



MASS VIOLENCE & ATROCITIES
READOUT & RECOMMENDATIONS

IV. Regional Responses to the Venezuelan Crisis: Displacement, Civil Society, and Extraregional Actors

April 2019 | Cúcuta, Colombia



This Readout and Recommendations reflects the contributions and discussions during the fourth workshop on “Regional Responses to the Venezuelan Crisis” held April 24–26, 2019, in Cúcuta, Colombia, at the border with Venezuela. The workshop was jointly organized by the Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES), the Stanley Center for Peace and Security, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, the Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados (the Jesuit Refugee Service, or JRS), and the Instituto Pensar of the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana of Bogotá, Colombia.

The workshop was structured into four sessions: (1) the displacement of Venezuelan refugees to nonbordering countries, (2) the role of civil society in coordination with multilateral organizations, (3) the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, and (4) the role of extraregional actors in the crisis. Below are the main conclusions of each session, along with a series of policy recommendations developed by participants throughout the workshop.

Context

The series of workshops on the “Regional Responses to the Venezuelan Crisis,” jointly organized by the Stanley Center and CRIES, began in 2017 with the objective of convening different civil society actors from Latin America and the Caribbean to analyze and propose policy recommendations for mitigating the crisis in Venezuela and the impact beyond the state’s borders. Prior to the workshop in Cúcuta, three others occurred in Panamá City, Panamá (July 2017 and September 2018), and Bogotá, Colombia (February 2018). With each workshop, the deterioration of the Venezuelan crisis and the effect on

Venezuelans and the region has been evident. Participation in the workshops by civil society representatives from across the region along with international organizations has enabled spaces for exchange and discussion that strengthen multidimensional and multisectoral cooperation.

To understand the Venezuelan situation and the migration crisis in the region, it is first necessary to consider the situation in the country and its impact on the politics and elections throughout South America. Thus, the crisis must be considered not just from a domestic dimension but also from its impact at regional and multilateral levels, including how it affects the debates in





Migrants at the Simón Bolívar Bridge on the Colombia-Venezuela border, April 2019.

multilateral spaces in addition to domestic politics in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

In previous workshops, participants considered three crucial elements of the Venezuelan crisis: (1) the political situation in the country, (2) the economic structural crisis, and (3) the repression and violation of human rights. These three factors, in addition to a worsening humanitarian crisis in the country, are some of the primary structural reasons for the mass exodus of at least 4 million citizens within and outside of South America.

With respect to that migratory flow, the cases of Colombia and Brazil stand out. Because of their geopolitical positioning, these countries have been the main recipients of this population.

In this context, the significant political factors include the current Venezuelan regime's control of the institutional apparatus and its capacity to subordinate the powers of the state. This means that in practice, a real division of powers does not exist in the government because the other powers are subordinated and under the control of the executive. In addition, the establishment in 2017 of the National Constituent Assembly contributed to the creation of what some analysts have called a modern dictatorship. Furthermore, it is important to note the appointment of the president of the Venezuelan National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, as interim president of Venezuela, which has received the support and recognition of 54 countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and the member countries of the European Union. Despite this, the regime continues to maintain international support in countries such as the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China.

Venezuela is going through a structural economic crisis that has caused its gross domestic product to decrease steadily, declining by 10 percent in 2016 and 15 percent in 2017; as of April 2019, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expected a further decline of

25 percent in 2019. In terms of hyperinflation, the IMF expects the Latin American country to reach an inflation rate between 4 million and 10 million percent. Additionally, as of April 2019, Venezuela's external debt was close to \$125 billion. The poverty rate for 2018 was 87 percent, with 61 percent of the population in extreme poverty. It is also important to remember that around 90 percent of the economy is sustained from exports. This has generated a series of impacts in the daily life of Venezuelans, who currently live with a food shortage of 85 percent of the basic market basket. Meanwhile, in the health-care system, the crisis has led to the operative failure of at least 71 percent of emergency rooms and a life expectancy reduction of 3.5 years.

