CHMUN'20



4th Annual Conference

ERADICATING PERSECUTION AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION TO RESOLVE DISPLACEMENT AND ECONOMIC CRISIS IN VENEZUELA

United Nations Human Rights Council

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

August 30, 2020

Dear delegates,

The Executive Board of CHMUN-20 welcomes each one of you.

To the veterans of MUN, we promise you a very enriching debate that you've never experienced before, for many it may be the first ever MUN conference in your educational experience, and we strongly encourage you to go through the study guide and rules of procedure that has been prepared for you as a part of the conference in order to get an in depth understanding of the issue that will be discussed in the committee. However, there is lot of content available beyond the study guides too. You are expected to research, collate list down possible points of discussions, questions and plausible responses and be prepared to enjoy the intellectual energy in the group. At the same time it is not only about speaking and presenting, but very importantly it is also about the ability to listen, understand view points and learn from each one's perspectives. As the world looks to come out of a rather 'depression' ridden economic environment and the world talks about a long standing 'power shift' to the east happening soon, the importance of our generation being 'ready enough' to accept various challenges that lie ahead of us can hardly be over stated. What we desire from the delegates is not how experienced or articulate they are. Rather, we want to see how she/he can respect disparities and differences of opinion, work around these, while extending their own foreign policy so that it encompasses more of the others without compromising their own stand, thereby reaching a unanimously acceptable practical solution. The following pages intend to guide you with the nuances of the agenda as well as the Council. The Guide chronologically touches upon all the different aspects that are relevant and will lead to fruitful debate in the Council. It will provide you with a bird's eye view of the gist of the issue. However, it has to be noted that the background guide only contains certain basic information which may form the basis for the debate and your research. You are the representative of your allotted country and it is our hope that you put in wholehearted efforts to research and comprehensively grasp all important facets of the diverse agenda. We encourage you to go beyond this background guide and delve into the extremities of the agenda to further enhance your knowledge of a burning global issue. Wishing all of you a great learning experience. Looking forward to having you all with us..

Best wishes,

Atharva Tonpay (Chairperson)

Charvi Gangwani (Vice Chairperson)

Sahaj Malhotra (Vice Chairperson)

Committee Overview:

Model United Nations, or MUN, is a worldwide academic program that promotes understanding of and involvement in international relations and alobal issues through simulation of the real United Nations. The United Nations is an international organization, often called a peacekeeping body, that ensures active efforts by all 192 member states to the principles of peace, justice, equality, and human dignity. The Human Rights Council is an intergovernmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 States responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe. It has the ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year.

TIMELINE

- **1521** Spanish colonisation begins on the north-east coast.
- **1749** First rebellion against Spanish colonial rule.
- **1810** Venezuelans take advantage of Napoleon's invasion of Spain to declare independence.
- **1829-30** Venezuela secedes from Gran Colombia.
- **1870-88** Ruler Antonio Guzman Blanco attracts foreign investment, modernises infrastructure and develops agriculture and education.
- **1908-35** Dictator Juan Vicente Gomez governs at time when Venezuela becomes world's largest oil exporter.
- **1945** Coup established civilian government after decades of military rule.

1948 - President Romulo Gallegos, Venezuela's first democraticallyelected

leader, overthrown within eight months in military coup led by Marcos Perez Jimenez.

- 1998 Hugo Chavez elected president. Leads the Bolivarian Revolution bringing in new socialist and populist economic and social policies funded by the high oil prices. Rewrote the constitution and became increasingly anti-US.
- **2001** Chavez utilizes the enabling act to pass socialist laws to redistribute land and wealth. Business and labour groups begin to worry about the government's role in the economy.

December 2006 Chavez wins a third presidential term with 63% of the vote.

- **January 2010** Bolivar devalued by 17% for priority imports and by 50% for non-essential items to boost oil revenue.
- **April 2012** Chavez regime tightens price controls on essential goods against inflation, threatening to expel non-complying companies.
- **April 2013** President Hugo Chavez dies at age 58 in March after a battle with cancer. Nicolas Maduro, his chosen successor, is elected president by a narrow margin. The opposition contests the result.
- **November 2013** National Assembly grants Maduro emergency powers for a year due to

rampant inflation (running at over 50%), which he uses to limit profit margins. Prompts

protests by opposition supporters.

