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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

## Visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

### Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri\*\* \*\*

#### *Summary*

The Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, visited the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from 1 to 14 February 2024. In the present report, the Special Rapporteur provides a first-hand assessment of the country's efforts to address food security and malnutrition, while acknowledging its progressive legal framework and various government initiatives, such as the local supply and production committees, aimed at addressing food insecurity.

The Special Rapporteur highlights the severe impact of unilateral sanctions, which have exacerbated economic challenges, reduced food availability and increased dependence on humanitarian aid. Structural issues, including reliance on food imports and insufficient support for small-scale farmers, have further deepened food insecurity. Groups in vulnerable situations, including women, children, older persons, Indigenous communities and detainees, face disproportionate challenges in accessing adequate food and nutrition.

The Special Rapporteur calls for urgent reforms, emphasizing the need for greater transparency in food policies and strengthened support for local agricultural production. He recommends a national action plan to secure the right to food in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

\* The summary of the report is being circulated in all official languages. The report itself, which is annexed to the summary, is being circulated in the language of submission and Spanish only.

\*\* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.



## **Annex**

### **Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, on his visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, visited the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from 1 to 14 February 2024, at the invitation of the Government. The purpose of the visit was to examine how the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is implementing the right to food, to identify good practices and to consider the challenges that the country faces in the promotion and protection of the right to food.
2. During his visit, the Special Rapporteur met with government officials, representatives of civil society, academics, attorneys, students, members of cooperatives, stakeholders from the private sector and representatives of international organizations. Most of the official meetings were held in Caracas, although the Special Rapporteur also visited locations across the country, namely in Zulia, Sucre and Anzoátegui States.
3. The Special Rapporteur met with senior officials from government agencies and officials at the municipal level, including from the Ministries of People's Power for Foreign Affairs, Economy, Finances and External Trade, Planning, Industries and National Production, Agriculture and Land, Food, Urban Agriculture, Fishing and Aquaculture, Youth and Sports, the Social Process of Labour, Communes and Social Movements, Indigenous Peoples, Women and Gender Equality, and University Education, Science and Technology.
4. The Special Rapporteur expresses his gratitude to the Government for its invitation and cooperation throughout the visit. He also thanks the resident coordinator, the United Nations country team and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for their support.
5. The Special Rapporteur is particularly grateful to the many individuals and community members whom he met in the course of the country visit. He was highly impressed with the local representatives, peasants, fishers, herders, citizen activists, lawyers, members of religious communities, local residents and parents who showed great appreciation of the right to food and a commitment to its continued protection.

#### **II. Legal and policy frameworks**

##### **A. International and regional legal framework**

6. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is party to many human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – some of them contain provisions specifically related to the right to adequate food.<sup>1</sup> The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is not a party to the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel

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<sup>1</sup> See [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=191&Lang=EN](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=191&Lang=EN).

Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, despite having signed the treaties in 2008 and 2011, respectively.

7. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela participated in the first, second and third cycles of the universal periodic review in 2011, 2016 and 2022, respectively.<sup>2</sup> Following the third cycle, the Government supported 11 recommendations related to the realization of the right to food, including to take measures to improve food security in local communities and address alleged discrimination in access to food assistance and other social protection programmes.<sup>3</sup>

## **B. Domestic legal framework**

8. The Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela recognizes food production and food security as essential to guarantee adequate and permanent access to food. Article 305 of the Constitution states, *inter alia*, that the State shall promote sustainable agriculture as a strategic basis for integral rural development, in order to guarantee the food security of the population, understood as the sufficient and stable availability of food in the country and the timely and permanent access to it by the consuming public.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it recognizes that food production is a matter of national interest and is fundamental for the economic and social development of the State, which can adopt all necessary measures to ensure strategic levels of self-sufficiency. Article 305 recognizes, in particular, the role of the State in protecting the settlements and communities of fishers and the traditional fishing industry.

9. Furthermore, article 306 of the Constitution holds that the State shall provide the necessary conditions for comprehensive rural development, with the goal of creating employment and guaranteeing an adequate standard of living to the peasant population and its integration into national development. Therefore, the State should also promote agricultural activity and the optimal use of the land, which is reinforced by the prohibition of the latifundium regime, noted in article 307, to overcome historical, structural and systemic inequalities dominated by the latifundia (large estates). Article 91 recognizes the right of all workers to a sufficient wage that allows them to live in dignity and provide for their basic material, social and intellectual needs and those of their families. For that purpose, the State is to guarantee to the workers of the public and private sectors a minimum wage, to be revised every year according to the cost of the basic food basket.

10. Article 156 of the Constitution establishes the competencies of the People's Power in matters of food security, to be addressed through national policies and legislation. In 2008, the Government approved Decree 5.889 with Rank, Value and Force of Organic Law on Food Security and Sovereignty, which is based on principles including the right to available and accessible food, the right to produce food and the right to sustainable food production.<sup>5</sup>

11. On 13 November 2014, the Government adopted Decree No. 1.408 on the Law on Fishing and Aquaculture, with the objective of regulating the fishing and aquaculture sector to ensure the food sovereignty of the nation, especially the sufficient and stable availability of fisheries and aquaculture products and by-products to meet the population's basic needs in a timely and permanent manner.<sup>6</sup> In order to do so, the Law promotes the consumption of locally caught products and subproducts and protects small-scale fishing settlements and communities. It also aimed at protecting biodiversity and ensuring a healthy and balanced aquatic environment for future generations. The Law commendably establishes the means of genuine participation of fishers, fish farmers, fishers' councils and other grass-roots

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ve-index>.

<sup>3</sup> See A/HRC/50/8. See also the matrix of recommendations available at [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/sessions/session40/ve/2022-09-19/UPR40\\_Venezuela\\_Thematic\\_List\\_of\\_Recommendations.doc](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/sessions/session40/ve/2022-09-19/UPR40_Venezuela_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.doc).

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.asambleanacional.gob.ve/storage/documentos/botones/constitucion-nacional-20191205135853.PDF> (in Spanish).

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.oda-alc.org/documentos/1341412822.pdf> (in Spanish).

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC147977> (in Spanish).

organizations of the People's Power in the decisions adopted by the State on fishing, aquaculture and related activities.

12. On 28 December 2015, the Government passed the Seed Law through Decree No. 6.207, after a process of broad public consultations, which had begun in 2012. The purpose of the Seed Law is to preserve, protect and guarantee the production, multiplication, conservation, free circulation and use of seeds, as well as the promotion, research, innovation, distribution and exchange of seeds, giving priority to national seed production, with special emphasis on the value of Indigenous, peasant and local seeds and those of African descent.<sup>7</sup> Article 4 of the Law recognizes the seed as a living being and a constituent part of Mother Earth and therefore as an object and subject of law and application of the rules on the preservation of life on the planet and the conservation of biological diversity. The seed is declared as a good of the public domain, having the State as its guardian through the norms related to the research, production, certification, protection, distribution and commercialization of seeds carried out in the country (art. 6). Particularly commendable are the principles and values on which the Seed Law are based, *inter alia*, the struggle for food security and sovereignty; the struggle against poverty; and equity, inclusion, emancipation, participation, gender equality and social justice.

