



Regional Responses to the Venezuelan Crisis: Strengthening Capacities of Civil Society and Multilateral Initiatives

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Introduction

This policy memo reflects the discussions undertaken as part of a third regional workshop on “Regional Responses to the Venezuelan Crisis: Strengthening Capacities of Civil Society and Multilateral Initiatives,” organized by *cries* and the Stanley Foundation and held September 27 and 28, 2018, in Panama City, Panama.

The workshop was structured into four sessions centered on these topics: (1) characteristics of the Venezuelan crisis, (2) human displacement trends in the Caribbean, (3) the role of regional and hemispheric organizations in containing the crisis and protecting refugees, and (4) the role of civil society in the regional Venezuelan crisis.

This document synthesizes the main conclusions of each of these sessions, along with a series of recommendations identified by participants based on the discussion and suggestions raised during the workshop.

Characteristics of the Venezuelan crisis

The situation in Venezuela is a highly complex, multidimensional crisis that requires an integrated, negotiated, sustainable solution that safeguards democracy and the rule of law, avoiding interventionist patterns of the past.

At the political level, the Venezuelan crisis is marked by the consolidation of hegemonic authoritarianism. This regime is characterized by violence against civilians (PROVEA reports 2,450 attacks on the civilian population and an increase of 561 percent in incidents of torture in 2017); the manipulation of procedures, time lapses, and results of the National Electoral Council (NEC); the disqualification or invalidation of opposition political parties under the NEC; and the existence of political prisoners and exiles.

Since July 2017, two key political events have occurred in Venezuela. First, there was the illegal election of a Constitutional Assembly, charged with drafting a new constitution. While this assembly formally constitutes a superpower—meaning it has power over the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government—in practice it is subject to the governing coalition. Led by Diosdado



Cabello, its majority composition is favorable to President Nicolas Maduro. Second, there was a succession of three elections: of governors in October 2017, of mayors in December 2017, and the presidential election in May 2018.

The current Venezuelan regime is authoritarian but does not characterize itself as such. This authoritarianism is reflected, for example, in the increased use of the *Carnet de la Patria* (National Identity Card) to access goods, grants, and services. It is estimated that 16 million Venezuelans possess this card, and without it they would be excluded from numerous services and benefits. There is also evidence of increased governmental interference in matters related to health, education, universities, theater, and private companies, among other sectors.

Furthermore, a serious public safety crisis is ongoing, with a steep increase in the weakening of the Venezuelan state and the rule of law, along with elevated levels of violence. In general, authoritarian regimes centralize violence, but in the case of Venezuela the opposite occurs: the state has delegated some of its right to the use of legitimate force to paramilitary groups in addition to its own armed forces. This has led to an increase in forced disappearances related to armed nonstate actors. Additionally, there is a strong presence of criminal organizations in Venezuela, such as the Colombian guerrillas (the National Liberation Army, or ELN), mining mafias, and megagangs located in the central and eastern regions of the country who are involved in drug trafficking, human trafficking, and exploitation of the indigenous. Venezuela now has 27,000 homicides annually, with a rate of 89 homicides for every 100,000 residents.

Simultaneously, Venezuela is in the midst of an acute economic crisis, with a hyperinflationary economy that is in default. This has led to a reduction in income—with a minimum salary of 1,800 Bolivars—and a basic food basket that costs more than 20,000 Bolivars, or 11 to 12 times the minimum salary. Poverty is at 87 percent, with 61 percent of the population living in extreme poverty. In turn, the estimated inflation rate for 2018 is between 1 million and 4 million percent (IMF/Economática, 2018).

Finally, Venezuela is in the midst of an acute social and humanitarian crisis, which is in turn the main cause for emigration. This crisis strongly impacts the health sphere, which is experiencing a 78 percent drug shortage at the national level, high emigration of doctors and nurses, and increased epidemics such as HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria.

Venezuelan migration has developed in two phases:

1. **Planned migration, 2000–2014.** In this period, there were 2.5 million migrants with an average age of 25 to 40. This was planned migration (e.g., for school or work) due to personal/legal insecurity, low purchasing power, and lack of work opportunities in Venezuela. The middle and upper classes migrated to developed countries (primarily Spain, the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands).

