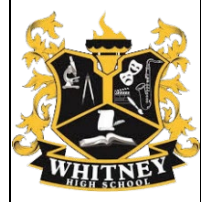


Whitney High School Model United Nations
 16800 Shoemaker Avenue / Cerritos / CA / 90703 / 562-926-5566



WHSMUN XX CONFERENCE

January 29, 2022

Novice UN High Commission on Refugees A [UNHCR]

Venezuelan Refugee Crisis

Chair Introductions

Head Chair

What's up, I'm Andrew Kong! As a senior, I've been in MUN for four years, chaired for three, and I am so excited to chair one last time for this committee, UNHCR! A little bit about me, besides doing MUN, I love shopping, fashion, the beach, volleyball, and having fun. I also love music, especially bands like Alvvays and Nirvana. I'm here for a good time and just trying to enjoy myself. Anyway, I look forward to seeing you guys in committee. I know all your hard work to prepare speeches, mods, and tons of research will pay off! :)

Legal

Hey, I'm Aleeza! I'll be serving as your legal for this conference! I've been involved with MUN for about a year and a half now and this is my first time chairing for a conference, so I'm excited! I enjoy reading, especially biographies, photography, travelling, and talking. Most of my friends describe me as loud, very talkative, and being unpredictable. The things I'm looking forward to the most in this conference are meeting all of you guys, seeing what unique solutions you come up with, and forming friendships!



BACKGROUND

Since 2014, Venezuela has been subject to an extreme socio-political and economic crisis which has only worsened due to increased political turmoil and hyperinflation. This resulted in two choices for Venezuelans: to either flee the country into an unknown future or stay and face the possible repercussions of a failed state.

5.3 million Venezuelans chose the first route, resulting in an 8,000 percent increase in the influx of migrants crossing borders into neighboring Latin American countries as access to food, medicine, and other necessities for Venezuelans living inside the country became scarce. This left 59% of households not receiving the necessary protein in food resulting in 73% of children being malnourished. According to the Monitoring of Acute Malnutrition and Family Food Security, this

is primarily due to a minimum wage that only covers 0.8% of basic groceries and remittances being reduced to half.

Not only is food challenging to find, but UNICEF also reported that 1.3 million children could not gain access to education and the [Venezuelan Human Rights Watch](#) highlighted evidence of abuse of people by the government working in illegal gold mines. This is the result of the de-dollarization of the private which increased salary growth by 22.7% in 2020 due to more than half of salaries being paid in US dollars, not bolivar, allowing remote workers to make just under 15% more than the public sector but at the expense of the suspension of human rights.

Venezuela, known for its incredible oil reserves, the largest in Latin America, is experiencing a high-level economic disparity because of fuel shortages in electricity and clean water due to the negligence of infrastructure maintenance. Coupled with strong US sanctions in 2019, the GDP plunged 35% since President Maduro assumed power in 2013. Furthermore, COVID-19 has left many countries that regularly donated in disarray, resulting in a massive dip in funding since 2020. The Brookings Institute has found that refugees from Venezuela received just \$265 per individual—over ten times lesser when being compared to Syrian refugees who received \$3,150 per individual. According to a report done in 2021 by [the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees from Venezuela](#), 7.2 million Venezuelans require assistance. However, current funding could only support just half of that as only 6% of the \$1.5 billion pledged by 30 countries in mid-June of 2020 has not been met; the [UN Humanitarian Response Plan](#) only received 34.8% of the requesting funding in 2020. The pandemic also gave rise to dangerous water crossings, instead of traditional overland methods, including traveling across the Bocas del Dragon. This water passage is criminally known for high sexual exploitation, trafficking, and violence by armed groups. This is especially dangerous for the thousands of families with pregnant wives, children, and disabled elderly. To make matters worse, on March 21, 2021, the Venezuelan armed forces took action against the [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia](#), a violent gang known for terrorism against migrants, in the Venezuelan State of Apure, which resulted in raids on family homes and assault. Events where human rights were violated turned the bordering states into war zones and forced people to take illegal and even more dangerous routes.

Amid this growing crisis, the Venezuelan government has also hindered aid efforts to the 7.5 million people in need within the country's border. Since December 2020, government workers have initiated methods to harass and intimidate NGOs, human rights organizations, and news outlets by freezing bank accounts, issuing arrest warrants, and partaking in raiding offices and buildings. This wastes time and resources when they could be assisting in helping those who need immediate assistance.



