



Venezuela - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Tuesday 21 October 2014

Information on the current political and social situation

A report published by the *International Crisis Group* in September 2014 states:

“The streets of Venezuela’s major cities are now largely calm, following several months of violent clashes between opposition demonstrators, security forces and civilian gunmen that left more than 40 dead. The crisis, however, is not over. The opposition is demanding freedom for several dozen activists jailed during the unrest and an end to the threat of prosecution against more than 2,000. The underlying causes have not been addressed, and calls to restore autonomy and independence to the justice system and other key institutions have not been heeded” (International Crisis Group (23 September 2014) *Venezuela: Dangerous Inertia*, p.1).

This report also points out that:

“Living standards continue to decline due to economic recession; violent crime remains at record levels, and labour unrest and protests over poor-quality public services are often dealt with harshly” (ibid, p.1)

It is also noted in this document that:

“The impact of the recession can be seen in rising poverty. According to official statistics, the percentage of households living in poverty rose by over 6 per cent in 2013, to 27.3 per cent, while those in extreme poverty increased from 7.1 to 9.8 per cent. The government has been forced to cut back social spending, while wages have failed to match inflation. Though poverty is low by regional standards, and social unrest is not yet regime-threatening, there are indications that it is increasing; the government has several times used riot squads to contain it” (ibid, p.4).

In September 2014 *BBC News* states:

“...Venezuelans live in poverty, many of them in shanty towns, some of which sprawl over the hillsides around the capital, Caracas” (BBC News (24 September 2014) *Venezuela profile*).

An article published by the *Miami Herald* in September 2014 notes:

“The lull in the street battles that raged across many of Venezuela’s cities this spring belies the violent civil conflict still threatening the country. From February to June, dozens of people died, hundreds were wounded and several thousand more were detained during conflict between protesters and government security forces” (Miami Herald (24 September 2014) *Crisis in Venezuela Worsening*).

In September 2014 *BBC News* states:

“One of Venezuela's main opposition leaders, Leopoldo Lopez, has appeared in court in the capital, Caracas. Mr Lopez is accused of inciting violence during anti-

government demonstrations earlier this year” (BBC News (10 September 2014) *Venezuela opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez on trial*).

In September 2014 the *Inter-American Commission on Human Rights* points out in a report that:

“The Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) expresses its deepest concern for the deterioration of the right to freedom of expression in Venezuela in light of the recent events that took place in that country. These events include the continued stigmatization by high-level public officials of critical media outlets and journalists, punitive lawsuits and the dismissal of journalists, and the reported blocking of the internet signal of media outlets” (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (22 September 2014) *Office of the Special Rapporteur expresses concern over the situation of the freedom of expression in Venezuela*).

In October 2014 *BBC News* notes:

“A lawmaker from Venezuela's governing party has been killed in the capital, Caracas...According to UN figures, Venezuela has the second highest peacetime murder rate in the world after Honduras” (BBC News (2 October 2014) *Venezuelan lawmaker Robert Serra killed in Caracas*).

This document also states:

“Last year, the president introduced tough penalties for illegal weapons possession, with sentences of up to 20 years in jail. But despite these new laws, the perception of insecurity among Venezuelan citizens remains high, correspondents say. Earlier this year, many took part in a series of mass anti-government protests demanding increased security as well as measures to improve the economy” (ibid).

Reuters notes in a report issued in October 2014 that:

“Red-clad “Chavistas” rallied in central Caracas on Saturday to protest the killing of a young ruling party lawmaker, while across town a protest called by the opposition's new leader failed to attract as big a crowd” (Reuters (18 October 2014) *Maduro supporters, foes stage rival protests in Venezuela*).

In October 2014 *Reuters* states:

“Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's approval rating dropped to 30.2 percent in September from 35.4 percent in July, according to a survey by pollster Datanalisis, amid an ongoing economic crisis that has weighed on his popularity. The OPEC nation faces the highest annual inflation in the Western Hemisphere at 63.4 percent, chronic shortages of consumer goods and an economy that business leaders say has entered recession” (Reuters (20 October 2014) *Venezuela's Maduro approval rating drops to 30 percent, poll says*).

References

BBC News (2 October 2014) *Venezuelan lawmaker Robert Serra killed in Caracas*
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-29455219#>

Accessed Tuesday 21 October 2014

BBC News (24 September 2014) *Venezuela profile*
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19649648>
Accessed Tuesday 21 October 2014

BBC News (10 September 2014) *Venezuela opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez on trial*
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-29151975?print=true>
Accessed Tuesday 21 October 2014

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (22 September 2014) *Office of the Special Rapporteur expresses concern over the situation of the freedom of expression in Venezuela*
<http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/office-special-rapporteur-expresses-concern-over-situation-freedom-expression>
This is a subscription database
Accessed Tuesday 21 October 2014

International Crisis Group (23 September 2014) *Venezuela: Dangerous Inertia*
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/latin-america-caribbean/andes/venezuela.aspx>
Accessed Tuesday 21 October 2014

Miami Herald (24 September 2014) *Crisis in Venezuela Worsening*
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/latin-america-caribbean/andes/venezuela/op-eds/schneider-crisis-in-venezuela-worsening.aspx>
Accessed Tuesday 21 October 2014

Reuters (20 October 2014) *Venezuela's Maduro approval rating drops to 30 percent, poll says*
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/20/us-venezuela-politics-idUSKCN0I91RN20141020>
Accessed Tuesday 21 October 2014

Reuters (18 October 2014) *Maduro supporters, foes stage rival protests in Venezuela*
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/19/us-venezuela-protests-idUSKCN0I70QM20141019>
Accessed Tuesday 21 October 2014

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted

Amnesty International

BBC News
Electronic Immigration Network
European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
International Crisis Group
IRIN News
Lexis Nexis
Minority Rights Group International
Online Newspapers
Refugee Documentation Centre E-Library
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
Reliefweb
Reuters
United Kingdom Home Office
United States Department of State
UNHCR Refworld

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.
This page will not be added after purchasing Win2PDF.