2. **Forced migration, since 2015.** Four million migrants have left the country, with accelerated growth during the 2016–2018 period; more than two million migrants have left Venezuela in the last two years. These numbers do not include undocumented migrants or citizens with dual European, Colombian, or Ecuadorian nationality. There has also been an increase in the number of Venezuelan asylum seekers and refugees, and child migrants in other countries. The upper and middle classes continue to migrate, but citizens of all socioeconomic levels are now leaving the country. The lower socioeconomic level of the population migrates to cover its basic needs and to send remittances to those remaining in the country. The average age of migrants is 18 to 45, and there is a loss of intellectual capital and a worker base within Venezuela. In addition to the destination countries of previous years, migrants are primarily moving to countries in the region such as Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Panama, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay. People with chronic disease and/or malnutrition, as well as pregnant women, have begun to migrate as a form of survival.

The main country receiving the migratory flow since 2015 is Colombia, with nearly one million Venezuelans. In addition, Spain and the United States recorded the arrival of more than 200,000 Venezuelans each, with Venezuela being the primary country on the list of those requesting refuge and protection in Spain. Migrants from Venezuela have the fourth most asylum requests globally (after Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq). In fact, Venezuelan refugees make up 5.8 percent of the world's total, requesting asylum in countries like Peru, the United States, Brazil, Spain, and Panama. Since 2014, 166,000 Venezuelans have requested asylum worldwide.

Many people decide to leave Venezuela illegally because of problems processing their passports and apostilles. This makes them more vulnerable, exposing them to trafficking, prostitution, and recruitment by guerrillas. Migrants are vulnerable people, but in the case of Venezuelans, they are more vulnerable because they often migrate without important documents or money, and many have health and nutrition problems. Restrictive measures in receiving countries increase the vulnerability of migrants, especially those who do not have documents.

Based on this data, it is evident that the flow of Venezuelan migration will not decline unless internal conditions in the country change. If the government is to change direction, remedy conditions, and contain the drift toward totalitarianism, four fundamental elements must come together: (1) a generalized crisis, (2) a fracture of the governing coalition, (3) the existence of an active challenging coalition, and (4) coordinated and generalized international pressure on the governing coalition.

There is no doubt that the first condition (generalized crisis) is present in Venezuela today. However, the other elements are still absent. With respect to the governing coalition, while there are some internal tensions, there are no major fractures. The



opposition today is strongly persecuted, and opposing political parties are invalidated and outlawed. In turn, the opposition is divided over crucial matters such as how to develop policy under an authoritarian system, how to take advantage of electoral events, whether to promote dialogue with the government, the need to mobilize the population and to organize a general strike and/or drive a violent outcome, and whether to pursue judicial actions at the international level. Furthermore, the opposition lacks connections with civil society and is disconnected from the public's priority agenda. With respect to the fourth element (international pressure on the governing coalition), increased international pressure has been observed but in a disjointed manner (through the Lima Group, the United States, the European Union, particular states, the secretary general of the Organization of American States, Mercosur, different UN agencies). At the moment there are declarations, sanctions against officials, financial sanctions, judicial cases, and humanitarian aid initiatives. However, this pressure is not effective because of its fragmented and disaggregated character and the lack of a clear consensus strategy (among the different actors in the international community) about what should be done. Furthermore, the international community does not have a clear internal interlocutor because of fractures in the opposition coalition, which generates divisions on the international front.

As a result of all these circumstances, the minimum conditions for a change in governance are not present, and the imposed authoritarian government has been consolidated. In the imposition scenario, the government advances its authoritarian model without significant fractures in the governing coalition. However, the development of a general crisis may result in a collapse in the future. The key is to unify the opposition coalition and the international community around the hemispheric links between governance and cooperation. In addition, the cracks in the governing coalition must be exploited, and its most pragmatic sectors should be approached.

Human displacement trends in the Caribbean

In practice, the Venezuelan crisis acts as a case study with respect to whether the Caribbean countries, which are small developing states, can respond to a migration crisis of this scale.

