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Venezuela, Factor 17: Good Governance

Venezuela: The Fight for the Rights

When it comes to being a Venezuelan citizen, you don't have much control or say in what occurs around you. Although they may not have the ability to speak their minds or voice their concerns about certain issues, whether those issues are political or about the economy itself, the daily life of a "well-off" or middle class Venezuelan is very similar in some ways to a middle class citizen in the United States. The neighborhoods in which they live are relatively developed. These people have access to electricity, water, phone lines, luxury, and entertainment. "Many of them have access to the internet. 25.5 % of Venezuelans (most of them middle class) had access to the internet in 2008."¹ "The middle class has easy access to health care, both private and public; many of them are insured."² The parents usually also send their children to private school. Nutritional products are easy to get a hold of, but with recent shortages of various products such as eggs, milk, and sugar, it has become more difficult and time consuming for Venezuelans to shop. These shortages are due to price regulations. Most middle class Venezuelans work in the tertiary sector, also known as the service industry. The tertiary sector of the industry involves the provision of services to other businesses as well as final consumers. "Services may involve transport, distribution, and sale of goods from producer to a consumer, as may happen in wholesaling and retailing, or may involve the provision of a service, such as in pest control or entertainment."³ While the upper class dominates the economic structures of commerce and industry, the middle class dominates the political aspect of the economy.

"The country only has 0.71% permanent crops"⁴. This is because Venezuela is dependent on foreign-made goods, even though they have made substantial gains in manufacturing, in both variety and in value of output. "Some environmental issues include oil and urban pollution of Lago de Maracaibo, deforestation, and a threat to the rainforest ecosystem because of irresponsible mining operations. Some of Venezuela's resources include petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, gold, bauxite, other minerals, hydropower, and diamonds"⁵. Petroleum is the country's top money maker resource. It has allowed substantial economic growth. "Benefits from the industry, however, have not been widely distributed, and a large percentage of the nation's rapidly growing population is poorly housed, fed, clothed, and educated."⁶ This issue was caused by former president, Hugo Chavez, who left the government in shambles after his death. One thing that he didn't provide was a more suitable social welfare system

¹ "What Is the Daily Life like in Venezuela?" *Yahoo! Answers*. Yahoo!, n.d. Web. 02 June 2014. <<https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20090415065751AA1XP8Y>>.

² "What Is the Daily Life like in Venezuela?" *Yahoo! Answers*. Yahoo!, n.d. Web. 02 June 2014. <<https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20090415065751AA1XP8Y>>.

³ "Tertiary Sector of the Economy." *Princeton University*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 June 2014. <http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Tertiary_sector_of_the_economy.html>.

⁴ *Central Intelligence Agency*. Central Intelligence Agency, n.d. Web. 01 June 2014. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html>>.

⁵ *Central Intelligence Agency*. Central Intelligence Agency, n.d. Web. 01 June 2014. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html>>.

⁶ "HowStuffWorks "Geography of Venezuela - Economy"" *HowStuffWorks*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 June 2014. <<http://geography.howstuffworks.com/south-america/geography-of-venezuela2.htm>>.

benefiting poor Venezuelans. "To improve conditions nationwide and to diversify the economy, the government has undertaken numerous development programs and the nationalization of key industries"⁷.

Venezuela's climate is tropical, hot, and humid. The temperature becomes more moderate in the highlands. "Deforestation issues and global warming are raising considerably the vulnerability over the forests to burn, threatening biodiversity in this sense. On the other hand, El Nino and La Nina are phenomena which bring droughts or excessive rains. When droughts are produced over this region, hydro power is considerably affected, especially when we consider that the biggest dams are fed with water coming from rivers which are born in this jungle region. Venezuela depends on 70% hydro to meet its electricity demand."⁸ "There is only about 2.85% of arable land."⁹ Due to this, Venezuelans' food mostly comes from other countries. "Agriculture is one of the weakest sectors of Venezuela's economy, and large amounts of food must be imported. Problems have included poor farming practices and lack of modern equipment."¹⁰ There have also been food shortages in essential products such as milk and butter, which is another reason why food products need to be imported. People believe that the government has caused these issues through nationalization. There has also been a lack of dialogue between landowners and farm workers, which promote the issue of poor farming practices.