2 February-March 2014 - Protests spread to Caracas from the western regions of Tachira

and Merida, earning the backing of opposition parties and turning into anti-government

rallies. The government accuses the opposition of planning a coup and breaks up the rallies,

leaving at least 28 dead.

November 2014 - Government announces cuts in public spending as oil prices reach a four year low.

2014-2015 - Opposition figures Maria Corina Machado and Antonia Ledesma charged with

treason and conspiracy in December 2014 and February 2015 respectively.

December 2015 - Opposition wins a two-thirds majority in parliamentary elections, marking

the end of 16 years of Socialist rule.

September 2016 - Hundreds of thousands participate in a rally against Maduro and his

actions addressing the economic crisis.

2017 April-June - Several people die in clashes with security forces during mass protests

demanding early presidential elections and the revoking of a planned constituent assembly

to replace the National Assembly.

July 2017 - Opposition holds an unofficial referendum, reporting that seven million people

rejected Maduro's plan to convene a new constituent assembly.

July 2017 - Constituent assembly formed and granted virtually unlimited powers by vote to

rewrite the constitution with Maduro's Socialist Party.

3 August 2017 - Luisa Ortega, Venezuela's main prosecutor, fled to Colombia over fear of

the government

2018 May - President Maduro wins another term in an election.

2018 August - Venezuela slashes five zeros from its old currency, renaming it the Sovereign

BACKGROUND

Bolivar and tying it to a state-backed cryptocurrency in a bid to tackle rampant hyperinflation. In the 1970's, Venezuela was the richest country in South America and among the top 20 richest countries in the world.



Now it sits in a state of financial disaster. How did this rapid decline happen in such a short period of time? The economic crisis in Venezuela erupted during President Hugo Chávez's tenure and extended over

the years into the current presidency of Nicolás Maduro. It is the worst economic crisis in Venezuela's history and has affected the average life of Venezuelans on various levels. The root of the crisis stems from three main issues: Economic mismanagement, the price of oil, and shortages of Food and Medicine (basic provisions essential to the survival of the Venezuelan citizens).

Key Players:

HUGO CHAVEZ

After a long history of imperialist rule and subsequent independence, the State assumed full sovereignty in 1830101. Throughout the 19th century, caudillismo ruled Venezuela in an era of autocracy. Caudillos are 'strongmen' in Latin American military and politics. A successful coup in 1945 brought the provisional presidency of Romulo Betancourt. After developing a new constitution, holding democratic elections that he won, going to exile in a decade of military rule, and returning to power, Betancourt left a stable and democratic Venezuela. After being pardoned for anti-government activities in 1994, Hugo Chavez contested the elections in 1998 and won with 56.2% of the votes under the promise of a peaceful and democratic social revolution. His socialist party, called the "Fifth Republic Movement," advocated for major changes to the government and economy. Chavez rewrote the constitution, renamed Venezuela the "Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela", placed many members of his party in the National Assembly. Chavez's rise

to power is known as the Bolivarian Revolution. Although his first term maintained a moderate foreign policy, including considering the United States as an important ally and making state visits as such, his administration was known for its social programmes dedicated to improving access to health, education, food, land, and social security for the poorest members of society. At this point, Chavez's role split Venezuelan politics in two. Chavistas saw him a leader who redistributed wealth and worked for the welfare of the people, and Anti-Chavistas saw him as a symbol of autocratic and authoritarian rule who used social welfare to take power away from the people. A counter-revolution even briefly ousted him from office, but it did not take him more than two days to reclaim his seat . In following years, there was a considerable focus on Chavez's actions and intents. President Chavez took special interest in Venezuela's oil wealth and re-nationalised the oil industry and severed the ties private businesses owned by the rich and elite had to the oil resources. Chavistas point to reforms like this as Chavez's success. Throughout Chavez's presidency, GDP per Capita almost doubled, unemployment halved, and oil export revenues increased from USD\$14 billion to USD\$60 billion annually. However, in the Anti-Chavista books, Chavez was simply lucky to preside over an era of rise in oil prices and he ended up spending all the money that came in, which lay the foundation an inevitable economic crash without any type of buffer. As Chavez continued winning elections amidst loyal support and dissent, he continued to pump money from rising global oil prices into his welfare programs. After his 2006