The systematic violation of human rights and the repression of citizens, civil society, and the opposition have exacerbated the humanitarian emergency in the country. There are approximately 790 political prisoners, of which 100 are military and 690 are civilian. Meanwhile, restrictions on freedom of expression have led traditional media outlets to be at the service of the regime. Those that are not tend to suffer the same fate as the newspaper *El Nacional*, which printed its last edition December 14, 2018, after 75 years of operation and more than two decades of hard confrontations with the governments of the late President Hugo Chávez (1999–2013) and his successor, Nicolás Maduro, as well as dozens of other media outlets that have disappeared.

High violence rates indicate there are at least 23,047 homicides per year in Venezuela. Leading contributors to this violence include military forces; paramilitary groups; criminal organizations; the Colombian guerrillas of the National Liberation Army (ELN); the “strategic rearguard” of the sectors of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) that have not been demobilized near border areas; illegal mining mafias; and criminal gangs in the center and eastern portions of the country involved in drug trafficking, human trafficking, and indigenous exploitation. As for demonstrations against the Maduro government, while in 2018 there were 12,715 protests, as of May 2019, 2,573 demonstrations have been registered, even with the ongoing systematic repression.

Maduro's government is an authoritarian regime that has not quite been able to consolidate itself. This is reflected, for example, in an increase in use of the *Carnet de la Patria* (Homeland Card) to access basic goods, grants, and services. It is estimated at least 16 million Venezuelans hold this identification card; without it, they would be excluded from access to public services and benefits.

There is also evidence of an increase in government interference in autonomous services related to health care, education, universities, theater, and, particularly, the economic private sector.

It is in this context that the latest workshop on “Regional Responses to the Venezuelan Crisis” took place. In addition to examining the internal situation of the country, the workshop featured an analysis of the importance of the humanitarian emergency in the current international agenda and the roles that



different international actors—including the United States, the European Union, China, and Russia—have in the emergency.

Displacement of Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants to Nonbordering Countries

In order to analyze and break down the features of migration out of Venezuela, it is necessary to consider the migration in context of a larger humanitarian crisis.

As established in past workshops, the Venezuelan migratory process has occurred in two phases:

1. From 2000 to 2014: Migration was primarily carried out by middle and upper socioeconomic classes to developed countries (Spain, the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands) in an organized manner, motivated by personal or legal insecurity, low purchasing power, lack of labor opportunities, and international educational opportunities. Until 2014, 2.5 million emigrations had been reported. From that point forward, various waves of migration have been reported, motivated mainly by physical insecurity. The average age of the migrants was 25–40 years old.
2. Since 2015: The phenomenon of forced migration developed. Upper and middle socioeconomic classes continued to migrate, but citizens of all socioeconomic levels were now leaving, looking to cover their basic needs and help those who stayed in the country. The average age of those who emigrated was 18–45. Throughout this period, the country began to steadily lose intellectual human capital as well as basic labor capital and capacity. The main destination countries continued to be those in the Global North but now included other nations in the region, such as Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Perú, Panamá, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay. It was also during this period that the emigration of pregnant women and individuals with chronic diseases and/or malnutrition began. Based on recent numbers from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), since 2015, 4 million migrants have left Venezuela. The years 2016–2018 saw an accelerated growth in migration rates; in those two years alone, more than 2 million people left the country. These numbers do not include undocumented migrants and individuals with dual European, Colombian, or Ecuadorian citizenship, among others. Throughout this period, there was also an increase in the number of asylum seekers, refugees, and underage migrants.

The current Venezuelan migration phenomenon has specific causes based in humanitarian factors, beginning with challenges to the social imaginary, or the set of values, laws, and institutions common to Venezuelans, that have permeated Venezuelan society with respect to migration, followed by the international treaties and agreements signed and ratified by the countries of the region on the legal protection of refugees, and ending with the hospitality that migrants and refugees receive at their destinations.