13. The Special Rapporteur considers the Seed Law as a good practice due to its focus on and recognition of the knowledge, practices and beliefs of the local population, peasants, Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent. Furthermore, the public consultations held throughout the formulation of the Seed Law were meaningful and participatory. They reportedly included a total of six public debates, with the participation of more than a thousand people, including representatives of social movements and civil society organizations, government representatives, peasants and academics. In addition to the six public debates and multilateral working tables, between October and November 2014, the National Assembly held a national public consultation to discuss the first draft of the Law.

14. Despite those achievements in relation to domestic laws and the clear obligations under international human rights law, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela still reportedly lacks a comprehensive legal framework regulating the right to food and defining clear objectives for its progressive realization.<sup>8</sup> Economic, social and cultural rights are not applied consistently by national courts and, in some cases, the Supreme Court has reportedly ruled that economic, social and cultural rights do not fall within the scope of judicial protection.<sup>9</sup>

### C. Policy framework

15. On 3 April 2014, through Decree No. 876, the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela created the National Human Rights Council, which was expected to coordinate, support and promote public policies aimed at guaranteeing the free exercise of the human rights of all persons, with special emphasis on the most vulnerable and socially at-risk groups, including children and adolescents.

16. On 1 March 2016, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela approved the National Human Rights Plan 2016–2019. The process for its formulation reportedly included public consultations across the country, both in-person and online, with more than 258,000 individuals.<sup>10</sup> The second strategic line of the Plan was aimed at adapting the internal regulatory framework to the provisions on human rights contained in the Constitution, through some programme actions, including healthy nutrition and food. The Plan was aimed at achieving that by reinforcing policies and programmes aimed at increasing local production of food, food security and food sovereignty, with special consideration paid to the contributions of family and urban agriculture; maintaining policies against large urban estates and for the democratization of land; and strengthening the strategies that promote healthy eating habits, based on balanced diets and local food products. Nevertheless, the Special

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/es/c/LEX-FAOC151761> (in Spanish).

<sup>8</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.

<sup>9</sup> E/C.12/VEN/CO/3, para. 7.

<sup>10</sup> See <https://consejoderechoshumanos.gob.ve/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/plannacionalddhh-ingles.pdf>.

Rapporteur notes that, while in November 2019 it had been announced that the National Human Rights Council would start consultations for the development of a second National Human Rights Plan, the consultations reportedly did not take place. The second National Human Rights Plan has not yet been adopted.

17. The Constitutional Law on Local Supply and Production Committees, adopted on 29 January 2018, is aimed at regulating the creation, organization and operation of such committees and ensuring the production, supply and distribution of food and products and to guarantee food safety, to face the crisis in the country.

18. On 3 April 2019, the National Assembly adopted the Constituent Law on the Homeland Plan, the Third Socialist Plan for the Economic and Social Development of the Nation 2019–2025. The Homeland Plan is aimed at deepening the social protection system by expanding the reach of the local supply and production committees, guaranteeing school meals to ensure full school enrolment and strengthening the School Feeding Programme, and improving technical and scientific skills for food production, and Indigenous and revolutionary understanding of Mother Earth. National objective 1.4 of the Homeland Plan is aimed at achieving food sovereignty to guarantee the right to food. Actions under the Homeland Plan include those that generate the economic and material conditions for the socialist transition; promote local production for sovereign supply through the local supply and production committees; expand and strengthen food culture programmes; promote a national plan of full supply, which guarantees the Venezuelan population access to food and essential goods; and ensure healthy food.

#### **D. Implementation of existing laws and policies**

19. The Special Rapporteur is reassured that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has many progressive laws, developed through effective participation mechanisms, which hold the potential to realize the right to food in the country. Besides the above-mentioned good practices, the Constitution recognizes the rights of the Indigenous Peoples. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has enacted a set of laws to develop the specific rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Special Rapporteur commends the Government for its programmes that support local small-scale farmers. For example, the Scientific-Peasant Alliance is a very dynamic programme. In the course of his visit, the Special Rapporteur witnessed how government-sponsored fish fairs in cities directly connected fishers with urban consumers, creating a fair price for everyone.

20. Despite those legislative and policy advancements, the Special Rapporteur observed the growing sense of disappointment among social movements, peasants, fishers and Indigenous Peoples concerning the lack of implementation and enforceability of the progressive laws. If the Government does not effectively implement existing laws, it will diminish the popular will to use participation mechanisms. In turn, that reduced popular participation will hollow out government institutions. For example, the Seed Law and the Law on Fishing and Aquaculture constitute core elements protecting food sovereignty in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The Special Rapporteur strongly recommends that the Government implement the certification process that protects the seeds of local communities, peasants, people of African descent and Indigenous Peoples. That will strengthen the national food system, making it more resilient against climate change and economic shocks.

### **III. Unilateral coercive measures**

21. During the visit, the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the realization of the right to food was the main subject raised by government authorities with the Special Rapporteur. The term “unilateral coercive measures” usually refers to economic measures taken by one State to compel a change in the policy of another State. The most widely used forms of economic pressure are trade sanctions and the interruption of financial and investment flows between sender and target countries. So-called smart or targeted sanctions, such as asset freezing and travel bans, have been employed increasingly by States to influence

individuals who are perceived to be in a position to decide on political action in a particular State.<sup>11</sup>

22. After an official visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in February 2021, the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights noted with concern that sectoral sanctions on the oil, gold and mining industries, the economic blockade of the country, the freezing of Central Bank assets, targeted sanctions imposed on Venezuelan and third-country nationals and companies, and growing overcompliance by banks and third-country companies had exacerbated pre-existing economic and humanitarian situations.<sup>12</sup> The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, after his official visit to the country in January 2023, pointed out that the sectoral sanctions imposed on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela since August 2017 had exacerbated the economic crisis and hindered human rights, even though the roots of the country's economic crisis predated the imposition of economic sanctions.<sup>13</sup>

23. During his visit, the Special Rapporteur witnessed first-hand how unilateral coercive measures in the form of economic sanctions had constrained the Government's fiscal ability to implement its social protection programmes and deliver basic public services. Unilateral coercive measures imposed against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have also increased the cost of delivering humanitarian assistance and prevented international financial institutions from providing any financing. The harm is felt disproportionately by persons living in extreme poverty or vulnerable circumstances.