"For Venezuelans, family is the cornerstone of the social structure and forms the basis of stability for most people."¹¹ The average family size is 5.2 people, and whether you are closely related or apart of the extended family unit, you are still celebrated and revered. Families usually have large breakfasts in the morning, large dinners, which occur around noontime, and a very light supper in the evening. Typical foods include arepas, which are thick disks made of precooked cornmeal that are either fried or baked and are usually filled with ham and cheese. Arepas are usually eaten as snacks throughout the day. Other popular foods include pernils (roasted pork), asado (roasted beef), and pork chops. As you can see, Venezuelans are huge meat lovers! "Great social family affairs, such as weddings and birthday, are very frequent. Despite an increase in households having to survive without a male role model due to absent fathers and an apparent increase in murder rates amongst young men, the family unit remains a conventional, social, and supportive institution."¹² When the men are around, they are expected to be the bread winners, and the women are expected to stay home and care for the children. It is obvious that the Venezuelans uphold family values and cherish it dearly. They live in very close proximity to one another, sometimes even on the same block. Due to modernization and western influence, women have stepped up and taken on jobs in fields such as medicine, dentistry, economics, and law. Venezuelans have a very basic social structure, including the elite, middle-class, the poor, and the people below the poor. The elite are distinguished by their income and most hold a postsecondary degree. The middle-class citizens usually have jobs such as teachers, industrialists, and government workers. The average monthly wage for middle-class citizens is between 6,000 bolivares, which translates to \$1,400 in the U.S, and 10,000 bolivares, which translates to \$2,325 in the U.S. The majority of the poor, or peasants, are laborers and

⁷ "HowStuffWorks "Geography of Venezuela - Economy"" *HowStuffWorks*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 June 2014. <<http://geography.howstuffworks.com/south-america/geography-of-venezuela2.htm>>.

⁸ "Rodrigo Capriles Mazzei." *Rodrigo Capriles Mazzei RSS*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 June 2014. <<http://www.eoi.es/blogs/rodrigocapriles/2012/02/06/vulnerability-to-climate-change-venezuela/>>.

⁹ *Central Intelligence Agency*. Central Intelligence Agency, n.d. Web. 01 June 2014. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html>>.

¹⁰ "HowStuffWorks "Geography of Venezuela - Economy"" *HowStuffWorks*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 June 2014. <<http://geography.howstuffworks.com/south-america/geography-of-venezuela2.htm>>.

¹¹ "Venezuela - Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette." *The Translation Agency For A Complete Professional Translation Service*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 June 2014. <<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/venezuela-country-profile.html>>.

¹² "Venezuela – Values and Attitudes." *CultureSmartConsulting The Smarter Approach To Culture*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 June 2014. <<http://www.culturesmartconsulting.com/venezuela-values-and-attitudes/>>.

sharecroppers. The people who are lower than the peasants usually participate in rough, manual labor and are illiterate.

The most common infectious disease that plagues some areas in Venezuela is malaria. “Malaria transmission rates are affected by local factors such as rainfall patterns, proximity of mosquito breeding sites, mosquito species, and time of day. Some regions have a fairly constant number of cases throughout the year, whereas in other regions transmission varies in intensity throughout the year and highest rates usually coincide with the rainy season.”¹³ If malaria is suspected, testing should be done immediately at a local hospital. This disease can also be prevented by taking anti-mosquito measures. Other health concerns include anemia, tuberculosis, and HIV. “The estimated prevalence of anemia in pre-school children in this country is 20-40%.”¹⁴ There is not much data concerning HIV in Venezuela. It is not very prominent in the country. As for tuberculosis, there is a very low rate of it. Symptoms of the rare disease include coughing for more than three weeks (may even cough up blood), weight loss (slowly at first and then more rapidly as the disease worsens), loss of appetite, high fever, night sweats, and extreme tiredness or lack of energy. If any of these signs are seen in a child, then they should be tested immediately.