Currently, the Caribbean has few migration statistics. The region is characterized by a mixed migration flow, which includes workers, traffickers and the trafficked population, and asylum seekers. Borders are porous, and there are strong social and financial limitations to receiving migratory flows. In turn, there is a series of established migration routes between Venezuela and the Caribbean countries. The main destinations of Venezuelan migrants are the Southern Caribbean countries: Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao (known as the “ABC” islands); Guyana; and Trinidad and Tobago. Asylum requests from Venezuelans to these countries

have increased recently. In 2018, Trinidad and Tobago received 4,847 asylum requests, Curacao 679, and Aruba 78.

Four items in particular should be noted in relation to Venezuelan migration in the Caribbean:

1. The strategic and geopolitical relevance of Venezuelan energy and oil cooperation and investments in the region. This makes the Caribbean countries reluctant to make statements against Maduro.
2. The impact of the transnational organized crime networks in the region. The fact that borders of Caribbean islands are very porous facilitates the development of networks of piracy, human trafficking, and drug trafficking.
3. The Caribbean's very underdeveloped political and legal environment in which to receive and protect refugees. There is no common framework shared by the entire Caribbean, and some countries have not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention or the Protocol on the Refugee Status of 1967.
4. The role of the Venezuelan diaspora in the region. Venezuelans make up 8 percent of Aruba's population and 10 percent of the population of Curacao, where Venezuelans represent the second largest migrant population after the Dutch.

In Curacao, an island with 160,000 inhabitants, it is estimated that there are 15,000 Venezuelans, of which only 5,000 are legal immigrants and the remaining 10,000 are undocumented. The relatively large number of Venezuelan immigrants in the country is noticeable with such a small population on the island. Further, there is a marked lack of clarity as to who—the government of the Netherlands or the government of Curacao—is responsible for managing migration. Given this situation, there are many *de jure* deportations. In 2017, 1,200 Venezuelans were deported from the island, and 386 had been deported as of April 2018. Venezuelans are a large majority of those deported from Curacao, followed by Jamaicans, Colombians, Dominicans, and Haitians.

In practice, Venezuelans who arrive in Curacao undocumented often have their rights violated while they are detained, including suffering psychological pressure, overcrowding, physical abuse (including to pregnant women), poor nutrition, lack of access to clothing and personal hygiene items, deplorable infrastructure conditions, denial of medical attention in emergency cases, detention of minors without social services assistance, persecution of children and interruption of the educational process, family separation, and even sexual abuse in exchange for hygienic items and admittance into the country. It should be noted in regard to these migrants that it is very expensive and nearly impossible for them to process their documents in Venezuela, and Curacao maintains a rigid migration policy that requires all papers in order to enter and settle in the country. The cost of attaining legal status within Curacao is very high, estimated at between \$2,000 and \$3,000 per person per year. Worse yet, those Venezuelans who enter Curacao legally cannot

leave the country, as it is impossible to renew their passports. Another issue is the situation of children born in Curacao, whose migration documentation can only be processed if the parents are residing legally in the country. There is also evidence of a high level of xenophobia against Venezuelans, promoted by the government and the press, which is replicated in environments such as schools and leads to police persecution, domestic abuse, and abuse in the workplace. Since September 2017, Curacao has refused to allow the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and Red Cross to continue registering refugees. Up to that point, the UNHRC had been able to register more than 250 certificates. Refugees in Curacao cannot work without having social assistance, so they cannot satisfy basic needs, nor can they access health care, banking services, auto insurance, or other services.

Given this scenario, it is important to remember that Curacao signed the Brazil Declaration on Refugees, which is also part of the refugee framework of the European Union. The same is the case with Aruba. However, neither of the islands' governments complies with the commitments assumed in relation to refugees, and they both continue a policy of deportations.

In Aruba, a series of budgetary and logistical restrictions affects new migrants. In addition, Aruba treats them as economic migrants instead of refugees. This is a political choice by the government, since under this status it is not required to provide protection for the migrants. Also, Aruba does not fulfill its commitments to political refugees according to the European Union. Like Curacao, Aruba has prohibited the UNHRC from providing refugee certificates to Venezuelans in the country.