24. Sectoral sanctions are creating obstacles for the recovery of the Venezuelan economy, which contracted by approximately 74 per cent between 2014 and 2022. Real gross domestic product contracted by 78 per cent in the period of deep depression between 2014 and 2020, which is reportedly the largest recorded collapse for any country not at war. However, the Venezuelan economy grew by 8 per cent in 2021, then by 13.3 per cent in 2022 as oil output increased following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and, in 2023, the economy contracted by 1.2 per cent.<sup>14</sup>

25. Sanctions negatively affect the whole food system in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, from food production and distribution to sale to consumers, rendering even locally produced food financially inaccessible to many given the scarcity and high costs of fuel. It should be noted that sectoral sanctions exacerbated pre-existing adverse economic and complex humanitarian conditions and affected the available resources to guarantee and protect human rights, particularly those of the most vulnerable.<sup>15</sup>

26. Due to overcompliance by foreign banks and suppliers, the Government is facing serious challenges in importing goods and services that are essential for an adequate standard of living, namely such goods and services that are not produced in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, including raw materials and supplies for the food and agriculture sectors, as well as medicines and health supplies and equipment. Overcompliance with sectoral unilateral coercive measures has also placed additional burdens on civil society organizations, whose donors and financial institutions require detailed additional financial information, thus diverting capacities away from the effective conduct of work, particularly in rural and remote areas.<sup>16</sup> Fuel shortages negatively affect not only food production and distribution, but also public transport, public services, education and the health sector.<sup>17</sup>

27. Furthermore, existing humanitarian exemptions are said to be ineffective and insufficient and subject to lengthy and costly procedures; they do not cover the delivery of

<sup>11</sup> See [A/HRC/19/33](#).

<sup>12</sup> See [A/HRC/48/59/Add.2](#).

<sup>13</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/01/un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-turk-concludes-official-mission>.

<sup>14</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, "One-click report: Venezuela", 10 January 2025.

<sup>15</sup> OHCHR, "UN human rights expert urges to lift unilateral sanctions against Venezuela", 12 February 2021.

<sup>16</sup> [A/HRC/48/19](#), para. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Submissions received through the call for input.

spare parts or equipment and machinery indispensable for the maintenance and restoration of the economy and vital public services.<sup>18</sup>

28. Unilateral coercive measures have also created new patterns of power and exacerbated existing political economic problems, thereby increasing inequality. There is an increased use of emergency measures and institutions to tackle the sanctions that reduce transparency and create the conditions for corruption and impunity. For example, the Constitutional Anti-Blockade Law for National Development and the Safeguarding of Human Rights, adopted in October 2020, gave vast powers to the Government to contract with private companies without effective public notice and to privilege those contracts over existing laws. The Special Rapporteur is also concerned that legislation on special economic zones makes public decision-making more opaque and prioritizes private contracts over public laws.

29. The Special Rapporteur has received convincing reports illustrating how unilateral coercive measures hinder the realization of the right to food.<sup>19</sup> He calls upon all relevant States to immediately review and lift sectoral sanctions imposed on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, including secondary sanctions against third parties. His recommendation echoes the previous calls by OHCHR, the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights<sup>20</sup> and the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order.<sup>21</sup>

30. He acknowledges the Government's efforts to take measures to reduce its dependency on oil revenues and increase local production in rural, urban and peri-urban communities. The Special Rapporteur strongly encourages the Government to continue and expand its support for peasants, fishers, pastoralists, ranchers, and urban and peri-urban agriculturalists – especially women, Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent. The effects of climate change on Indigenous communities are especially pronounced. The Special Rapporteur witnessed, during visits to Zulia State, how sedimentation was choking the Sinamaica lagoon and how the Wayú people were coping with the effects of drought on their food security and way of life.

#### IV. Food security and malnutrition

31. Growing food, cooking, sharing and eating is how people celebrate life. Food also reflects people's relationship with the land, rivers and sea. Hunger – and malnutrition – is a human rights issue. The right to food means that everyone has the right to be free from hunger, not just to be fed. To be free from hunger, people must be free from oppression, exploitation and occupation.

32. According to international human rights law, the right to adequate food in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is realized when every person, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or the means for its procurement. The core content of the right to food is understood to include the availability of food in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, free from adverse substances, and acceptable within a given culture; as well as the accessibility of such food in ways that are sustainable and that do not interfere with the enjoyment of other human rights.<sup>22</sup>

33. The visit allowed the Special Rapporteur to appreciate that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a rich country. It is rich not because of its oil but because of its biodiversity. During the difficulties of the past years, be they due to the sanctions or the economic or public health crisis, Venezuelan people have had to rely more on their relationship with the land, rivers and sea, and with each other, enhancing their food sovereignty. For example, the

<sup>18</sup> A/HRC/48/59/Add.2, para. 93.

<sup>19</sup> Submissions received through the call for input.

<sup>20</sup> A/HRC/48/19, para. 7.

<sup>21</sup> See A/HRC/39/47/Add.1.

<sup>22</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 12 (1999), para. 8.



Special Rapporteur observed the positive impact of the “Pueblo a Pueblo” (village to village) initiative when he visited the Mapirikaki community in Anaco in Anzoátegui State.

34. Despite abundant arable land and water resources, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is not self-sufficient in most areas of food and agriculture. It imports the vast majority of its food, including basic products, due to the country’s protracted dependence on oil exports, which, during periods of high international oil prices, made it cheaper to import food rather than to invest in domestic agriculture.<sup>23</sup> Despite the country’s efforts to strengthen agricultural production and integrate small producers into the local economy, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concern that the Government had increased its dependence on food imports, contributing to a serious shortage and scarcity of food and basic necessities.<sup>24</sup> The Special Rapporteur was informed that the Government had been developing an import substitution policy known as the Bolivarian Economic Agenda and the Recovery, Growth and Prosperity Plan, which focused on strengthening production in the countryside, from small-scale producers to large enterprises.

35. Furthermore, the sectoral sanctions, which lead to fuel shortages and a decrease in seed production and the importation of fertilizers and machinery, coupled with the policies based on price controls and inspection and control measures, including the criminalization of certain producers and traders, as well as the State’s preference for food imports over national production, have, accumulatively, a strong negative impact on national food production and cause increased shortages and food insecurity in the country.<sup>25</sup>

36. The visit showed that people across the country were still having trouble accessing enough healthy food, either because of their low incomes or because food is not reaching their communities. The Special Rapporteur received reports pointing to structural constraints facing the agriculture sector, such as limited access to finance, fuel shortages, cross-border smuggling and untaxed imports, hyperinflation and the technological backwardness of machinery.

37. The lack of funding and credit for small producers has further impeded small-scale farmers and rural workers, who reportedly face conflicts over land, including physical violence and threats from larger owners and criminal groups.<sup>26</sup>

38. Human rights-based governance of land tenure is critical to guarantee the livelihoods of small-scale farmers and to prevent and regulate disputes. That is also crucial in overcoming the structural challenges facing resolution of the food crisis. The autonomous National Land Institute is responsible for ensuring secure and equitable access to, and use and control of, land. Official figures indicate that 4,828,935 hectares of land were regularized in the period 2013–2023, affecting 515,580 families.<sup>27</sup> However, the Special Rapporteur highlights allegations that, in some instances, the Institute did not respond to requests from small-scale producers for land regularization, arbitrarily revoked previously adjudicated land and contributed to the stigmatization and criminalization of community leaders defending their land rights.<sup>28</sup>

39. According to a report by the World Food Programme (WFP), one out of three Venezuelans (32.3 per cent) was food insecure and in need of assistance in 2019. In order to face food insecurity, Venezuelans have resorted to coping strategies such as reducing the variety and the quality of the food that they eat; 60 per cent of households reported reducing the portion size of their meals. Some 33 per cent of households accepted working for food as payment and 20 per cent have sold family assets to cover basic needs.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, “Consumer goods and retail report: food and drink”, 27 June 2024.