“Venezuela is a federal republic, with five branches of government: executive, legislative, judiciary, electoral, and citizen.”¹⁵ “The president, who is both the head of state and the head of government, is popularly elected for a six-year term and is not subject to term limits.”¹⁶ The problem with the elections is that they are believed to be very easily tapered with and unfair. Once the government picks a side, they will go to great lengths to make sure that that candidate wins. They use strategies such as media regulations and a lack of transparency to further help their desired candidate. The U.S has attempted to make efforts to promote democracy and has tried devising a comprehensive policy to guarantee transparency and fairness in the Venezuelan elections, but these things have seemed to contradict each other. Since Venezuela wasn’t born into democracy, the idea is foreign to them. As much as the U.S impedes democracy assistance, their efforts have only back fired into the Venezuelan government protesting against it and undermining solvency. This backlash has caused local grantees and project partners to be threatened, assaulted, and in severe cases, even killed.

Since 1998, when Hugo Chavez was elected as president, Venezuela has never been the same. Venezuelan corruption was at an all time high and Chavez was power hungry. “His electoral promises included convening a Constituent Assembly to write a new constitution and improve the state, fighting poverty and social exclusion, and eliminating corruption.”¹⁷ He didn’t quite live up to all the promises he made. For example, the money belonging to the Venezuelan people was greatly misused in furthering an anti-U.S alliance in the Western Hemisphere. “Chavez’s policies have promoted corruption rather than combating it. The nine years of his presidency have led to the highest levels of government corruption ever experienced in Venezuela. The main reasons have been: the record oil income obtained by the nation, money going directly into Chavez’s pockets; a mediocre management team working without transparency or accountability; the ideological predilections of Chavez, which have led him to try to play a messianic role in Latin America and even world affairs; and the policies of handouts put in place by

¹³ "Malaria." *HPA Migrant Health Guide* -. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 June 2014.

<<http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb%26Page%26MigrantHealthAutoList/Page/1281954670198>>.

¹⁴ "Malaria." *HPA Migrant Health Guide* -. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 June 2014.

<<http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb%26Page%26MigrantHealthAutoList/Page/1281954670198>>.

¹⁵ "Basic Facts on Venezuela." *Venezuela News, Views, and Analysis*. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 June 2014. <<http://venezuelanalysis.com/basicfacts>>.

¹⁶ *Infoplease*. Infoplease, n.d. Web. 03 June 2014. <<http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/world/venezuela-government.html>>.

¹⁷ "The Corruption of Democracy in Venezuela." *Cato Institute*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 June 2014.

<<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/corruption-democracy-venezuela>>.

Chavez to keep the Venezuelan masses politically loyal.”¹⁸ The nation was now in an intense struggle between the defenders of democracy and a president who wanted to be a dictator for life. Fortunately, Chavez’s reign ended in 2007, but he still left behind a very big mess.

Venezuela’s health care has much improved throughout the years. “In 1940 the overall life expectancy at birth was forty-three years old. By 1990, that figure was over seventy years old: seventy-one years old for males and seventy-seven years old for females, both among the highest in Latin America. The death rate was only 4 per 1,000 populations and the average caloric intake was 107 percent of the minimum level established by the United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization. These indices reflected generally improving health conditions, especially since the end of World War II, and the increase in preventive public health measures undertaken by the government.”¹⁹ Doctors tended to be more active in larger cities, neglecting the smaller cities. However, public institutions that are located in smaller cities charge the patients a small fee in which they are able to pay to receive some care. “In addition to providing public health care, the IVSS also administered the country’s public welfare program. Government campaigns for the prevention, elimination, and control of major health hazards have been generally successful.”²⁰

“The GDP per capita is \$12,956. The GDP at the market prices is \$382.42 billion.”²¹ Most of the money that comes into Venezuela is earned through oil revenues. One of the major issues concerning Venezuela’s income is the uncertainty behind it. For example, “in the nine years since Chavez came to power, an estimated \$300,000,000,000 of oil income has entered the national treasury. The exact number is uncertain due to the poor transparency of the government account, and because the national petroleum company no longer presents financial results to the U.S Securities Exchange Commission or to the Venezuelan people.”²² Their government is set up so that only the president and a few people with power are able to know the exact details of their income. The residents of the country are shut out and are not informed about such information. The U.S is also shut out from knowing this information because of the recent conflicts that have occurred over the debate of democracy. The more the U.S tries to enforce a democracy on Venezuela, the more they rebel and go against the idea. Once the government learns how to improve their transparency and accountability, it will “increase efficiency in the management of state enterprises, improve services, and provide more transparent accountability that will enable citizens to exercise their right to democratic participation and to combat corruption.”²³

“In Venezuela, the national supply of drinking water currently reaches 96 percent of the population, while in urban areas that amount is 99 to 100 percent, according to Environment Minister Alejandro Hitcher.”²⁴ Venezuela has made great efforts to improve its water treatment capacity all over the country. Water

¹⁸ “The Corruption of Democracy in Venezuela.” *Cato Institute*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 June 2014. <<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/corruption-democracy-venezuela>>.