Characteristics of the 2018–2019 period of migration from Venezuela include a sense of urgency, disorderly migration under extremely vulnerable conditions, and a migrant population made up of professional and nonprofessional individuals from a variety of demographic backgrounds. There is no definite destination or specific purpose; the main objective is to “leave Venezuela.” Migration has become a survival factor for the social imaginary, especially as it lives in children, teenagers, and young adults. Currently, the main destinations are Colombia and Brazil, which border Venezuela; Argentina and Chile, the main recipient countries for professionals; Ecuador, a country of transit and a destination; and Perú, which has received the largest numbers of refugees and asylum seekers.

There is no consensus regarding the real number of individuals who have emigrated in recent years. The R4V—a coordination platform for refugees and migrants from Venezuela—points to 2.7 million migrants, while the UNHCR has an official number of 2 million, and the JRS estimates 4 million.

To gain a better understanding of the situation from the present figures, it is necessary to analyze two factors: (1) Venezuelan migration in the region is a phenomenon that tends to increase. The Organization of American States (OAS) had estimated that by the third trimester of 2019, the number of migrants would have reached 5.4 million to 5.7 million, and that by 2020, the migrant numbers may reach 7.5 million to 8.2 million. (2) Official registries present lower numbers than reality. An example of this is the case of Colombia, where, even though the border is closed, migrants continue to circulate. Additionally, numerous illegal migratory paths are being used without proper registry mechanisms to adequately process those who pass through these borders.

The migration phenomenon has led to the deterioration of the social fabric of Venezuelan society because of the disintegration of families as they choose those members who are better able to work (usually young people) to emigrate with the objective of financially helping those who stay behind.

The World Bank indicates that \$297 million entered Venezuela as remittances in 2018. A recent survey by the consulting firm Consultores 21 estimates that six out of every ten Venezuelan homes depend on foreign remittances and 71 percent of individuals who have left the country help their families back home through this medium.

Additionally, the social fabric in receiving countries is also affected by politicization of the migration phenomenon, with social issues such as socioeconomic insecurity and unemployment being blamed on Venezuelan migrants.

Regional agreements and domestic policies on migration in many Latin American and Caribbean countries are characterized by a humanitarian approach, as is the case with the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, as well as the residence agreements of regional organizations such as the Southern Common Market



(MERCOSUR) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). These policies and agreements were developed by progressive governments in the Southern Cone during a period when the region did not present a migratory crisis of this magnitude.

The Cartagena Declaration on Refugees establishes, in a clear and joint manner, the definition of refugees as those who “have fled their country of nationality or habitual residence and whose lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights, or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order.” Most Venezuelans who seek asylum and refugee status meet the criteria of this definition, yet most of the states that have signed the declaration have not fulfilled their responsibilities because of the large numbers of applications that increase by up to a hundredfold per year. A lack of awareness of the Cartagena definition and of the current residence agreements of the MERCOSUR and UNASUR have led to the adoption of questionable legal actions by executives in many of the receiving countries, with little or no intervention by their parliaments. Ad hoc instruments have been developed and applied to Venezuelans who had previously returned to their country, however, access to asylum and refuge rights is hindered by new bureaucratic and administrative regulations.

One of the main phenomena in the region is the growing politicization of the Venezuelan migration flow, transforming from a matter of foreign policy to a domestic issue for migrant-receiving countries. The narrative of this politicization has been characterized by a desire to close off the migration flows to receiving states, reinforcing with it the stigmatization and blaming of internal problems—such as unemployment and socioeconomic insecurity—on the migrant population. This has encouraged growing xenophobia in the main receiving countries, such as Colombia, Peru, Brazil, and some Caribbean islands, among others.

The Venezuelan migratory phenomenon presents a series of challenges for receiving countries: (1) the humanitarian crisis, (2) mechanisms for migratory regularization, (3) the collapse of public services in border regions, (4) abuse and human exploitation, and (5) the xenophobia occurring in some communities.