<sup>24</sup> [E/C.12/VEN/CO/3](#), para. 26.

<sup>25</sup> See [A/HRC/48/59Add.2](#); and International Federation for Human Rights and the Venezuelan Programme of Education Action on Human Rights, *Food is Not a Game: Serious Violations to the Human Right to Food in Venezuela* (Paris, 2022).

<sup>26</sup> [A/HRC/53/54](#), para. 19.

<sup>27</sup> *Tierra y Futuro: Revista del Instituto Nacional de Tierras*, No. 4 (January 2025) (in Spanish), p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> [A/HRC/53/54](#), paras. 18–20.

<sup>29</sup> WFP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, “Venezuela food security assessment: main findings – data collected between July and September 2019” (2020).



40. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), compared with 2004–2006, the prevalence of undernourishment in the total population more than doubled (from 7.8 to 17.6 per cent) between 2021 and 2023. In the period 2020–2022, the number of undernourished people more than doubled when compared with those in 2004–2006 (from 2.1 million to 5.1 million undernourished persons).<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, the prevalence of stunting in children decreased from 12.1 per cent in 2012 to 10.5 in 2022.

41. In 2023, 82 per cent of the population were worried about running out of food, while 68 per cent expressed concerns about eating less healthy food and 67 per cent about smaller variations in their food consumption.<sup>31</sup> In the same year, 32 per cent of people stopped eating one of their daily meals and 12 per cent went an entire day without eating.<sup>32</sup> The diet of Venezuelans is increasingly based on carbohydrates, containing less protein and fewer vegetables, leading to malnutrition.<sup>33</sup> In a survey of 1,040 households in Caracas on their dietary consumption at home and in schools between 1 November 2022 and 1 March 2022, it was reported that 45 per cent of the 17 per cent of households that did not consume fruits or vegetables belonged to the poorest households in Caracas. Furthermore, 87 per cent of households with children reported that their children did not have access to fruits or vegetables in schools.<sup>34</sup>

42. Hyperinflation is affecting people's ability to secure food and other basic needs. In 2019, 59 per cent of households had insufficient income to buy food, 65 per cent were unable to buy other essential items and 18 per cent relied on government assistance and social protection systems.<sup>35</sup>

43. According to the World Bank Food Security Update, in 2024, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela registered food inflation of 90.5 per cent in January, 53.4 per cent in May and 21.9 per cent in October.<sup>36</sup> The annualized price variation of the basic food basket between April 2023 and April 2024 was 85.6 per cent in bolívares and 19.1 per cent in United States dollars.<sup>37</sup>

44. In 2024, the Humanitarian Response Plan for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela referred to the fact that, out of the total population of 26 million, 5.1 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance. Of those, 2 million were targeted for food security and nutrition interventions.<sup>38</sup> The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) considered that 7.7 million Venezuelans, including 3.8 million children, required humanitarian assistance in June 2024.<sup>39</sup> The Special Rapporteur received reports of gaps in the humanitarian assistance provided, namely a lack of activities targeting the food security of older persons and Indigenous populations, as well as a need to promote activities aimed at strengthening local livelihoods, focusing on self-sufficiency, resilience and empowerment to achieve greater food security and sovereignty.

45. The right to adequate food is indivisibly linked to the inherent dignity of the person. It is indispensable for the realization of other human rights and inseparable from social justice, requiring the adoption of appropriate economic, environmental and social policies, oriented to the eradication of poverty and the fulfilment of human rights for all.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>30</sup> FAO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024*, pp. 161 and 176.

<sup>31</sup> Statista Research Department, "Food insecurity index in Venezuela in 2023, by type", 2 December 2024, available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1416812/food-insecurity-by-type-venezuela>.

<sup>32</sup> See <https://www.proyectoencovi.com> (in Spanish).

<sup>33</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.

<sup>34</sup> Academia de Ciencias Físicas, Matemáticas y Naturales, "Consumo de frutas y hortalizas en la Región Capital de Venezuela y sus determinantes", p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> WFP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, "Venezuela food security assessment: main findings".

<sup>36</sup> World Bank, "Food security update", 17 January 2025.

<sup>37</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Venezuela: March–April 2024, situation report", 30 April 2024.

<sup>38</sup> WFP Venezuela, "Country brief, August 2024" (2024).

<sup>39</sup> UNICEF, "Humanitarian situation report No. 1", 15 August 2024.

<sup>40</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 12 (1999), para. 4.

46. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, food insecurity is strongly interlinked with climate-related disasters, economic challenges, including rising global food prices, global supply chain disruptions and limited access to international markets and investment.<sup>41</sup> Hyperinflation, at an annual rate of nearly 190 per cent in 2023, and the informal dollarization of the Venezuelan economy further weaken households' purchasing power. The rising prices of goods and services, as well inflation, and the loss or deterioration of regular livelihoods negatively affect the purchasing power of people in vulnerable circumstances, especially those individuals who depend on fixed sources of income or informal and irregular jobs.<sup>42</sup> The Special Rapporteur received numerous testimonies that women who were heads of households and older persons were particularly at risk.

47. The gross domestic product of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela grew 2.6 per cent in 2023, buoyed by an increase in oil activity of 9.4 per cent, and was forecast to grow by 6.1 per cent in 2024.<sup>43</sup> The annual inflation rate was 190 per cent in 2023, the lowest rate since 2015, while the estimated final inflation rate in 2024 was 50 per cent.<sup>44</sup> After steady disinflation during most of 2024, inflation resumed its upward trend, with the month-on-month rate growing to 4 per cent in October 2024,<sup>45</sup> soaring to 12.6 per cent in December 2024.<sup>46</sup> It is estimated that potential disruptions to global trade on the back of more frequent geopolitical conflicts, as well as weather-related shocks to domestic production, pose upside risks to inflation.<sup>47</sup>

48. Despite the indicated growth in gross domestic product, the population still faced serious obstacles in accessing food, healthcare and education. Women, people in rural areas and Indigenous Peoples are disproportionately affected.<sup>48</sup> One of the main challenges to food security in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is economic accessibility to adequate food (affordability), since prices are simply too high when compared with household incomes.<sup>49</sup> Nearly 82.4 per cent of Venezuelans live in poverty and 50.5 per cent are exposed to extreme poverty with insufficient income to purchase a basic food basket.<sup>50</sup>

49. Reportedly, in 2023, 83.6 per cent of people did not have access to sufficient food due to high costs.<sup>51</sup> For example, the food basket for a family of five amounted to \$532 in 2024, while, since March 2022, the minimum wage has remained at 130 bolívares (equivalent to \$2.19 based on the exchange rate as at 10 February 2025) due to devaluation.<sup>52</sup> An average family would need to earn hundreds of times more than the minimum wage to afford the cost of the basic food basket to feed a family. Rising food prices and depreciation of the bolívar are reducing households' purchasing power, affecting in particular the most vulnerable among them. In addition, food prices are volatile and unpredictable.

50. The multidimensional poverty index covering areas such as education and health stood at 51.9 per cent in 2023. The situation is also aggravated by fuel costs and the scarcity

<sup>41</sup> WFP, "Annual country report 2023: Venezuela", available at [https://www.wfp.org/operations/annual-country-report?operation\\_id=VE02&year=2023#/27571](https://www.wfp.org/operations/annual-country-report?operation_id=VE02&year=2023#/27571).