In Trinidad and Tobago, there have been many deportations because of concern that maintaining the country's good relations with one of its key allies—Venezuela—is a bigger priority. As a result, the geopolitical importance of the relationship with Venezuela has more weight than the humanitarian and migratory crisis of each country. Meanwhile, Trinidad's inability to handle undocumented migrants is clear, especially with its limited capacity to address any existing connections to international organized crime. However, it is important to highlight that recently Trinidad established a Refugee Unit in its Immigration Department. It is also developing legislation and policies to provide a legal and political framework for Venezuelan migrants. At this time, Trinidad offers a special work permit that allows Venezuelans to enter the country.

Since colonial times, there has been a population flow between Trinidad and Venezuela. The Venezuelan migrant arriving in Trinidad generally has the following profile: (a) a preexisting social network in Trinidad, (b) ages ranging from children (with their families) to people in their 50s, (c) various levels of skills and education, although a large number are professionals, (d) either seeking asylum or status as a refugee or economic migrant.

It is of great concern that Trinidad has installed migrant detention centers where people may be detained from 15 days up to two years without a clear timeline to resolve their situation. There

is a deficiency in domestic laws, since they do not provide protection for asylum seekers. Detainees do not have access to legal representation, nor are they permitted contact with local non-governmental organizations. They are also unable to formalize claims or have access to health care.

Often they must share beds or sleep on the ground, and their personal property is confiscated. In addition, there is a strong language barrier with the local population. There is evidence of a strong xenophobic feeling against Venezuelans, who suffer labor exploitation and have limited access to essential services. This population is also victim to sexual and gender violence, with a stereotype that associates Latina women with prostitution. In addition, the Venezuelans live in a constant state of vulnerability and deportability.

On the other hand, Trinidad may be part of a regional Caribbean response through CARICOM. In 2016, the Caribbean Migrations Consultation was launched in Trinidad, and it met in 2017 in the Bahamas to decide on a refugee-protection framework and a standard operating procedure.

The policy in Guyana is more receptive to migrants who enter across the land border and by sea. This country may be seen as a model of refugee policies throughout the Caribbean region. Guyana maintains an interagency committee to handle immigration and holds periodic meetings with representatives from the United Nations. Guyana has established a camp for Venezuelan migrants and has a vaccination campaign to address the population's health problems.

The role of regional and hemispheric organizations in containing the crisis and protecting refugees

Venezuela is in the midst of a generalized, complex, and multi-dimensional crisis. The United States plays a contradictory role in this scenario: on the one hand, it sanctions officials of the Maduro government; on the other hand, some pronouncements of President Donald Trump have not been helpful, for instance his comments about the possible use of force. For its part, China is acquiring ever more influence in the region and maintains a significant bilateral relationship with Venezuela. However, it is not included in multilateral responses to the crisis in Venezuela (related to investments and loans) and maintains a firm policy of nonintervention in internal matters.

Venezuela maintains a problematic relationship with its immediate neighbors—Brazil, Colombia, and Guyana—accentuated because of the spreading impact of its crisis, such as the flow of migrants and refugees, organized crime, and the increase in citizen insecurity.

Despite the paralysis of action, the crisis in Venezuela requires multilateral solutions. It is important to note the Venezuelan crisis cannot be handled as if it exists in a vacuum. Rather, it is occurring amid a regional and global increase of authoritarian



regimes. It must also be stated that the divided opposition in Venezuela substantially decreases the possibilities of multilateral action. With respect to regional multilateralism, first, it must be noted that the Lima Group has an important strength: its informality grants it flexibility and pragmatism, although this advantage has still not been fully utilized. In effect, the Lima Group must take advantage of its informality and flexibility to coordinate actions among its members and with the United States and the Organization of American States (OAS). In addition, it could form a troika-style subgroup assigned to carry out substantial actions with the support of the group as a whole. The Lima Group must also renew its commitment to the Inter-American Democratic charter, also considering the cases of Honduras and Guatemala. Finally, the Lima Group could maintain bridges with civil society organizations in Venezuela and throughout the region.

