free lifts to migrants and refugees from Venezuela. Governments of the neighbouring countries, like Columbia, have closed borders and migrant shelters along the main route. Meanwhile, Ecuador and Peru have forced the refugees and migrants from Venezuela to take help from illegal criminal groups who control illegal border crossings. The closure of borders and shelters during the pandemic has been extremely hard on desperate Venezuelans. Women and children have been the most vulnerable group during the migration and the risk has increased due to the pandemic.<sup>11</sup>

Before the pandemic started, about 5000 Venezuelans used to leave their nation on a daily basis. But since March 2020, when the pandemic hit the Latin American nations, the situation of the Venezuelan refugees and migrants worsened. More than 140,000 Venezuelan refugees were forced to return to their country between March, 2020 and September, 2020. The outflow of Venezuelan migrants through regular routes almost cease during the pandemic months, but

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<sup>9</sup> Reetinder Kaur Chowdhary, *Understanding the Venezuelan Crisis and Analyzing its Impact on India* (Mar. 11, 2020), Indian Council of World Affairs, [https://www.icwa.in/show\\_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls\\_id=4804&lid=3468](https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls_id=4804&lid=3468).

<sup>10</sup> Anonymous, *Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant Crisis* (Jan 01, 2021), <https://www.iom.int/venezuela-refugee-and-migrant-crisis>.

<sup>11</sup> Manuel Rueda, *Venezuelans brave 'brutal' migrant route made tougher by pandemic* (Oct. 06, 2020), BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-54418542>.

income through irregular routes increased. Many refugees who were forced to return to their country by neighbouring nations faced criminal actions after they returned. As the regular routes were shut down, many desperate Venezuelans had to use other routes, like the sea, to flee to other countries. Many got stranded in other countries without proper authorization or basic supplies due to border closures during the pandemic.

A report published by the OAS General Secretariat mentions the status of the Venezuelan refugees in the pandemic year, 2020. Some of the highlights of the report were that the conditions in which the refugees and migrants arrive in the neighbouring countries were becoming increasingly critical and vulnerable due to the pandemic. Refugees who tried to flee the country via sea, were found dead on the maritime border between Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela. The remains of 33 have been recovered and includes even minors. Another highlight from the report was that if the borders opened in 2021 and the ruthless dictatorship in Venezuela under Maduro continues, then the number of refugees could surge to 7 million this year.<sup>12</sup>

Due to the pandemic, Venezuelan refugees and migrants had no other way than to use illegal routes and jobs to survive. In their own country, they are faced with extreme harsh conditions and are subjected to numerous human rights violation by the Maduro regime and during the pandemic, their escape routes have been ceased. The only option for them was to take irregular routes via illegal channels to flee Venezuela. Others who were stranded in neighbouring countries without basic supplies and proper authorization could not return to their own land. As a result, crimes such as human trafficking has increased in the region. Without any place to go and without any work, Venezuelan migrants and refugees have been the most vulnerable to such crimes in recent years.

### **Rise in Human Trafficking**

Venezuela did not have any anti-trafficking laws. In 2019, they did classify selected forms of trafficking as a criminal offense but it was not enough to control the rapid rise in human trafficking in the area. Neither did the laws have sufficient penalties nor did it have proper reporting systems, protection or prevention from trafficking of people. The horrendous crime of human trafficking has always been prevalent in the country but has been on a rise since the

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<sup>12</sup> David Smolansky, *Situation Report: Venezuelan Migration and Refugee Crisis (December 2020)* (Dec. 30, 2020), <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/situation-report-venezuelan-migration-and-refugee-crisis-december-2020>.



Venezuelan crisis started. Without having proper laws to control the problem, the Maduro administration has failed to curb the problem. On top of that, people having to flee the country has also been a reason for the rise of the problem. Venezuelan refugees and migrants have had to take irregular routes through illegal channels to cross borders. Without having enough money or resources to survive, these migrants have been immensely susceptible to human trafficking near the borders. Migrants who have crossed the borders successfully still does not have proper authorization in the host countries they're residing in. Without authorisation, earning money is another challenge for these people and hence many have had no other option but to sell themselves to earn money for their family.