The Role of Civil Society in Coordinating with Multilateral Organizations

Amid a proliferation of initiatives to mitigate the Venezuelan crisis, a crucial challenge faced by civil society and multilateral organizations alike is the existing fragmentation and division within and among these actors. This raises the question: how can coordination capacity among existing initiatives be improved?

For example, there is division among civil society organizations, including competition for resources from private institutions and a prominent role of their representatives. In addition, the fragmentation among regional multilateral bodies is evident, as is exemplified by the actions of the Lima Group and the Quito Process,¹ which lack coordination between themselves.

In both cases, determining coordination has been difficult because of the politicization of the humanitarian emergency and the different political views among governments as well as in civil society. It is necessary that leaders, despite different ideological views, observe the situation from a human perspective rather than a political one. It is also necessary to depoliticize the situation and humanitarian aid and enable civil society to establish dialogue with key sectors that can help mitigate the crisis. Regarding this last point, it is essential to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations working on the ground with parts of the population that are affected the most by the humanitarian emergency.

To overcome the division found in civil society, it is necessary that organizations first increase interaction among themselves, while also reaffirming their leading role as mediators between different states, multilateral organizations, and governments, to recover lost influence in their field of action.

Bottlenecks that greatly hinder the advocacy capacity of civil society organizations persist because of the difficulties evidenced by the Permanent Council of the OAS Assembly. This has occurred despite the important efforts that this body has made in coordination with civil society organizations in creating a working space between the secretary general of the OAS and civil society, including the appointment of an adviser to help facilitate that connection. The Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Court have taken multiple interpretations of the OAS efforts.

In addition to the initiatives promoted by the OAS within the framework of its coordinated spaces with civil society, it has also promoted other initiatives related to the role of civil society. Regional initiatives by civil society to address the humanitarian emergency have faced a series of obstacles, among which the lack of coordination of initiatives and the lack of financial resources stand out. According to the OAS, \$500 million to \$738 million have been allocated to help Venezuela's neighboring countries deal with the migratory and refugee crisis, and by the end of 2019, the amount may exceed \$1 billion. Despite this, more international economic support is necessary due to the nature and state of the crisis.

Regarding coordination of multilateral organizations, it is necessary to depoliticize the Venezuelan situation so civil society organizations can engage in effective cooperation with organizations such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which has tried to maintain a neutral stance on the possibility of intervention in the Latin American country. Additionally, multilateral organizations such as the Lima Group must create spaces for cooperation with civil society, as the OAS has begun to do, in order to have a significant impact on the mitigation of the humanitarian emergency.

In this sense, Johns Hopkins University and Human Rights Watch have been calling for the creation of dialogue channels with the Lima Group. It is necessary to promote relations among civil society organizations working on this issue, generating spaces for coordination within and among organizations, with the objective of increasing their capacity and the reach of written materials



on the humanitarian emergency in Venezuela, which document, among other things, the systematic violation of human rights in the country.

Once documentation is coordinated and disseminated, civil society organizations must continue to insist on cooperation efforts with multilateral bodies so that different governments in the region are made aware of the reality of the situation in Venezuela. This must be done without losing sight of the situation's predominantly humanitarian features. This proposal is based on the premise that civil society should not remain in a continuous state of reflection of its duty but rather look for spaces and scenarios for possible coordination and cooperation in service of the Venezuelan crisis.

The Crisis within Venezuela

While the situation in Caracas has acquired more media coverage, it does not completely represent what is happening across the country. The situation throughout Venezuela varies from state to state. Regions of the country have been affected to a greater or lesser extent because of various issues. However, the pillars that sustain and deepen the crisis are, mainly, food insecurity and the lack of state policies. So the question is, if the situation in each Venezuelan state is different, why is there talk of a generalized humanitarian crisis throughout the country?