Furthermore, there has been increased cooperation between the secretary general of the OAS, Luis Almagro, and the regional nongovernmental organizations that work with migrants and refugees. The recent creation of an OAS working group to analyze the Venezuelan migration crisis is also notable.

With respect to global multilateralism, it should be noted first that the UNHRC approved a resolution for Venezuela to accept humanitarian aid. Furthermore, the International Criminal Court has initiated an investigation of the Venezuelan government for crimes against humanity at the request of several Latin American and European governments. In addition, Eduardo Stein has been designated as special envoy of the United Nations for Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

However, multilateral options are limited. The two most visible are the Lima Group and Almagro's actions within the OAS. In the current context, there is a leadership vacuum in these initiatives. This presents an external leveraging problem: it is impossible for outside actors to obtain influence and to achieve the desired changes in Venezuela. On the other hand, there is also a problem of moral risk: how should the international community respond to an authoritarian setback, as in the case of Venezuela? It is important to consider that a failure to respond will set a negative regional precedent.

Given the complexity of the crisis in Venezuela, it is important to seek long-term solutions that go beyond the political transition. For example, the creation of a multilateral assistance fund for Venezuela and its migrants and refugees could be considered.

At the global multilateral level, it is also important to consider the Global Migration Pact. The secretary-general of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, is a great supporter of this pact and has invested a great deal of political capital in it. Guterres was once the UN high commissioner for refugees for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and worked on the matter of forced migration for more than 10 years. However, the high commissioner does not have his or her own budget for refugees. Instead, that budget is mostly allocated to pay the salaries of officials. Therefore,

the operational budget with which the high commissioner can work is based on donations from countries. However, the global economic and financial crisis of 2008-2009 has had a very negative impact on UNHCR resources. It is also important to note that the UNHCR representative in Brazil, Isabel Valente, just assumed directorship of the agency's American Department, which makes her the main person responsible for the policy of the UNHCR in the Americas. The Venezuelan crisis has greatly impacted UNHCR policy in the region, and the designation of an officer with experience in Brazil, one of the main destinations of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, as representative of the UNHCR in the Americas will surely increase the role of this agency in the crisis.

Migration is legally divided into voluntary and forced, generating two types of migrants. In practice, however, there is a gray area in identifying forced migrants. The Geneva Convention establishes three pillars for migration and refugee policies: protection, long-term solutions, and repatriation. In addition, the Geneva Convention establishes the principle of nonreturn—that is, people seeking refuge cannot be returned to their country of origin.

Nonetheless, the state of Roraima in Brazil has returned Venezuelan migrants, as did Curacao. Given this, civil society has the task of pressuring countries to sign, ratify, and implement the Geneva instruments. These instruments serve to pressure governments to adopt a policy based on rights and also to consider the responsibilities of the countries receiving migrants—keeping in mind, mainly, the principle of nonreturn.

It is important to highlight the role of the National Committees for Refugees (CONAREs). The CONAREs are technical, autonomous bodies with great influence that operate and make important decisions in terms of migrant and refugee protection. They also include civil society organizations. In legal terms, the CONAREs have jurisdiction over their decisions, which are binding for governments. It is difficult to carry out an appeal against them, as their decisions have great credibility. Furthermore, while many countries have difficulties recognizing the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela (such as Brazil), they can do so through the CONAREs, which do recognize the expanded definition of refugee through the Cartagena agreements. Actors related to the Catholic Church and its organizations, such as Caritas and the Jesuit Refugee Service, are also important, as many already work on the ground assisting Venezuelan migrants and refugees.

Finally, it must be emphasized that health is the only area in which there is a combined effort between a hemispheric body and an international organization: the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The health alerts issued by these two organizations have been effective. Due to the increase of contagious diseases in Venezuela and the fact that diseases such as measles and diphtheria have reemerged, there are actionable spaces for the WHO and PAHO.