- **Inadequate Measures**

The Maduro administration of Venezuela does not meet the minimum standards for tackling the problem of trafficking and has not made any adequate measures to do so. Thus, Venezuela falls under the Tier 3 category of countries. In 2019, the government created a specialized Prosecutor's office to oversee all kinds of investigations relating to human trafficking. According to reports, it began proceedings against three officials who were allegedly involved in a case of trafficking where victims of the same disappeared at sea. But, there were no reports of any conviction of traffickers and neither did the office provide any assistance to the victims or their families. It has also been reported that Venezuelan authorities did not make any effort to curb the problem of recruitment of children by illegal Columbian armed groups which operates in the nearby territories.

Venezuelan law requires a demonstration of force, fraud and coercion to constitute the offense for child sex trafficking. The laws also fail to criminalise trafficking of Venezuelan men and boys when the crime is not done by an organised criminal organisation. The Venezuelan organised crime office (ONCDOFT), have been reportedly not investigating any crimes relating to trafficking of people at all. Although there was a massive increase in the number of human trafficking cases in 2019, the authorities under the Maduro regime did not report any training or operations. Press reports indicate that the Venezuelan authorities convicted 99 people in 2018 in notable trafficking cases but only convicted 17 people the next year when the same crime was on the rise. Victim assistance in the country remains almost null and it has been reported that several contact numbers provided by the ONCDOFT remains inactive. Most victims of trafficking are women and girls who are exploited in the near Caribbean Islands like The Bahamas, Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago. Some victims are also shipped

abroad and in 2019, Spanish authorities reported that most victims of trafficking in Spain were from Venezuela. Many criminal groups near the borders also recruit children by promising them the basic necessities to survive.<sup>13</sup>

- **Illegal Mining Operations**

During the ongoing Venezuelan crisis, illegal mining operations across the country has increased. In September 2020, The United Nation's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that prostitution through force, fraud and coercion and gender specific violence has been on the rise since 2016 in Venezuela's mining regions. Venezuelans who come to these mining regions in search of work are forced into slave labours and women are forced into prostitution. There have been reports of makeshift brothels near the mining regions in Venezuela which includes the states of Bolivar, Amazonas and Delta Amacuro. Women and girls who are forced to work in these brothels face inhuman conditions and constant threat of violence. Women who voluntarily work for the same also face similar conditions. The profits from these brothels end up with the owners of mines or with the criminal organizations who are running these trafficking rings. The currency which is used as a payment in these regions are gold. Without having anywhere to go to, the victims continue to live in these slavery-like conditions to survive and earn for their families.<sup>14</sup>

- **Failures of Host Countries**

In Spain, authorities are uncovering endless trafficking rings that mostly constitute of women and girl victims from Venezuela. There have been reports of women having to pay their rents in exchange for sex in Columbia. In Panama, there have been reports of victims of trafficking forced to wear underwear which reads "To your service, I am your Veneca". In the bordering towns of Brazil and Columbia, Venezuelan women migrants have either fallen into sex for survival or have been forced into prostitution. In Cucuta, there have been allegations that several sex workers are minors from Venezuela who charge as little as 1 USD for sex. Even after the favourable decision given by the Columbian Supreme Court and recommendations of CEDAW, migrants are denied basic medical care and assistance. Even pregnant women

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<sup>13</sup> Anonymous, *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Venezuela* (Jun. 25, 2020), U.S Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/venezuela/>.

<sup>14</sup> Venezuela Investigative Unit, *Human Trafficking Accompanies Illegal Mining in Venezuela's Orinoco* (Feb. 09, 2021), Insight Crime, <https://insightcrime.org/news/human-trafficking-illegal-mining-venezuela-orinoco/>.

migrants from Venezuela suffer the same.

Columbia does not give citizenship to children who are born in the country. Instead, one of the parents have to be a Columbian. Thus, the children born to the Venezuelan migrants staying there are denied their right to identity. Without proper authorization the Venezuelans living in foreign lands cannot open a bank account, rent a place, travel, marry or have access to education and healthcare. There have been reports of women suffering from depression as they have never worked as a sex worker before.<sup>15</sup>

The U.N.'s International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Peru reported that during 2017-18, Peruvian authorities reported 1700 victims of human trafficking and out of which 10 percent were Venezuelans. Venezuelan refugees and migrants arrive without sufficient money, documentation and in the most vulnerable state. Children who travel without their parents are the most vulnerable and are recruited by criminal organisations to serve their purpose. Hungry and poor teenage girls arriving from Venezuela are coerced into sex trafficking by false offers of work as dancers, cooks and waitresses. In Madre de Dios, there have been reports of illegal mine activities with dozens of brothels and bars constituting of women and girl migrants from Venezuela. Without proper patrol by respective State authorities, the border areas with Ecuador and Bolivia are a hotspot for human trafficking.<sup>16</sup>

### **International Aids**

The UNICEF and UNFPA signed an agreement in 2019 to amplify the humanitarian aid provided to 1 million Venezuelans which includes children, pregnant women and mothers. This agreement included providing basic necessary aids to these victims such as drinkable water, healthcare services and high quality birthing support along with educational assistance.