reelection, he expanded his socialist dream beyond borders where he extended and handed it to socialist states like Cuba. The 2004 agreement signed with Cuba slowly transformed into the Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA) pact, forming a leftist group of Latin American countries to work against United States of America (U.S.A) capitalist exploitation of Latin American countries 107. The group aimed to combat cheap imports and protect worker rights by promoting state-owned enterprises, pursuing free healthcare and education for all citizens, and promoting the effectiveness of socialist policies by controlling the narrative through state media. Chavez also made other regional alliances like the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR). Despite all that, Venezuela's increasing dependence on high oil prices will prove to be a challenge they would face in time. In addition, not only did Chavez's policies fail to benefit the wealthier Venezuelans, but it made their situations worse as criminality and inflation continued to rise. Its dependence on oil prices, which were soon to fall dramatically, was dangerous for the economy and for the social programs it funded. Although Chavez was committed to leading the nation, his health got in the way, and after a brief battle with cancer, he died in March 2013.

MADURO

Nicolas Maduro organised labour from a young age. Instead of studying at university, he observed organising in Cuba. A loyal Chavista who Chavez thought was fully in line with the Bolivarian Revolution, Maduro even took nominal control of the government when Chavez was undergoing treatment for his health in 2013. After the death of Hugo Chavez, he was soon sworn into office after a marginal electoral victory. Maduro strengthened national security and took precautions against organised crime and drug proliferation and internal corruption 108. He requested more executive power under "rule by decree", a form of control primarily used by dictators, that would allow him to create unchallenged laws. As Maduro began what he called an "economic war," as the economy keeps crashing, global oil prices dropped and economic chaos ensued in oil-dependant Venezuela, thus beginning its economic crisis. In addition, Maduro formed a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution despite domestic and international opposition to it. As he continues to rule Venezuela, we see the country crippling under economic and political struggles, which has resulted in the situation today

The Maduro Administration

Led by Nicolas Maduro, the current Maduro administration is responsible for the continuance of the economic and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela due to its ability to remain united. Despite pressure from the Venezuelan people and international community, Maduro remains in power due to his staunch political and military supporters who have been put into position through Maduro's effective bribery and blackmail system: his supporters have access to an exclusive bolivar/dollar exchange rate, and those who do not support his

regime are immediately flushed out of the political system25. However, international sanctions have been imposed on high ranking Venezuelan officials in order to break unity and weaken internal Alliances. In addition, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has accused Maduro of preparing to flee to Cuba, only convinced not to do so by Russia. Maduro has vehemently denied this accusation.

The Opposition Coalition

Led by Juan Guaido, the head of the National Assembly, the opposition to Maduro's regime has been working to gain the legitimacy to take over as Venezuela's ruling entity. After Maduro's Questionable 2018 reelection, Guaido declared himself interim president on the constitutional basis that allows for the head of the National Assembly to become Venezuela's interim leader in the absence of a President. Subsequently, the Democratic Unity Roundtable or Mesa de la Unidad Democratic (MUD) formed a parallel government to Maduro's, supported by the Venezuelan people. Guaido has gained a significant amount of support from the international community, with the US, EU, and most Latin American governments in support of the overthrow of Maduro.

The Venezuelan National Armed Force (FAN)

Comprised of over 500,000 troops and veteran military officers loyal to Maduro, the Venezuelan military is one of the key factors in determining the fate of the nation. FAN is currently responsible for controlling riots and protests, as well as prohibiting foreign humanitarian aid from entering the country. In the case of a foreign

invasion, the Venezuelan military would be directly involved in the fighting. Within the 38% of Maduro's cabinet who are retired or active military officers, corruption is widespread as Maduro's followers exploit the natural resources, food, and economy of Venezuela. Depending on Maduro's ability to sustain the military's loyalty And Guaido's ability to win over enough defectors to the opposition, the military has the power to tip the scales in either leader's favour.