UN Involvement/Possible Solutions

The UNHCR has been an active member in aiding Venezuelans seeking asylum in neighboring Latin American and Caribbean countries. Notably, they have worked with host governments along with the International Organization for Migration to build a shelter with tents, relief items such as food, water, and first aid, as well as provide registration for migrants arriving in Aruba, Brazil, Colombia, Curacao, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Trinidad, and Tobago. These efforts prove vital in documenting migrants as asylum requests have increased five times from 33,100 in 2017 to 160,500 in 2018 in Peru alone. And with registration, UNHCR can send these refugees to different shelters that offer better opportunities for employment and education. Today, 13 shelters

are open, including Boa Vista and Pacaraima, which have a current capacity of 6,000 Venezuelans. This comprehensive plan falls under the Regional Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela, led by UNHCR and IOM and 137 different partners initiated on November 13, 2019.

To receive funding for the necessities desperately needed at the shelters, UNHCR and IOM also partnered with the Canadian government and 160 different organizations working in Latin American countries in a joint, virtual pledging event, with a targeted goal of \$1.44 billion to go into the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan during mid-2021. In total, 30 countries and two development banks were able to provide \$1.5 billion in grants and loans, reaching this year's goal, with the most being provided by the United States (\$407 million) and the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (\$600 million combined).

The World Food Programme, in April 2021, has also taken efforts to alleviate hunger in Venezuela, targeting an estimated 185,000 malnourished children too young to go to school and those with special needs in a multi-year plan in coalition with the Venezuelan government. By the end of the program, in 2023, the WFP hopes to supply food to 1.3 million children.



Bloc Positions

Latin American Bloc

Due to the unfortunate circumstances, 31% of Venezuelans go to Colombia, 18% to Peru, 8% to Chile, 8% to Ecuador, and 5% to Brazil. In the Latin American bloc, Colombia and Peru are the most involved in the Venezuelan Crisis. Approximately 1.74 million Venezuelan refugees are living in Colombia and more than a million in Peru. Because of the large number of refugees, the Colombian government granted them ten years of protected status since most are undocumented and have difficulty finding work and accessing essential services. In addition, hospitals in Colombia are filling up with Venezuelan refugees suffering from food insecurity and malnutrition during the coronavirus, which also imposes the risk of COVID-19 spreading. To improve living conditions for the refugees, the Colombian government created the Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Immigrants to ease the migration procedure. In Peru, the refugees can find jobs as taxi drivers, food deliverers, and gravediggers due to COVID-19. However, the living conditions for refugees in Peru are getting worse by the day as politicians are accusing them of crimes they did not commit and are now denying them entry into the country. In Peru and Colombia, Venezuelan refugees are exposed to sexual violence, gender-based violence, discrimination, and xenophobia and face poverty, food insecurity, eviction, and protection risks.

Western Bloc

In the western bloc, the United States is helping the Venezuelan refugees through enacting and supporting programs for food assistance, emergency shelters, health care, water, sanitation, and protection for vulnerable groups like the youth and the LGBTQ+. They have also announced a \$247 million fund in humanitarian assistance and \$89 million in economics for the refugees. Similar to Colombia, the United States announced it would grant a temporary protected status for the refugees. The United States is known to have provided Venezuelan refugees with the most funding, up to \$611 million. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom, with help from the World Bank, has sent a new package of aid to help Colombia host its refugees, which will allow the

government to access low-interest loans, improve essential services, provide more job opportunities, and boost economic growth.

Eastern Bloc

In the eastern bloc, things are somewhat complicated because although Russia and China are allied with Venezuela, the Venezuelan people see them as a threat to storing democracy and their peace. Due to the large wave of migration out of Venezuela, the oil industry lost many workers, hindering the Russian economy, especially trading. On the other hand, Germany stated it would increase the amount of support it's lending to the Venezuelan refugees by loaning 35.4 million euro and 23.6 million euro for developmental funding, which both together is well over \$60 million.

African Bloc

In the African bloc, many countries have not been actively involved in the Venezuelan crisis, so they have not commented on their stance or position regarding funding and other forms of aid. However, Henning Suhr, the head of the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation, stated, "The [South African] parliament declared Maduro's second term in office to be illegal." The African bloc has not given a proper stance, and it seems they are undecided of whether they will step in and help with the Venezuelan Refugee crisis. However, it is essential to note that most countries in the African bloc are third-world countries struggling to pick up their economies, improve living conditions, and decrease conflict.



Questions To Consider

1. What are the root causes of the Venezuelan Refugee Crisis?
2. What is the danger for Venezuelans who migrate across borders and those who stay behind?
3. How can the safety and wellbeing of Venezuelan migrants and citizens be assured? 4. How has the influx of Venezuelan refugees affected Latin American and Caribbean countries?
4. What countries have aided these refugees the most? The least? How so? 6. Since its start in 2017, why has the crisis still continued to grow?
5. What are some nonprofits and organizations that have helped provide humanitarian aid to Venezuelans in the African bloc?
6. What solutions to assist Venezuelans, both migrants and current citizens, are being taken?
7. How can governments improve living conditions for Venezuelans in countries they are primarily fleeing to? What can countries do to increase protection, decrease violence, and strengthen essential services?



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