The role of civil society in the regional Venezuelan crisis

Above all, it should be stated that Venezuelan civil society does not have a history with organizations dealing with the matter of migrants—therefore, the humanitarian and migratory crises required civil society actors to learn about the subject as the crises developed.

Venezuelan civil society has been weakened because many workers in human rights and development organizations have migrated because of the crisis. Given the absence of a political organization to lead a process that addresses the situation, civil society organizations must assume that leadership role.

Currently, there are two great risks in Venezuela: First, that the situation will normalize, thereby weakening regional responses that may arise from the humanitarian and migratory crises. The Venezuelan government is betting on this scenario. On the other hand, there is an increasing risk that the government will not have the capacity to contain those betting on a violent outcome to the crisis. As the path to a peaceful solution becomes less likely, a violent solution will receive more support from the Venezuelan population. The support of the international community and civil society organizations in favor of peaceful and democratic solutions is needed to offset this trend.

Additionally, the key problem is that there is no clear internal interlocutor in Venezuela who can lead a dialogue with the international community. Therefore, a large part of the multilateral efforts and initiatives of the international community are lost. It is important to think about how and with whom to interact, and how to find an interlocutor in the Venezuelan opposition.

There are three important elements to note with respect to how a crisis exit strategy should be designed in Venezuela: (1) the solution to the Venezuelan crisis must be peaceful, (2) the solution must preserve democracy, and (3) the process of reinstitutionalization is a fundamental step to guarantee stronger institutions and an adequate political transition in the country, and it must be completed within the framework of reestablishing and strengthening the rule of law.

We must also look further into the three large obstacles for civil society's role in any transition in Venezuela:

1. The increased weakening of civil society due to the migration of its members. While members of the organizations who remain in the country are ever fewer, they must do ever more.
2. The lack of political focus in civil society. There is no unified political strategy shaped by civil society in cooperation with the political parties. Given this, a common narrative must be constructed to deal with the crisis. To do this, the theme of migration cannot be separated from the need for

a change in governance structures through a peaceful and constitutional process.

3. A possible government onslaught against civil society. If the government decides to take this route, as there are no political parties to respond or internal interlocutors to act; it would be a very strong strike against civil society. This is an evident risk that may deepen, and the trend in recent months has been going in that direction.

In the countries of the region, civil society is very important to contain the advance of xenophobia. The Civil Justice Association in Colombia, with its “Welcome Venezuela” program, is a clear example. Regional civil society also has the task of legitimizing the information that comes out of Venezuela, as civil society itself is a very important element of legitimization.

Beyond Venezuela: Nicaragua and El Salvador

It is also important for others in the region to consider the lessons learned by civil society organizations in Venezuela. Clearly, the current situation in Nicaragua is similar to what is happening in Venezuela. It is important to identify the triggers of the crisis in Nicaragua, to act on them, and to prevent them from aggravating the situation. To do so, the Nicaraguan population must be informed of what is happening in Venezuela. Today, there is fluid communication among the civil society networks in both countries despite the impossibility of traveling between Venezuela and Nicaragua, which makes physical encounters between said civil society organizations difficult.

In addition, both crises have regional impacts and negative consequences for civil society. Indeed, the conflict between Venezuela and Colombia will soon expand to Nicaragua, which has a history of conflict with Colombia. It should also be noted that the Nicaraguan Human Rights Center is a member of the CONARE, but it has been deactivated by the government. As a result, any Venezuelan who requests asylum in Nicaragua is detained and deported to Venezuela, instead of being returned to the country from where they enter Nicaragua, often Costa Rica. It is also of utmost importance to consider the case of El Salvador, a country that could experience something similar to Venezuela and Nicaragua and which is also an important political ally of Venezuela and is scourged by criminal violence and insecurity.

More broadly in Central America, there is evidence of strong deterioration of democratic processes, which involves authoritarian political regimes on both the right and the left, in which the civil population bears the worst impact. Human rights violations occur throughout the region. The end of armed conflicts in Central America did not resolve structural conflicts and socioeconomic inequality, which has increased considerably in recent years. Given this situation, it is important to advance narratives with respect to migrants and refugees and to recognize the authoritarian setback occurring in the Central American region. This can be reinforced by academia in collaboration with civil society organizations in the region to strengthen mechanisms of citizen diplomacy that



serve to express postures not being expressed today by a weakened or, in some cases, nearly nonexistent political opposition. It is also vital for all actors to pay attention to the existing threats to human rights in Central America and to denounce them, as they limit the possibilities of civil society to be able to contribute to a peaceful reestablishment of the democratic system in the region.

