

United Nations Security Council
Arria Formula Meeting

The Situation in Venezuela

Monday, November 13, 2017
3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
ECOSOC Chamber

Organized by the United States in partnership with Italy

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Venezuela has been in a state of escalating political, economic, and social crisis since April, when anti-government protests left more than 120 dead. Even after mass protests subsided, the situation in Venezuela continues to worsen as the country suffers from acute shortages of basic food and medicine. In August, President Maduro installed the widely criticized Constituent Assembly, whose legitimacy has been seriously questioned. The Constituent Assembly has since claimed supreme power and overruled the democratically-elected National Assembly. In September, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein reported that Venezuelan security forces may have committed “crimes against humanity” in dealing with protestors and called for an international investigation. In October, the Venezuelan government held gubernatorial elections amidst allegations of widespread fraud and impropriety in the voting process.

Objective

This meeting will provide an opportunity to hear first-hand accounts and expert perspectives on the deteriorating political, economic, and social situation in Venezuela, and its potential humanitarian impact on the region. It will also provide an opportunity to discuss the role the international community and regional organizations can play in seeking a political solution and facilitating humanitarian access to those affected by the tensions.

Context

When preventative efforts fail and national authorities do virtually nothing to prevent the suffering of people from worsening violence, the human and socio-economic consequences can be severe. Displacement is often the byproduct of internal unrest and human rights abuses and violations can be exacerbated by an unstable economy with hyper-inflation, acute scarcity of food, medicine, and other basic goods. Over the past six months, over a half a million Venezuelans have fled to Colombia and countries in the region in search of food, medicine, and economic opportunities no longer available in Venezuela. Venezuela's neighbors lack the resources and capacity to absorb this influx of displaced people and exposes the vulnerable to human trafficking and sexual exploitation. As the Venezuelan economy continues to crumble, the situation will likely only worsen, especially as the country is at risk of defaulting on its debt. The international community needs to work collectively to address the unfolding crisis and

its humanitarian impact in Venezuela and beyond before it worsens and potentially develops into a threat to international peace and security.

In order to provide Security Council members with a better understanding of Venezuela's challenges, speakers will address the implications of the profound political crisis; the deteriorating social, economic, humanitarian situation, and potential displacement crisis; and rule of law, corruption, and human rights violations and abuses, in particular those involving the use of excessive force and arbitrary detentions against protestors and other democratic actors. Council members may wish to consider how the United Nations can use existing tools and -- where appropriate -- employ new mechanisms to prevent further violence and a potential humanitarian crisis from spreading.

Panelists

Luis Almagro, Organization of American States Secretary-General

Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Joseph Cornelius Donnelly, Caritas International

Julio Henriquez, Foro Penal

Format

Following introductory remarks by the United States and Italy and the panelists, members of the Security Council will be invited to take the floor and are encouraged to speak and ask questions for no more than five minutes each.

All member states as well as permanent observers and non-governmental organizations accredited to the United Nations are invited to attend. Interpretation will be provided in all official languages of the United Nations. The Arria will be open to the press.