UNHCR has provided increased security near the borders. They have also been providing basic supplies to the migrants and have ensured that the people receive adequate information about opportunities they are offered. The Regional Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants, which

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<sup>15</sup> Anonymous, *The 'fallen' Miss Venezuela: a tragedy of sexual slavery and trafficking* (Aug. 14, 2019), <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/la-caída-de-miss-venezuela-una-tragedia-de-tráfico-y-esclavitud-sexual-en/>.

<sup>16</sup> Anastasia Moloney and Jason Fields, *Venezuelan child migrants, women fall prey to human traffickers in Peru* (Mar. 13, 2019), Thomson Reuters Foundation, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-peru-Humantrafficking-idUSKBN1QT355>.

commenced from December 2018 after a collaboration between the UNHCR, IOM and the host countries, heightened the priority for 2.2 million Venezuelan migrants who needed assistance.

The Columbian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) provides support to young victims of human trafficking. It does so by providing shelter, assistance, programs and evaluations for the minor victims of Venezuelan human trafficking. It provides awareness strategies and education for the prevention of trafficking of people.

Although, there have been significant aids provided by international organisations, it has not been enough to curb the problem. The aids have helped a lot of victims but Venezuela still remains a Tier 3 country. Without any efforts from the Venezuelan government, the international aids being provided will not be able to tackle this problem permanently.<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusion

The political state of Venezuela is still in crisis with the Maduro administration refusing to step down and occupying the presidential palace. Citizens of the country still face grave violations of human rights by the Maduro government. The economy of the nation is in shambles as inflation has reached its peak and the purchasing power of people have almost decreased to null. Venezuelans have had to flee the country due to such adverse situations but have fallen into the traps of criminal organisations and have been forced to live in inhuman circumstances. Human trafficking has been on the rise due to the mass exodus of Venezuelan people to neighbouring countries and the condition has been worsened due to the global pandemic. Without the Venezuelan government protecting its own people, the international community has to step up to relieve these people of these extreme challenges faced by them.

The neighbouring countries in South America can extend their help by expanding the legal ways in which migrants and refugees from Venezuela can enter their countries. This will prevent illegal organisations from recruiting and exploiting Venezuelan migrants. The neighbouring countries should also give the migrants a legal status which will help them find work and shelters. This will help them from falling into the trafficking rings in Latin America. The authorities in the neighbouring countries should ensure that anybody can file a complaint

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<sup>17</sup> Violet Chazkel, *HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN VENEZUELA* (Nov. 25, 2020), The Borgen Project, <https://borgenproject.org/human-trafficking-in-venezuela/#:~:text=Venezuela%20has%20established%20human%20trafficking,anti-trafficking%20law%20and%20policy.&text=However%2C%20Venezuelan%20law%20in%202019,and%20protection%20of%20vulnerable%20groups>.

of human trafficking even if they are migrants or refugees. Assistance for the victims of trafficking should be increased and they should be informed about their basic rights and legal assistance.

Other countries should help the host countries with technical and financial aids. Host countries such as Columbia or Brazil does not have the financial power to look after millions of refugees and thus aids from other countries might curb this problem. The international community should coordinate to prevent and protect the migrants, especially women and children, from trafficking and forced labour. The present situation of these refugees are extremely poor and donations should be made to local and international NGOs who are trying to tackle the problem. The situation of both Venezuela and its inhabitants are worsening day by day. The international community must step up and prioritize this as without their help, the horrific crime of human trafficking in and near Venezuela cannot be eliminated.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Devon Cone and Melanie Teff, *Searching for Safety: Confronting Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Venezuelan Women and Girls* (Aug. 05, 2019), Refugees International, <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2019/8/2/searching-for-safety-venezuela-trafficking>.

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