It is because the humanitarian emergency situation is indicated by the following areas:

- Scale of the harm: Number of affected individuals, children under 5 years of age with acute malnutrition.
- Intensity of the damage: How many people suffer from acute malnutrition?
- Speed at which the crisis will further deteriorate.
- Survival strategies—consumption: The strategies employed to face the crisis.
- Humanitarian response capacity.
- Aggravating factors, including access to drinking water, energy, public order, and loss of the rule of law.
- Cross-border nature: The situation experienced in the country affects neighboring countries or communities.

In the case of Venezuela, the rate of deterioration in these areas shows a worsening situation, especially in relation to food insecurity. The food insecurity situation is the result of the restrictions employed by the government on the implementation of humanitarian aid, as well as a lack of state policy on the matter, generating uncertainty in terms of future food security as the rates continue to remain volatile in their increase and decrease, doubling in some cases. There has also been an increase in mortality rates for pregnant women and infants, which have doubled in less than five years.



Migrants carry goods from Colombia into Venezuela across makeshift pedestrian bridges, April 2019.

The volatility of the food security rates is an example of the state's unwillingness to regulate the humanitarian emergency. If there was real political will on the part of the regime to resolve the situation, the trends of food security would show constant rather than volatile rates. Civil society organizations have also recorded an alarming shortage in six out of 12 food groups. Additionally, families have reported the pattern of consumption has been decreasing: currently, they are only consuming between three and four products of the family basket.

The lack of state policies and disconnect from the central government in states has led to an increase in informal and illegal activities in the migratory crisis. This is evidenced in the border regions, where the closure of the border has led to a different reality. The workshop's site visit demonstrated how border paths are still very much in use and operated by security forces. In the border states, informal activity has increased, accompanied by a strong influence from paramilitary groups, including Colombian guerrillas from ELN and former members of FARC's People's Army. Colombian media outlets have reported on these groups charging extortions or tolls from undocumented migrants.

Additionally, the presence of these groups in border regions has generated overlapping social problems in both countries, thus contributing to an even more complex situation for migrants on both sides of the border. In some areas, reports indicate that Venezuelan social leaders have been threatened by the ELN to express their support for the Venezuelan regime, and parts of the border population have also reported that this armed group has occasionally appeared in schools to recruit minors.

Thus, the situation at the national level is a crisis. However, some states have been even more affected by social problems—some overlapping—that further exacerbate the deterioration of the social fabric of border regions.





An informal settlement camp for people displaced from Venezuela, near Cúcuta, Colombia, April 2019.

The Role of Extraregional Actors in the Crisis

What is the importance of Venezuela for extraregional actors? There is near constant analysis on this question because of the important international support the Venezuelan regime currently maintains. This support comes from a range of powers, including Russia and China, as well as countries, such as Turkey and India, that are in the process of implementing ambitious economic investments and expansion strategies in their areas of influence worldwide.

Much of the international support for Nicolas Maduro is motivated by economic and political factors. Economic considerations include commercial and financial relations regarding the sale of weapons; investment in oil, which includes the exploitation and exchange of the resource for loans; and the extraction of gold in the mining arc. The political factor is borne out of challenges to the liberal international system by new powers that question the values and rules of that system.

These are the main actors and their predominant interests in Venezuela:

- China: The country is primarily motivated by an economic interest. Perceptions of this interest in Latin America are mostly centered on the purchase of commodities as well as growing investments. Indeed, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has developed a vertical pivot axis in Latin America through its agreements with Panama, has increased the country's investments. This Chinese strategy is not unique to Latin America. The BRI is a fundamental policy instrument in China's efforts of global projection and to promote a multipolar international system—which, in the context of China's differences with the United States, becomes increasingly bipolar.
- Russia: It is usually assumed Russia's interests are purely geostrategic, but it also has an economic strategy in which

its companies benefit from agreements with Venezuela. This is especially reflected in the hydrocarbon industry. Between Russia and Latin American countries there has been a turn toward a growing importance of the economic dimension, as has been demonstrated not only between Russia and various Latin American countries, but also in the recent signing of a memorandum of understanding among the Eurasian Economic Union, MERCOSUR, and Cuba. The foreign policy of Russia has aimed to move conflicts away from its borders and from its areas of influence closer to those of the United States.