¹⁹ “Venezuela - Health and Social Security.” *Venezuela - Health and Social Security*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 June 2014. <<http://countrystudies.us/venezuela/20.htm>>.

²⁰ “Venezuela - Health and Social Security.” *Venezuela - Health and Social Security*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 June 2014. <<http://countrystudies.us/venezuela/20.htm>>.

²¹ “Venezuela.” *OPEC*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 June 2014. <http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/171.htm>.

²² “The Corruption of Democracy in Venezuela.” *Cato Institute*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 June 2014. <<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/corruption-democracy-venezuela>>.

²³ “Global Information Society Watch.” *Venezuela*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 June 2014. <<http://giswatch.org/en/country-report/transparency-and-accountability-online/venezuela>>.

²⁴ “96% of Venezuelans Have Access to Safe Drinking Water.” *Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the US* 96 of Venezuelans Have Access to Safe Drinking Water Comments. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 June 2014. <<http://venezuela-us.org/2012/03/21/96-of-venezuelans-have-access-to-safe-drinking-water/>>.

pumps and pipes have been built nonstop all over the country for the last 13 years, which is when the push to improve water security began. Several plans have been made to pump water into different areas around the country. Even though water security has improved in majority of the country, there are still some poor sections that struggle to get water. "These sections lack regular access to water because of inadequate investment in infrastructure and unchecked sprawl."²⁵ Some blame Chavez for not investing enough in electricity and water projects. Fortunately, trucks bring free water every two weeks thanks to the mayor's office. This water must be handled properly and wisely by the poor citizens in order for it to suffice.

Since February, there have been major anti-government protests which have been motivated by political opposition. The UN has recently condemned all violence on both sides in Venezuela. "The U.N. statement came after the Venezuelan National Guard and police expelled more than 200 youth protesters who were demonstrating peacefully at a campsite in front of the U.N. development Program office in the capital of Caracas and other parts of the city last week. Most of the protesters were detained, according to the U.N. The Venezuelan government accused the demonstrators of using the camps to incite violence."²⁶ Allegedly, these protesters were taken to military bases. Their family members were not properly informed about their specific whereabouts and were not allowed to see them for some time. "A Human Rights Watch report released this month documented 45 cases of abuse allegedly committed by security forces against protesters, including beatings, psychological abuse, and instances of torture."²⁷ The authorities have responded to the protesters by using violent repression and censorship, and this is what concerns the members of the UN the most.

In order to solve the crisis that is occurring in Venezuela, there needs to be foreign aid. "International support is needed to encourage dialogue between the government and opposition. This dialogue should be aimed at reducing violence, finding a solution to the present economic crisis, avoiding the use of presidential decree power to short circuit the political process, and ending media censorship. This would require the Maduro administration to accept a substantial change in its present policies."²⁸ Unfortunately, relations between the U.S and Venezuela are so bad that there is very little the U.S can do at this point to help, but fortunately there are still countries out there that can. The countries that are best suited to help make this process happen are Cuba, China, Brazil, and Columbia. This is because "China and Cuba want to preserve the status quo, Brazil would benefit from a large trade surplus with the present Venezuelan government, and Colombia believes they need President Maduro's good will to resolve their own domestic conflict."²⁹ Having help from the international community will pave the way for a peaceful outcome.

"The Carter Center has worked with Venezuelans since 1996 to help eliminate river blindness, and since 1998, has observed elections, conducted media training, and undertaken conflict resolution efforts to strengthen peace and democracy. In 2008, The Carter Center initiated a project to strengthen professional

²⁵ "Drought Worsens Water Shortages in Venezuela." *Msnbc.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 June 2014. <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/33751841/ns/weather/t/drought-worsens-water-shortages-venezuela/#.U5TvznkU_VI>.