The Current Situation:

Venezuela Before Maduro

On April 11, 2002, the Fedecamaras, the main Venezuelan business organization, and the CTV, the largest trade union organization, led a strike towards the president's office, the Palacio Miraflores. The next day, General Efrain Vasquez Velasco called for the current president Hugo Chavez's arrest. After his arrest, Pedro Carmona, the leader of the Fedecamaras, became president and was supported by the United States government. Carmona's support was largely a product of Chávez's condemnation of U.S. Middle Eastern policy and Chávez's contact with Fidel Castro. On April 13, 2002, Chavez's loyalists took back power and Chavez remained in office until his death on March 5, 2013. His creation of a new "Bolivarian magna carta" in 1999 further legitimatized and strengthened the office of the president. Traditional political parties, businesses, and older trade unions did not agree with Chávez's policy. These groups formed the opposition and during Chávez's regime, their relationship with the government greatly deteriorated. Bolstered by fundamental agreements

in policy, consolidation of military control, and anti-American sentiments, the opposition focused on impeaching Chávez.

Immediately after the death of Chávez in 2013. Nicolas Maduro took power. Maduro's ascent to office paralleled the global fall in the price of petroleum. This caused an economic crisis and the shortage of many essential goods. As a result of this dissatisfaction, the opposition party gained control of Venezuela's National Assembly in 2015. The opposition party has opposed all of Chavez's reform movements, accomplishing this in part, through the privatization of housing projects and natural disaster relief organizations. The parliament has also tried to take away authority from Maduro. In response to this aggression, the Supreme Court decided to take power away from the assembly. The Defense Council ordered the reinstatement of the National Assembly and the government has since prevented opposition leaders from entering the political sphere.

Main Political Factions

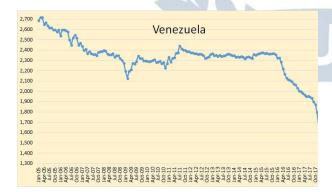
Venezuela is divided into two main factions: the Chavistas, the followers of the deceased Hugo Chavez and his policies, and the opposition, those who crave an ending to the Chavistas United Socialist Party (PSUV).7 The PSUV applauded Chavez and his party for using the wealth of oil to lift his constituents out of poverty, although the success of these programs is discussed in the economic portion of this guide. The Chavistas accuse the opposition of being an elitist capitalist aroup that desires to exploit Venezuela for their own gain. The opposition claims the PSUV has

destroyed Venezuela's democracy with corruption and has run the economy into the ground with reckless and inefficient spending. The president, Mr. Maduro, is a part of the PSUV and was handpicked as Chavez's successor, was originally popular. However, his popularity has been plummeting. The economic turmoil and the government's inability to stop the recession has led to protests and increased support for the opposition party. On March 29, 2017, the Supreme Court announced they were "taking over the powers of the opposition-controlled National Assembly".8 There was immense backlash as the opposition claimed that this corrupted the country's separation of powers and consolidated power underneath President Maduro. Eventually the court backtracked on its decision, but this attempted power grab resonated with the people and has caused increased tension with the legislating body and Supreme Court. According to BBC World News, the opposition is currently calling for the removal of the supreme court justices who issued the March 29th ruling, the institution of a general election in 2017, the opening of channels for humanitarian aid and the release of all political prisoners.

Maduro says that the opposition party is trying to overthrow the elected government and blaming the country's problems on the economic war waged against him.10 While the opposition parties are not all unified under one party, the different oppositional groups share common beliefs and are calling for the ousting of Maduro.

History of The Economic Crisis & Humanitarian Ramifications

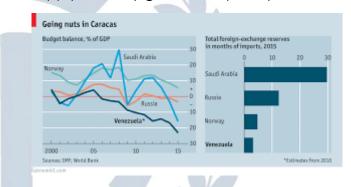
Venezuela's large economic problems have fueled the political and civil unrest, resulting in mass protests and rioting. The economic crisis was and is the root cause of the now dire situation that exists in Venezuela. The economy must be addressed in order to restore peace and prosperity to a now desperate nation. Under Hugo Chavez, the state-owned petroleum companies provided billions of dollars to social programs and food subsidies. The economic leg of the crisis first began when oil plummeted from over \$100 a barrel to around \$50 today. This meant that the subsidies and welfare programs that long propped up an inept and inefficient economy were gone, leading to massive unemployment and shortages of even the most basic commodities. Since Venezuela is an export economy, meaning it makes much of its money by selling goods to other countries, much of the government's funding was in foreign currency.