It is of great concern that there is evidence of a substantial reduction in opportunities for civic action by the governments of the region. The task, then, is to push toward a civil society with transnational character, and to preserve the role of the states in their relationship with civil society organizations.

Civil society organizations must first respond to the conditions under which migrants enter the community, generating a narrative defending migration under conditions respectful to human rights, with strategies to influence the advancement of public policies that govern these rights. The key here is to effectively construct coalitions to defend the migrant populations. Civil society organizations should forcefully promote this as a regional objective.

Recommendations

In Venezuela

- Initiate a new process to identify an international interlocutor in the Venezuelan opposition as an essential step toward advancing dialogue measures.
- Facilitate intersectoral dialogue (academia, civil society, multilateral organizations) with second- and third-level government officials within the opposition parties in Venezuela.
- Empower locals in Venezuela.
- Identify new facilitators and new opportunities for mediation that have legitimacy for both parties.
- Ensure that the reconstruction of state capacities and infrastructure is included on the agenda of solutions proposed.
- Generate the conditions under which Venezuelan officials acknowledge the existence of a humanitarian crisis in the country.
- Include pluralist sectors of progovernment political forces in the negotiations.

Regional Governments

- Ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention and the Protocol on the Refugee Status of 1967.
- Adjust the legal and regulatory frameworks related to migration and refugees in order to respect international agreements, conventions, and protocols.

- Incorporate narratives viewing migration as an opportunity for development.
- Reaffirm the Principle of Non-Refoulement and design and implement the insertion and integration of migrants and refugees in the long term.
- Promote and strengthen the role of the CONAREs and encourage the participation of civil society in them.
- Publish statistics on the number of refugees and migrants.
- Promote mechanisms of dialogue and nontraditional and low-profile negotiations.
- Initiate channels of communication with possible interlocutors such as China, Russia, Cuba, the Vatican, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay, and Costa Rica.

Civil Society and Academia

- Contribute to the aggregation and distribution of insights from Venezuelan civil society as a process that in turn contributes to its legitimization.
- Strengthen civil society's proactive role in multilateral forums (in bodies and commissions linked to questions of migration and refugees).
- Reinforce the role of the universities as instruments that increase awareness about migration, as well as a source of human resources for humanitarian aid.
- Support the role of private companies as dialogue facilitators.
- Strengthen cooperation with religious organizations assisting migrants.
- Promote a greater role for the International Red Cross Committee in Venezuela.
- Create communication strategies and engage media to influence action and mainstream a common language for government actors.
- Create a Group of Friends of the Inter-American Democratic Charter as a bridge between civil society and the OAS.
- Employ the language of the Responsibility to Protect as a tool to urge national governments to comply with their obligations.

Multilateral Organizations

- Articulate regional responses to the reception of migrants and refugees without documentation, understanding that bureaucratic restrictions increase the vulnerability of Venezuelan refugees.

- Promote the good practices of the secretary-general of the United Nations.
- Promote joint multilateral and consensus measures highlighting the preventive aspects of the Responsibility to Protect.
- Advance the work of intergovernmental, technical, and specialized organizations for intervention in humanitarian crises based on statistical and scientific data (e.g., the WHO and PAHO).
- Promote dialogue and collaboration between the Lima Group and the states and civil society organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Use the OAS's civil society working group on Venezuela to promote connections with civil society.
- Foster mechanisms of cooperation to develop and strengthen capacities in aid-receiving states (using lessons learned from other states, civil society organizations, and others).
- Incorporate new themes into dialogues, such as the importance of establishing a truth commission, promoting financial and economic reforms, developing health policies, applying justice under the framework of the rule of law, and developing new governance pacts.



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