- Iran and Turkey: Although they do not have the same political standing as China and Russia, they maintain their investments and are becoming more involved in Venezuela.

The interests and roles that Russia, China, and Turkey have in the Venezuelan crisis center on a competition structure between big powers in which the geostrategic position of Venezuela gains great importance. This suggests that these countries look to destabilize a region historically influenced by the United States by making inroads into its markets and influencing strategic political scenarios in the countries of the region. The objective is to demonstrate and increase their political clout when it comes to international negotiations by showing their capacity to impact spaces beyond their traditional sphere of influence. On the other hand, the United States' strategy regarding its influence in the region remains unclear. This is especially true regarding Venezuela, where there is an absence of strategic options that translate into proposals for a solution to the crisis.

In other words, Venezuela is strategically valuable because of its prime geographic location for the implementation of a plan aimed at relocating US focus, moving the United States away from the borders of China and Russia and doing so without those two countries neglecting their own economic interests. This calculation is one of the reasons why Russia and China support the current Venezuelan regime.

The preceding analysis presents a great challenge for civil society as it considers what can be done to help solve the Venezuelan crisis. It is necessary to look for ways to generate spaces for debate that transcend the region, situating civil society as a key tool for coordinating dialogue between great powers, in order to seek a way out and encourage peaceful transition to the recovery of democracy in Venezuela.

Recommendations

National Governments

Recognize the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees.

- For states that have not yet done so, implement the Agreement on Residence for Nationals of MERCOSUR for Venezuelan migrants.



- Replicate successful models of migration policies and data compilation to establish joint regional criteria and coordinate individual efforts. This way, countries will be able to maximize the reach of the registries and policies.
- Streamline procedures for the analysis of asylum and refugee applications:
 - Look to expand and facilitate the use of complementary or humanitarian visas and prevent discrimination practices in the form of requisites that are impossible or extremely hard to meet.
 - Avoid the use of humanitarian visas that must be applied for within the Venezuelan territory. In practice, these visas limit access because of socioeconomic conditions.
- Moderate political and media speeches with the aim of preventing stigmatization of the Venezuelan population present in other countries of the region. Speeches should focus on informing about the situation in Venezuela, the experience of migrants, and the positive impact migration has, rather than promoting its growing demonization.
- Continuously carry out awareness and information campaigns on the Venezuelan migration to create empathy in the receiving population.
- Work on integral policies on migration and refuge. These should not only focus on migration regularization but also promote inclusion and integration measures for migrant populations, implementing hospitality as an advocacy strategy. For example:
 - Implementing the Andrés Bello Convention regarding the recognition of secondary, tertiary, and university degrees.
 - Providing access to public services, especially health and education.
- Facilitate access to public services through the simplification of ID requirements.
- Inform the general public about the situation in Venezuela, including the migrant experience, and demonstrate the positive impacts of migration, as opposed to demonizing it. Carry out awareness campaigns on Venezuelan migration to help build empathy toward this population in receiving societies.
- Avoid closing borders through the requirement of impossible, or hard to achieve, requisites. Closing formal borders generates growth in the illegal economies along the border regions, strengthens illegal groups, increases the number of undocumented migrants, and puts migrant safety at risk.
- Avoid, at all cost, armed conflict or military intervention. The democratic transition should be carried out peacefully.