<sup>42</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Venezuela: March–April 2024, situation report".

<sup>43</sup> See <https://www.undp.org/es/venezuela/publicaciones/desempeno-macroeconomico-de-venezuela-en-tercer-trimestre-de-2024-y-proyecciones-para-el-futuro> (in Spanish).

<sup>44</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Desempeño Macroeconómico de Venezuela: Cuarto Trimestre 2023 y Perspectiva 2024 – Reporte Económico* (2024) (in Spanish).

<sup>45</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, "One-click report: Venezuela".

<sup>46</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, "Monthly inflation returns to double digits in November", 18 December 2024.

<sup>47</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, "Five-year forecast: Venezuela", 20 December 2024.

<sup>48</sup> OHCHR, "High Commissioner delivers update on the human rights situation in Venezuela", 3 July 2024.

<sup>49</sup> WFP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, "Venezuela food security assessment: main findings".

<sup>50</sup> Statista Research Department, "Poverty and inequality in Venezuela – statistics & facts", 2 December 2024.

<sup>51</sup> Hum Venezuela, "Informe de seguimiento a la emergencia humanitaria compleja en Venezuela" (2023) (in Spanish), p. 26.

<sup>52</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.

of electricity and drinking water. The Special Rapporteur witnessed frequent protests in support of a decent minimum wage and adequate standards of living, as public sector workers, students and retirees, in particular, struggle to make ends meet.

51. A significant portion of the population remained affected by compounding vulnerabilities, such as lack of economic opportunities, lack of access to food, education and healthcare and localized shortages of essential goods, including food, drinking water, petrol and medical supplies, which have exacerbated a complex humanitarian situation.<sup>53</sup> In hospitals, more than 40 per cent of patients have inadequate diets.<sup>54</sup> The Government should provide hospitals with significant support to ensure that patients receive the special diets that they need to recover. Support for university dining halls should be strengthened significantly to realize students' right to food.

52. As a result, families are forced to adopt negative coping mechanisms, such as reducing portion sizes, skipping meals, buying less nutritious food items or even looking for food in the street or in waste discharge sites. Some of those most affected have resorted to coping mechanisms such as reducing the quality of food, selling household assets (decapitalizing) to eat and reducing health, clothing and education expenses.<sup>55</sup> Women bear a disproportionate amount of the burden since they are often the caregivers for their families and communities, while still having to work for a wage or profit. The Special Rapporteur received reports of some women having to exchange sex for food. Pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls are particularly at risk given the growing livelihoods crisis.

53. The right to adequate food depends on the realization of other rights, such as the right to water. Lack of access to clean drinking water has been highlighted as a serious concern. In some reports, it was indicated that the supply of water distributed through the aqueduct network had fallen by 90 per cent by 2021.<sup>56</sup> In the same year, 15.7 million Venezuelans suffered from major water service restrictions.<sup>57</sup> According to WFP, 40 per cent of households had recurrent interruptions in their water supply in 2019, and 25 per cent of households did not have sustainable access to water.<sup>58</sup> Reportedly, in urban areas, supplies can be cut off for days. Moreover, 70 per cent of the population reportedly face deficiencies in access to drinking water, while 54.8 per cent face severe service restrictions.<sup>59</sup>

54. Food insecurity, malnutrition and deterioration in livelihoods are cited as the primary causes of the mass migration out of the country. By the end of November 2023, more than 7.7 million people had left the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.<sup>60</sup> In 2024, the number of refugees and migrants crossing the borders to address their essential needs in neighbouring countries was estimated to be 7.8 million.<sup>61</sup> With so many working-age people leaving, children are being left behind, increasing the financial and food security burden on grandparents and other family members.

55. In 2003, the Government established the Mercal Mission and other social missions to supply basic food to the population, mostly procured by the State from private producers and government imports.<sup>62</sup> In 2006, the Food Mission replaced it to facilitate access to basic commodities for the population as a whole, while strengthening public food distribution networks.<sup>63</sup> It was reportedly the social policy with the greatest coverage and the most

<sup>53</sup> WFP, "Annual country report 2023: Venezuela".

<sup>54</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.

<sup>55</sup> A/HRC/48/59/Add.2, para. 32.

<sup>56</sup> International Federation for Human Rights and the Venezuelan Programme of Education Action on Human Rights, *Food is Not a Game*, p. 6.

<sup>57</sup> Hum Venezuela, "Impactos de la emergencia humanitaria compleja en Venezuela con la pandemia de COVID" (2021) (in Spanish), p. 26.

<sup>58</sup> WFP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, "Venezuela food security assessment: main findings", p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> International Federation for Human Rights and the Venezuelan Programme of Education Action on Human Rights, *Food is Not a Game*, p. 6.

<sup>60</sup> WFP, "Annual country report 2023: Venezuela".

<sup>61</sup> See <https://www.fao.org/gIEWS/country-analysis/external-assistance/en>.

<sup>62</sup> Transparencia Venezuela, "Misión alimentación: de la gran red MERCAL a las bolsas CLAP" (2018).

<sup>63</sup> A/HRC/WG.6/26/VEN/1, para. 61.

beneficiaries in the country. In 2012, the system of social missions was replaced by the creation of “Great Missions” and the “Joint General Staff” mechanism. The Great AgroVenezuela Mission was established to consolidate national production bases and ensure food sovereignty and security by providing loans, agricultural machinery, supplies and technical advice. However, due to the effects of the economic crisis, the programme did not achieve sustained increases in national production.<sup>64</sup>

56. The local supply and production committees were set up in 2016 as an alternative food distribution mechanism in response to acute food shortages and to address food shortages in the formal supply chain. The aim was to distribute food from house to house through community organizations. The bags supplied by the committees are a lifeline for many families. Initially conceived as an interim measure, it later became the strategic food distribution programme. In 2017, the Homeland Card was created as a mechanism to access the programme and, in 2018, a constitutional law on the local supply and production committees reaffirmed the programme with the aim of guaranteeing social welfare and food security.<sup>65</sup> According to the Government, 7.5 million Venezuelan families receive a bag with basic food products from the committees at least once a month.

57. Nevertheless, there are growing criticisms raised about the local supply and production committees programme, which include inconsistent delivery, infrequent supply in remote areas and the lack of nutritional value and quality of the food distributed.<sup>66</sup> There are also concerns about its political structure and the military’s involvement in the logistics, contributing to the politicization of food distribution, as well as to the risk of linking it to the *colectivos* (social organizations of popular communities) and other armed groups.<sup>67</sup> The Special Rapporteur received testimonies that bags from the committees were denied to individuals who were perceived to be critical or to express alternative political opinions. Some beneficiaries suggested that the bags were treated by authorities as a charitable handout rather than as part of the right to freedom from hunger, undermining the human dignity of recipients.

58. The local supply and production committees programme was well intentioned as temporary humanitarian relief by the Government. However, the programme has become susceptible to political patronage and does not address the root causes of hunger and malnutrition in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela or meet right-to-food standards.