²⁶ Planas, Roque. "U.N. Condemns Violence In Venezuela After Government Breaks Up Protest." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 12 May 2014. Web. 08 June 2014. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/12/venezuela-un-violence_n_5310432.html>.

²⁷ Planas, Roque. "U.N. Condemns Violence In Venezuela After Government Breaks Up Protest." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 12 May 2014. Web. 08 June 2014. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/12/venezuela-un-violence_n_5310432.html>.

²⁸ "Toward a Peaceful Solution for Venezuela's Crisis." *The Brookings Institution*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 June 2014. <<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2014/02/20-venezuela-crisis-trinkunas>>.

²⁹ "Toward a Peaceful Solution for Venezuela's Crisis." *The Brookings Institution*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 June 2014. <<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2014/02/20-venezuela-crisis-trinkunas>>.

journalism to address the need for a less politicized media in Venezuela's polarized society. To reduce the confrontational and partisan tone in much of the nation's reporting, the Center provided technical support to reporters from both pro-government and opposition media outlets. The project encouraged ethical, balanced, and accurate reporting. It also promoted dialogue and improved relations between media professionals from public and private organizations through public seminars involving renowned international journalists and senior Venezuelan journalists and editors."³⁰ This organization is so successful because they launch active workshops and webinars that focus on important issues that are occurring in the country such as the voting process and proper journalism. This allows the Venezuelan democracy to become stronger and lessens the polarization that is occurring. The Organization of American States has had meetings in Venezuela concerning human right violations during recent protests. It is up to the citizens of the country to keep speaking up about the harsh conditions that are occurring. By documenting and recording the unconstitutional events, these organizations have the proof they need to take action and demand policy changes. The UN and Human Rights Watch have also voiced their opinions and concerns about the recent aggression that has been inflicted on the young, nonviolent protestors by government officials. "Human Rights Watch respectfully urges States in this meeting to ask the government of Nicolás Maduro to uphold its international legal obligations to respect human rights, and, specifically, to end abuses against demonstrators and ensure the release and respect for due process guarantees of those who were arbitrarily detained."³¹ Hopefully with the combined efforts of these organizations, slowly but surely, Venezuela will start to make a change in their government.

The main issue in Venezuela is the government. For several years, Hugo Chavez was the president. Under his power, Venezuela slowly began to crumble. He promised the citizens many things, such as fighting poverty, social exclusion, and eliminating corruption. Ironically, when he was in office the levels of government corruption was through the roof, and social exclusion and poverty was at an all time high. Once he was elected it was quite clear that the only thing that was on his mind was his unlimited opportunities for reelection. "Venezuela has been characterized by the persistent presence of political and financial corruption in public administration. During Chavez's tenure, national debt has increased from \$22,000,000,000 to about \$70,000,000,000. Together with income tax revenues, the total income of Venezuela during Chavez's presidency has been approximately \$700,000,000,000. This formidable amount of money is nowhere to be seen in terms of public works or effective health and education programs."³² "Three major areas of corruption have emerged during the Chavez presidency: grand corruption, derived from major policy decisions made by Pres. Chavez; bureaucratic corruption, at the level of the government bureaucracy; and systemic corruption, taking place at the interface between the government and the private sector."³³ Chavez's presidency left such a negative imprint on the Venezuelan government that it is going to take much time and effort to restore all the damage that was done.

In order to restore the balance of Venezuela, cooperation from the country's government is needed and so is international aid. Protestors are also a key role in helping this process happen. The country must

³⁰ "International Peacekeeping and Human Rights Programs - Carter Center Activities by Country." *International Peacekeeping and Human Rights Programs - Carter Center Activities by Country*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 June 2014. <<http://www.cartercenter.org/countries/venezuela-peace.html>>.

³¹ "Human Rights Watch Presentation on Venezuela before the UN Human Rights Council | Human Rights Watch." *Human Rights Watch Presentation on Venezuela before the UN Human Rights Council | Human Rights Watch*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 June 2014. <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/18/human-rights-watch-presentation-venezuela-un-human-rights-council>>.