With less oil to 10 This makes it much harder to import basic goods like medicine and food. Imports have fallen by 50%, which has led to a crisis in the healthcare system. 11 Clothes, technology and even toilet paper are imported, and now in desperately short supply. Food shortages have meant that over the past year 74% of

Venezuelans lost on average 19 pounds. The Venezuelan GDP has decreased by 10%, and will be a quarter smaller than its 2013 self by the end of the year 12. Inflation.

The situation is made worse by inflation that has exceeded 1600% in just the past year. The Venezuelan government has tried to curb soaring prices by inserting price controls, but this decision has only increased underground economic activity and led to the disappearance of the supply of many goods completely.



President Maduro made two crucial decisions regarding the government's finances. First, he refused to cut the government budget. Second, he refused to widen the tax base or raise taxes. This caused the deficit to skyrocket, leading to Venezuela printing massive amounts of money to fund the now unfunded programs. Fearing the political ramifications of cutting the budget or raising taxes, increased printing has led to mass inflation.

Failed Diversification

Venezuela never took the time to develop the non-energy sectors of its economy. Most oildependent countries build up reserves while prices are high to provide security when prices are low. Venezuela's rampant government spending during times of prosperity left little money for these emergency fund coffers. Chavez and his party claimed that Venezuela suffered during the oil bust from 1979 to 1999 because capitalists stole from the people and hoarded wealth. Maduro is telling a similar story today. To combat the inequality, Chavez set the precedent of writing this supposed wrong by increasing public spending and expanding subsidy programs. These programs were paid for by seizing properties and assets from political enemies and opposition. By crippling businesses and businessman and rewarding less efficient competition with subsidies, private firms fled the country. The exodus of private firms meant when oil prices finally fell, as they have, there was no other efficient industry to prop up the economy or provide for the country. Venezuela's farming reserves have already emptied despite a record harvest recorded this year 13. It was not popular politically to think of the long term, and so Venezuela's artificial economy was not prepared for its fall.

Corruption

Corruption is another issue that has propelled the economic recession. Officials have embezzled billions of dollars, earning Venezuela the title of the most corrupt country in Latin America, a tough title to win14. Venezuela has always had a problem with corruption. In 1824, Simon Bolivar established the death penalty for "all public officers guilty of stealing 10 pesos or more"15. In 1875, Venezuelan finance ministers said that "Venezuela does not know to whom it owes money and how much," and a century later, the General Comptroller called the same financial system "totally out of control" With high oil

prices in the 1970s, the government found itself with immense wealth. They poured money into 300 non-profitable state-owned companies with insufficient oversight and regulation enforcement, allowing corruption to flourish 17. Before this, only the top officials of Venezuela could steal from the country with impunity. Now with more departments and stateenterprises than ever, public funds could be abused at every level. A Venezuelan university recorded that 36 billion dollars were embezzled and stolen through corrupt government programs during the Lusinchi administration from 1984-1994. In 1997, an NGO estimated that over 100 billion dollars of government money was either stolen or mismanaged since the 1970s18. Venezuela continued these malpractices under the Chavez Administration. While billions of dollars are missing from collected taxes, it is difficult to calculate an exact figure because Venezuela rarely discloses its public financial records to scrutiny. This lack of transparency has not covered up the half of 22 billion dollar transfers during Chavez's presidency that are unaccounted for in foreign accounts 19. Chavez's administration was corrupted because of his corruption directly, his policies to ensure loyalty and his "mediocre management team working without transparency or accountability". Anyone who tried to expose Chavez's corruption were jailed or silenced The government wasted billions on providing free oil transfers to Cuba, buying weapons, and propping up failing businesses, and its officials, around 1,500 party elites, have stolen 95 billion dollars under Chavez's watch22. Corruption has not slowed down since Chavez's death. While Maduro may claim to be tough on

corruption, it is not clear what arrests are for justice and what are for consolidating power and jailing political and economic opponents. Luisa Ortega, who was the former chief prosecutor in Venezuela was fired and then fled for her life after she accused the President and other government officials of corruption. After her declaration, an arrest warrant was put out for her husband on charges of extortion. This issue of corruption must be addressed, or else Venezuela cannot hope to progress into a modern, stable, and transparent economy.