59. Another approach of social protection used by the Government to alleviate the socioeconomic crisis was by delivering vouchers through the Homeland Card. Households receive vouchers each month, such as those allocated under the Homes for the Nation Mission, but these permanent allowances are smaller in value than vouchers without specific periodicity delivered under the Homeland Card.<sup>68</sup> For households living in extreme poverty and rural and Indigenous communities, the vouchers represent a large proportion of household income or even the main or only income. The selection criteria of households and the periodicity and consistency of receiving the vouchers were among the questions that preoccupied many recipients and beneficiaries with whom the Special Rapporteur met during the visit.

60. The Special Rapporteur recalls that human rights require that the State assume the core obligation to take the action necessary to mitigate and alleviate hunger and malnutrition, even in times of economic crisis or sanctions. He therefore strongly encourages the Government to develop an urgent plan of action on the right to food through a socially inclusive process. A right-to-food action plan, built upon existing laws and participation mechanisms, could help orient humanitarian relief measures more towards improving livelihoods and inclusive development.

<sup>64</sup> International Federation for Human Rights and the Venezuelan Programme of Education Action on Human Rights, *Food is Not a Game*, p. 15.

<sup>65</sup> *Gaceta Oficial*, No. 41.330, 29 January 2018.

<sup>66</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.

<sup>67</sup> International Federation for Human Rights and the Venezuelan Programme of Education Action on Human Rights, *Food is Not a Game*, p. 35.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

61. The question remains of how the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela can continue learning from good practices of food sovereignty and continue adapting public policy and institutions to better align them with its human rights obligations.

## A. Private sector

62. In the course of the visit, the Special Rapporteur learned that the Government was expanding its engagement with the private sector with a view to boosting local food production and distribution. The private sector plays an important role in ensuring that the right to food is realized. However, the Special Rapporteur observed that there might be a risk of creating monopolies and monopsonies. He is concerned that, over the next few years, the new system of private contracts and government procurement deals could lead to the creation of de facto latifundia. With an increasing role for the private sector, robust transparency and accountability measures must be introduced. New measures should also address the potential conflict of interest between the private and public sectors.

## B. Accountability, transparency and participation

63. Corruption can have negative effects on the realization of the right to food. In fact, OHCHR has stressed that corruption had been a determining factor in affecting the right of the Venezuelan population to an adequate standard of living.<sup>69</sup> The food system in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has faced regular allegations of corruption. The first type of allegations relate to corruption at high levels through organized networks that have allowed the enrichment of officials and of businesspersons with connections to the Government. The second kind is the petty corruption that occurs at various intermediate points in the food distribution network.<sup>70</sup> The Special Rapporteur received information on more than 30 investigations into grand corruption linked to the food sector.<sup>71</sup> The lack of transparency and information on the use of public resources and implementation of the programmes is a major and worrying factor. Such opaqueness creates an environment of impunity for corruption networks and makes it challenging for any meaningful oversight. In addition, numerous legal provisions have been adopted to reduce the controls on public spending, such as the economic emergency decrees and the above-mentioned anti-blockade law.<sup>72</sup>

64. According to international human rights law, the formulation and implementation of public policies related to the right to food and an adequate standard of living require full compliance with the principles of transparency, inclusive public participation and decentralization.<sup>73</sup> As stressed by a former Special Rapporteur on the right to food, laws and policies that ensured transparency and accountability in the execution of programmes related to the right to food were important.<sup>74</sup>

65. Despite the legal obligation requiring all government entities to obtain and produce statistical data related to the exercise of their functions, data relevant to monitoring and following up the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in relation to food and nutrition have not been published. For example, the National Institute of Nutrition stopped publishing information from the Food and Nutritional Supervision System in 2008; the Food Balance Sheet has not been published since 2012; and the National Institute of Statistics stopped publishing its survey on food consumption in 2015.

66. The lack of official data and publicly available official statistical methodology hinders the Government's ability to effectively tackle challenges and meet the basic needs of the

<sup>69</sup> A/HRC/41/18, para. 12.

<sup>70</sup> International Federation for Human Rights and the Venezuelan Programme of Education Action on Human Rights, *Food is Not a Game*, p. 49.

<sup>71</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.

<sup>72</sup> International Federation for Human Rights and the Venezuelan Programme of Education Action on Human Rights, *Food is Not a Game*, p. 49.

<sup>73</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 12 (1999), para. 23.

<sup>74</sup> A/68/288, para. 25.

people. Without regular, reliable information, it is more difficult to assess and adapt food policies to protect the most vulnerable population from the effects of the dynamic set of crises. People must have access to such information, possess the power to narrate the realities of their lives and enjoy the right to express their views on addressing institutional and policy gaps. The lack of transparency regarding the use of scarce public resources and the implementation of large-scale social programmes also enables corruption and inhibits accountability in the provision of public services.

67. The Special Rapporteur urges the Government to enhance public transparency and guarantee access to information on food policies, as well as to put in place mechanisms to ensure accountability in the implementation of programmes relating to the right to food and livelihoods in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. He emphasizes the need to establish robust mechanisms for collecting and analysing disaggregated data, as well as ensuring the institutional frameworks necessary to coordinate multisectoral efforts in realizing the right to food.

68. The Special Rapporteur is concerned about regressive and restrictive legislation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which may seriously infringe on the exercise of the rights to free expression, assembly, association and participation in public affairs,<sup>75</sup> which are all interdependent and interconnected with the realization of the right to food. Despite the numerous alarms sounded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the special procedure mandate holders,<sup>76</sup> the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela passed the Law on the Control, Regularization, Operations and Financing of Non-Governmental Organizations (also known as the Anti-NGO Law) in August 2024. The Special Rapporteur urges the Government to revoke that legislation, which will not only stifle civic space, but will also undermine important progress made by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to strengthen food security and nutritional value.

## V. Specific groups at risk

69. Despite some recent economic improvements, the low purchasing power of households in the most vulnerable conditions continues to affect their access to food and other basic services.<sup>77</sup> In 2019, 6 out of 10 families spent their savings on buying food. Notwithstanding their resourcefulness in finding alternative solutions to afford food, the risk of malnutrition has become ever-more pressing, particularly affecting groups in vulnerable situations, such as children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and older persons.<sup>78</sup>

### A. Women

70. Women face barriers in accessing food in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, often arising from gender inequality. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted with concern that challenges persisted in providing women and girls with opportunities for economic empowerment and ensuring their access to adequate food, water and sanitation.<sup>79</sup> Households headed by women face greater barriers to accessing food. Thus, 63.6 per cent of women spend almost their entire income on acquiring food and 51 per cent of pregnant women suffer from nutritional issues.<sup>80</sup> Likewise, women caregivers try to provide food for their children before feeding themselves, undermining their nutritional

<sup>75</sup> OHCHR, “High Commissioner delivers update on the human rights situation in Venezuela”; and OHCHR, “High Commissioner’s update to the Human Rights Council on Venezuela”, 13 December 2024.

<sup>76</sup> See communications VEN 2/2023 and VEN 7/2024. All communications mentioned in the present report are available from <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments>.

<sup>77</sup> WFP, “Annual country report 2023: Venezuela”.