Multilateral Organizations

- Augment civil society organization participation in regional bodies as with the OAS and the Lima Group, among others, to solidify their support in the continuation of civil society efforts.
- Define the actions that have been carried out by the Lima Group and the Quito Process.
- Improve the coordination of regional responses to migration from functional regional organizations such as MERCOSUR, the Andean Community of Nations, and the South American Confederation of Migration to avoid redundancy and increase efficiency.
- Promote greater interaction with the Caribbean region on the coordination of efforts and policies carried out by governments and initiatives from civil society at the sub-regional level.
- Formally request that states implement the international agreements in force regarding the use of complementary or humanitarian visas, as is the case of the Cartagena Declaration and the Residence Agreement of MERCOSUR, among others.
- Request economic resources from the international community.
- Create and/or strengthen cooperation spaces with civil society.

Civil Society Organizations in the Region

- Enhance the capacities and technical knowledge of civil society organizations responding to the crisis. This is needed to systematize the work and strengthen proposals made individually by networks and civil society organizations.
- Generate a common methodology among civil society organizations to document, in a more global way, the occurrence of atrocities or indicators of violations of human rights in Venezuela and the migratory situation. Strengthen understanding, communication, and coordination among people in the field, technical teams, and decision makers.
- Strengthen the role of civil society as articulators and facilitators in the leadership of responses to large-scale crises.
- Strengthen the role of civil society in documenting the perpetration and indicators of atrocities to generate reports and databases that can be presented to governments, multilateral organizations, and the international community.
- Support further training and analysis on the role of Venezuela in the international arena to learn about the economic and geopolitical interests of world powers, with the aim of



generating dialogue and articulation strategies with extra-regional powers that have influence in the country.

- Strengthen the action of civil society in Venezuela for proactive efforts that go beyond mere denunciation.
- Help build a large-scale humanitarian space in interaction with state and social actors in Venezuela to allow actions of collection, entry, and distribution of aid, refraining from instrumentalizing it for nonhumanitarian purposes (e.g., for harm or for political purposes).
- Make efforts to disseminate at regional and international levels the documentation on the internal situation carried out by Venezuelan civil society, especially regarding the violation of human rights and requests for international assistance to mitigate the humanitarian emergency.
- Coordinate among the different initiatives that have been carried out individually and independently to strengthen Venezuelan civil society.
- Contribute to the work of the people who are in the field and demonstrate that the commitment is to the protection and defense of human rights and not to ideologies.
- Coordinate actions and/or programs among the organizations of the civil society forum.
- Increase and enhance interaction with multilateral organizations.
- Position civil society coordination with multilateral organizations as a necessary factor for these organizations to improve their work in fulfilling their missions. Avoid criminalizing those who perform humanitarian functions.

Civil Society Organizations in Venezuela

- Strengthen the role of civil society in documenting the perpetration and indicators of atrocities to generate documents and databases that can be presented to governments, multilateral organizations, and the international community.
- Enhance understanding of the multidimensional nature of the crisis: international actors must look beyond the geopolitical implications while local and national actors must see beyond the domestic and regional implications. Civil society in Venezuela must promote channels of communication with international actors to facilitate this change of perspective.
- Depoliticize humanitarian aid with a common strategy at the local level to focus attention on the humanitarian crisis over other problems.
- Universities and other educational institutions should coordinate with counterparts in Colombia to promote the analysis of common border phenomena. Their results can influence decision making.

This Readout and Recommendations summarizes the primary findings of the workshop as interpreted by the organizers. It should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to all of its recommendations, observations, and conclusions. Photos are property of the Stanley Center.

Endnotes

¹ The Quito Process is a multilateral space that was established after the Declaration of Quito in September 2018 in the Ecuadorian capital. Representatives from 13 Latin American countries participated, with the objective of exchanging information and articulating regional coordination on the migration crisis in Venezuela.



About Us

The Stanley Center for Peace and Security partners with people, organizations, and the greater global community to drive policy progress in three issue areas—mitigating climate change, avoiding the use of nuclear weapons, and preventing mass violence and atrocities. The center was created in 1956 and maintains its independence while developing forums for diverse perspectives and ideas. To learn more about our recent publications and upcoming events, please visit stanleycenter.org.



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