³² "The Corruption of Democracy in Venezuela." *Cato Institute*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 June 2014. <<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/corruption-democracy-venezuela>>.

³³ "The Corruption of Democracy in Venezuela." *Cato Institute*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 June 2014. <<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/corruption-democracy-venezuela>>.

understand that they have citizens who are willing to defend democracy. The citizens have been stripped away from their rights and have been put into the dark. An immense amount of money that has come from their pockets has been misused for other projects that do not benefit them. It is time for this unfairness to stop. The protestors need to keep fighting for their rights. They deserve to exercise their democratic participation, but they cannot do that if they continue to be mistreated and abused. This is why they need the support from other countries and organizations. As mentioned before, the UN, Human Rights Watch, The Organization of American States, and the Carter Center have all made efforts to help stop the violations of human rights and strengthen peace and democracy in the country. China, Cuba, Brazil, and Colombia also have the power to make a difference in the government. The key factor to this is time. Venezuela seems to be quite a stubborn country, so rushing them into changing their entire policy is not an option. "Yet Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru recently faced social protests, and have all adjusted their policies as part of a strategy to restore peace. The Maduro administration should be able to do the same."³⁴ It is not an impossible task; it is just a task that will happen over a period of time. This task can only occur with the help from other countries. Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Peru have all faced social protests and have had to adjust their policies and economy to properly fit the needs of the people. If those countries could change, so can Venezuela. If government officials from these countries could come into Venezuela and give the Venezuelan officials ideas and suggestions on how to go about changing their policies while avoiding as much criticism as they can, then it will help to come to a peaceful resolution to the crisis. "Support from the international community therefore plays a pivotal role in convening the actors in Venezuela's crisis to design a path towards a peaceful outcome."³⁵ Citizens have also recently been documenting the horrible events during protests. Since media censorship is also a major issue in the country, many newspaper companies have been fined for portraying violent images of the protests. It is now up to the people of Venezuela to document the illegal actions that are occurring and share them with the world. Social media companies, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube should also help contribute to shine the light on the injustice occurring in the country. This will help to better inform people who are oblivious to the conditions in Venezuela. Although the U.S has very little room to help the current situation in the country, they still have the ability to encourage foreign aid from other countries because it is apparent that Venezuela cannot accomplish policy changes on their own. Concerned Americans can open the eyes of other Americans on what is occurring in Venezuela through the media that the Venezuelans share. No country is perfect, including the US. We here have policy and economic issues ourselves, but that doesn't mean that we should be selfish and just worry about ourselves. It is important to look out for other countries and lend a hand whenever we can.

The corruption of Venezuela has been going on for a long time now. "The concentration of power in the hands of Hugo Chavez and the lack of institutional checks and balances has led to a total absence of accountability and transparency in the government. Although corrupt bureaucrats have been identified, none have been punished."³⁶ The citizens have been feed empty promises and have been cheated out of their money and human rights. "A series of anti-government protests have persisted since February, motivated largely by the leftwing government's heavy handed dealings with the political opposition, out of control crime, and the Nicolás Maduro administration's economic policies, which have resulted in shortages of food staples and basic items like toilet paper."³⁷ The citizens are tired and fed up with living

³⁴ "The Corruption of Democracy in Venezuela." *Cato Institute*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 June 2014. <<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/corruption-democracy-venezuela>>.

³⁵ "The Corruption of Democracy in Venezuela." *Cato Institute*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 June 2014. <<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/corruption-democracy-venezuela>>.

³⁶ "The Corruption of Democracy in Venezuela." *Cato Institute*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 June 2014. <<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/corruption-democracy-venezuela>>.

³⁷ Planas, Roque. "U.N. Condemns Violence In Venezuela After Government Breaks Up Protest." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 12 May 2014. Web. 08 June 2014. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/12/venezuela-un-violence_n_5310432.html>.

their lives in the dark, and although they are trying to make a change, they cannot do it alone. Their government is turning against them and becoming violent. The only way to make concrete and visible progress is to get international help. It will have much more of an effect on Venezuela's stubborn government. The trick is to be persistent without pushing the limits. If international organizations and countries can accomplish this with the help of the Venezuelan citizens, then Venezuela will be on the road to recovery.

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