Protests

Sadly, protests have become a part of daily life in Venezuela, as thousands of dissatisfied citizens take to the streets in anti-government demonstrations. Serious protests started in January 2016, when the Supreme court alleged that there was potential voter fraud in the election victories of three opposition legislative members and one. As a result, the court suspended their election. The opposition parties claimed that the court was attempting to weaken their political position by preventing the election of their members and decided to swear in their legislators despite the court's decision. In response, the Supreme Court claimed that the National Assembly was acting illegally, and all of its new legislation and decisions would be ignored and invalid. Eventually after more legal disputes the Supreme Court decided that it would take over the legislative powers of congress on March 30, 2017. This sparked large protests that enveloped Caracas the following day, and continued daily for months despite the court reversing its decision. Protesters

were not satisfied with the Supreme Court, controlled by the ruling parties, "attempted coup" and called for political change to ensure it would not happen again. The strength of the protests was bolstered as more and more citizens joined in to protest the dire economic situation the country was in. As shortages for basic needs like food and medicine worsened, and currency value fell, the protests grew larger and larger. Deadly clashes with police and soldiers has only enraged the opposition and protesters alike. Crime Crime and poverty were at an all-time high in 2017, as reported by the Venezuelan Violence Observatory. 27,479 murders were committed in one year alone. The new hunger and led to more crime and murder which only worsened the situation and gave even more reason for the citizens of Venezuela to protest. As of December 10, President Maduro declared that the opposition parties that boycotted the election were no longer a part of the Venezuelan government and are barred from being a part of the presidential elections. Maduro has also recently placed one of his political enemies, Antonio Ledezma, under house arrest on the charges of attempting to overthrow the Government. Venezuela is more fractured than ever. It faces protests, shortages and political war with no end in sight.

BLOC POSITIONS

LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES: As neighbouring countries continue to take on refugees from Venezuela, and not directly confronting Maduro, they have taken to the Organisation of the American States (OAS) (including the USA) to condemn Maduro for what they consider to be undemocratic elections in May 2018. A panel enlisted by the OAS also accused the Maduro government of crimes against humanity. The Lima Group of Latin American countries (including Canada) announced that it does not recognise the legitimacy of the May 2018 elections. They indicated that they would call their ambassadors back from Caracas for consultations and coordinate a regional response to the exodus of Venezuelans "who have been obligated to abandon their country".

UNITED STATES OFAMERICA: Although Hugo Chavez began his rule with the USA as a friendly ally; relations quickly deteriorated as the US failed to alert him about a brewing revolution. Chavez's anti-USA rhetoric, friendship with Iran and Cuba, and sanctions from the USA led to sour relations between the two nations. Venezuela and the United States maintain the contentious relationship under President Maduro as both States continued to frequently expel diplomats. In 2014, the United States House of Representatives passed the Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Protection Act (H.R. 4587; 113th Congress). This was a bill that would apply economic sanctions against Venezuelan officials who were involved in the mistreatment of protests during the 2014 Venezuelan protests. In 2015, President Barack

Obama issued a presidential order declaring Venezuela a "threat to national security" and ordered sanctions against seven Venezuelan officials. President Donald Trump in August 2017 said he is "not going to rule out a military option" to confront the Maduro regime 124. Lima Group Says Does Not Recognize Venezuela's Election." U.S

EUROPEAN UNION: The EU condemns President Maduro's repression of opposition members and believes the recent elections were neither free nor fair, which led to sanctions against multiple Venezuelan officials by issuing travel bans and freezing their assets. The bloc targeted names including former Vice President Tareck El Aissami because he is "responsible for serious human rights violations ... including arbitrary detention, politically motivated investigations, inhumane and degrading treatment, and torture," and current Vice President Delcy Rodriguez. The EU continues to keep an eye on the economic and humanitarian situation and has committed to supporting Venezuela to find peaceful and democratic solutions.

Questions to Consider

- 1. What economic options does Venezuela have to recover from their crises?
- 2. Is Venezuela in need of new leadership? If a change is necessary, what is the best way to achieve it?
- 3. Is the structure of the Venezuelan government in need of change? Are there any government policies that need to be removed or adopted?
- 4. Could Venezuela benefit from international intervention? How should international aid be distributed or regulated?
- 5. How can we improve relations between Venezuela and its neighbours to ensure that there is no military escalation of their conflicts?

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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