<sup>78</sup> WFP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, “Venezuela food security assessment: main findings”, p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> CEDAW/C/VEN/CO/9, paras. 39 and 40.

<sup>80</sup> Funcamama and others, *Ser Mujer en Venezuela: Diagnóstico Comunitario y Propuestas para la Acción Humanitaria* (2022) (in Spanish), p. 21.

needs and overall well-being. Some 80 per cent of women surveyed in one study indicated that the amount of food that they brought home was deficient, scarce or very scarce, even though 64 per cent of them stated that they spent almost their entire family budget on acquiring food.<sup>81</sup>

71. From the discussions that the Special Rapporteur held during the visit, it was clear that women are the first to reduce the quantity and quality of their meals, to prioritize their children, while protein is usually allocated in greater quantities to men. Child-centred needs assessments in communities, reports of which the Special Rapporteur received during the visit, showed that the most vulnerable households were those headed by single women and older persons.<sup>82</sup> Those caregivers often struggle to work while bearing full child-rearing responsibilities.

## B. Older persons

72. Older persons in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, especially those who have a chronic health condition, are particularly vulnerable. Their only source of income is often pensions amounting to 130 bolívars (\$2.19) a month, which is far below the cost of the basic food basket. In addition, older persons must spend approximately \$30 a month on medicines for chronic health conditions, which presents a challenge in choosing between a balanced diet and buying medicines. Their survival depends on State vouchers. Furthermore, there is a high and unreported tendency for older persons to be malnourished, and an additional aggravating factor is their isolation and loneliness, especially if their families had to migrate.<sup>83</sup> Due to the high rate of migration and the collapse of the purchasing power of pensions, older persons have become invisible and abandoned, while their food and nutritional needs are neglected.

## C. Children

73. The Government's School Feeding Programme provides nutritional support to schoolchildren, along with bonuses through various social programmes and the Homeland Card. Nevertheless, the Special Rapporteur remains concerned about children's right to adequate food. He received numerous testimonies from across the country indicating that some children were increasingly exposed to risks associated with negative coping practices, such as family separation, child labour and multiple forms of violence and abuse. Children under 5, adolescents, and underweight pregnant and breastfeeding women are the most affected by food and nutrition insecurity. The country's future is at stake.

74. Regarding the nutritional status of children, it should be noted that the National Institute of Nutrition, despite its mandate to publish information on food and nutrition monitoring in the country, has reportedly not published data on child nutrition in the last 14 years.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, UNICEF reported, in October 2020, that in a study of 4,625 children under the age of 5, 700 (15.13 per cent) were acutely malnourished, 516 (11.16 per cent) were moderately malnourished and 184 (3.98 per cent) were severely malnourished.<sup>85</sup>

75. In schools, 30 per cent of children do not receive balanced meals, which affects their growth and development.<sup>86</sup> That should be considered in the context that, in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 40 per cent of children do not attend school regularly.<sup>87</sup> A study on child well-being in schools in Caroní revealed that children from low-income groups were concerned about money, abuse and food insecurity.<sup>88</sup> Recent indicators from organizations

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.

<sup>83</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.

<sup>84</sup> International Federation for Human Rights and the Venezuelan Programme of Education Action on Human Rights, *Food is Not a Game*, p. 60.

<sup>85</sup> UNICEF, "Venezuela situation report October 2020" (2020).

<sup>86</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.

<sup>87</sup> UNICEF, "Humanitarian situation report No. 1", p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.



that work with children and adolescents show that households are experiencing crises or emergencies, even after receiving food assistance.

76. Children will usually go to school only when meals are served. Feeding all children through schools, using as much locally sourced food as possible, is the most effective way to make sure that children are strong and healthy. However, many children under 18 years of age are forced to leave school to earn an income to overcome the crisis and guarantee their access to food and basic services. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has no official data on child labour: the latest official data reportedly go back to 2007 and mentioned 81,000 children involved in child labour.<sup>89</sup> It is estimated that that number has doubled or tripled since then. The Special Rapporteur is concerned about the lack of accurate and up-to-date official data, which makes child labour invisible and increases the vulnerabilities of minors to trafficking networks, labour and sexual exploitation, and other forms of modern slavery.

77. At the time of the visit, the international humanitarian community was increasing its support for existing public school feeding programmes. The Special Rapporteur hopes that community-led initiatives, in which local small producers directly provide most of the food for schools, will become the dominant source for school feeding programmes.

## D. Indigenous Peoples

78. Indigenous Peoples continue to lack resources and access to adequate food. General lack of access to food and adequate income has reportedly provoked significant migration of Indigenous persons to urban and mining areas and abroad, contributing to progressive and long-term loss of their institutions and forms of self-organization, and severely interfering with their right to self-determination.<sup>90</sup> In its 2024 review, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern that both Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent continued to be victims of structural discrimination, as reflected in the levels of poverty and social exclusion that they faced and in the disproportionate impact that the socioeconomic crisis had had on their enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.<sup>91</sup>

79. The Special Rapporteur received reports of the attacks suffered by Indigenous Peoples due to mining activities; the lack of consultation; and the environmental destruction threatening their livelihoods. Development policies, territorial conflicts and mining have resulted in the loss of land and natural resources on which Indigenous communities depend for food and their livelihoods. That has led to malnutrition, disease and lack of access to adequate health services, therefore further increasing the vulnerability of those communities.<sup>92</sup>

80. The demarcation of Indigenous Peoples' land has reportedly remained at a standstill, despite the obligation to give legal recognition and protection to such land, respecting their customs, traditions and land tenure systems.<sup>93</sup> The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has expressed concern about the slowness of processes for demarcating and titling Indigenous lands.<sup>94</sup> The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has noted with concern the cases of forced eviction of Indigenous women and women of African descent from lands traditionally occupied or used by them and the use of those lands by private actors.<sup>95</sup> Malnutrition among children in the Indigenous communities is of great concern, because of the absence of sources of income, their geographical location and the hygiene facilities available to them.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> [A/HRC/53/54](#), paras. 18–20.

<sup>91</sup> [CERD/C/VEN/CO/22-24](#), para. 18.

<sup>92</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.

<sup>93</sup> [A/HRC/53/54](#), paras. 18–20.

<sup>94</sup> [CERD/C/VEN/CO/22-24](#), para. 18.

<sup>95</sup> [CEDAW/C/VEN/CO/9](#), paras. 43 and 44.

<sup>96</sup> International Federation for Human Rights and the Venezuelan Programme of Education Action on Human Rights, *Food is Not a Game*, p. 63.

81. Food distribution through the local supply and production committees programme does not efficiently reach Indigenous communities. Despite humanitarian interventions to address malnutrition in Indigenous communities in Bolívar, Amazonas and Delta Amacuro States, a comprehensive and sustainable approach, taking into account the underlying factors contributing to malnutrition in these communities, is still lacking.<sup>97</sup>

## E. Prisoners and detainees

82. The Special Rapporteur is concerned about the food security of prisoners and detainees in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. In its concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in November 2023, the Human Rights Committee expressed alarm about the high rate of overcrowding in the prison system and the fact that many persons deprived of their liberty were dependent on their families for adequate access to food and specialized medical treatment.<sup>98</sup>

83. The Special Rapporteur is alarmed about the well-being of detainees in custody centres in police stations, in which access to food, water and healthcare are even more precarious. These custody centres were designed as temporary facilities, pending a judicial hearing, and do not include any facilities to feed detainees. However, due to delayed judicial processes, those custody centres have become overcrowded, long-term detention sites, with people spending seven or eight years there. Authorities provide detainees with very restricted access to food, water, and bathroom and healthcare facilities. The conditions in the detention centres are inhumane and degrading and may constitute torture.

84. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the recent initiatives of the executive and judiciary branches to expedite detainees' access to a hearing and hopes that this initiative is quickly advanced. In the meantime, detainees should be released if the maximum number of days of detention is reached before a judicial hearing. The situation is somewhat better in prisons, although in some prisons, authorities offer people inadequate meals, sometimes only one *arepa* a day.

85. Families bear a heavy burden since they have to provide food for detainees in any type of facility. The families – usually women – suffer great logistical and financial hardship. Those incarcerated and without family support are left to obtain food from other inmates, sharing what they have or by exchanging sex for food.

86. According to the information received after the visit, the violation of the right to food of the prison population worsened in 2024, in the context of the presidential elections held in July. There has been a reported drastic increase in the prison population, with more than 2,000 people arrested between 29 July and 13 August 2024. Organizations that were able to visit prisons in various parts of the country reported a worrying situation regarding the right to food in those facilities.<sup>99</sup>

87. In that context, conditions in the country's detention centres have reportedly worsened, due to the significant increase in the number of people detained in the post-electoral context. In addition to the increased overcrowding in detention centres after the elections, the situation of persons deprived of liberty has also been aggravated by restrictions on family visits and a reduction in the number of meals provided each day, in a selective and allegedly punitive manner against some persons deprived of liberty who are opponents of the Government or perceived as such.<sup>100</sup> The concentration of detainees in a few prisons, usually far away from their places of residence, places strains on their family members who have to obtain resources to cover the costs of travel and accommodation to be close to the prisons to deliver food, water and other essential items to their detained family

<sup>97</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.

<sup>98</sup> [CCPR/C/VEN/CO/5](#), paras. 27 and 28.

<sup>99</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.

<sup>100</sup> Communication VEN 11/2024.

members.<sup>101</sup> Further concerns were also raised about the obstacles faced by the lawyers who represented persons in detention.<sup>102</sup>

88. The Special Rapporteur would like to remind the Government of its obligation to ensure that detainees have access to justice and due process and that all prisoners have the right to human dignity and all other human rights, such as the right to food, water and health. He echoes the recommendation made to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to ensure the rights to food, water and sanitation, health, security and dignity of all persons deprived of liberty, including by meeting gender-specific needs.<sup>103</sup>

89. Lastly, the Special Rapporteur is concerned that persons with disabilities feel exposed, disempowered and unsupported. Members of the LGBTIQI+ community often experience discrimination and receive limited social benefits because their families are not adequately recognized.

## VI. Conclusion and recommendations

90. The visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by the Special provided an opportunity for critical insights into the state of the realization of the right to food in the country.

91. Despite the country's progressive legal and policy frameworks, challenges persist in addressing food security and ensuring affordability and accessibility for all. The Special Rapporteur highlights that, while government initiatives such as the local supply and production committees and agricultural support programmes were aimed at mitigating food insecurity, their effectiveness has been hindered by economic constraints, persistent inflation, growing accountability gaps and inconsistent implementation.

92. A lack of transparency and data availability further impedes food policy responses and weakens accountability in the food system. In that context, the growing role of private sector partnerships raises concerns about monopolization, oversight and equity in food production and distribution.

93. The economic crisis, exacerbated by unilateral coercive measures, has placed immense pressure on the country's ability to implement social programmes and strengthen access to adequate food for vulnerable populations, including women, children, older persons, Indigenous communities and detainees. In the present report, the Special Rapporteur has highlighted that structural issues, such as reliance on food imports, insufficient support for local small-scale agricultural production and inefficiencies in food distribution programmes, have played a critical role in exacerbating food insecurity.

94. To address those challenges, the Special Rapporteur underscores the need for urgent action. The Government should enhance food system transparency, expand community-led, small-scale agriculture and food initiatives and review social programmes through an inclusive and participatory approach with respect for dignity and human rights.

95. Unilateral coercive measures have exacerbated the country's pre-existing economic and social challenges, disproportionately affecting low-income communities, rural populations and Indigenous Peoples. Economic sanctions have deepened food insecurity, weakened food sovereignty and increased the country's dependence on humanitarian aid. Given such severe consequences, the Special Rapporteur urges a comprehensive review and the lifting of sectoral sanctions to alleviate humanitarian suffering and support economic recovery.

<sup>101</sup> Information received by the Special Rapporteur.

<sup>102</sup> Communication VEN 10/2024.

<sup>103</sup> [A/HRC/44/20](#), para. 86 (h).

96. The Special Rapporteur concludes that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela needs a comprehensive national action plan on the right to food, built on existing progressive laws and participatory mechanisms. The action plan will serve as a vital step in addressing the root causes of hunger and malnutrition, and is essential to ensure long-term food security, resilience and protection of groups in vulnerable circumstances.

97. The Special Rapporteur urges the Government, international actors and civil society to foster dialogue with a view to upholding the right to food in Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, ensuring that all individuals can live with dignity and without hunger.

98. To facilitate, as a matter of priority, the full realization of the right to food in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Special Rapporteur:

(a) Calls upon all relevant States to review and lift sectoral sanctions imposed on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, including secondary sanctions against third parties, given that unilateral coercive measures significantly limit the ability of the Government and people to realize the right to food;

(b) Urges the Government to enhance public transparency and guarantee access to information on food policies and regularly publish accurate, disaggregated and verifiable data, which also includes ensuring accountability in the implementation of programmes related to the right to food and livelihoods;

(c) Strongly encourages the Government to continue and expand its support for small-scale peasants, fishers, pastoralists, ranchers, and urban and peri-urban agriculturalists – especially those who are women, Indigenous Peoples or people of African descent. That will not only enhance food sovereignty but will also improve local livelihoods and resilience;

(d) Recommends that the Government ensure that private companies' transactions are fair and transparent, and that the procurement system is made more transparent and strengthened by reinforcing conflict of interest regulations and mechanisms;

(e) Strongly urges the Government to carry out a comprehensive review of food security and living conditions of detainees and to guarantee detainees' right to adequate food, water and health;

(f) Recommends that the Government and the international humanitarian relief community develop a plan to transform international humanitarian relief plans into locally led development programmes. That should include enhancing community-led programmes to provide school meals and allowing the international humanitarian aid community to provide direct cash assistance on the basis of the principles of humanity, transparency, impartiality, neutrality and independence. The Special Rapporteur has found from his international work during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that direct cash assistance is the most effective first step to meet immediate nutritional needs, enhance livelihoods and improve the economy;

(g) Encourages the Government to develop an urgent plan of action on the right to food, based on existing laws, through a socially inclusive process and existing participation mechanisms.