Introduction

During the Presidency of Chávez, Venezuela entered into an economic crisis. Food and energy shortages began to happen. In the 2nd of June 2010, Chávez declared an “economic war” due to the constant shortages. When President Chávez died, his vice-president, Maduro came to power. The crisis in Venezuela began to heighten. In November of 2016, hyperinflation began during the economic and social ongoing crisis. The country became unstable, the economy collapsed. There has been an alarming increase in the abuse of human rights. As of 2019, the United Nations recorded that more than 4 million Venezuela’s have fled the country, caused by the constant shortages of food and no medicine available. In the reports done by the United Nation they have received information that there have been recorded deaths caused by malnutrition, diseases that could be prevented by vaccines, however, they are not being provided.

The economic crisis is harming the population health. The population average weight has been reduced by “11 kilos” in 2017 and onwards. The malnutrition of children under the age of 5 has had a “50% increase” in 2017. In 2016, the health-minister, Antonieta Corporale, released data that the infant mortality had increased by “30%”, “maternal mortality increased by 65% and malaria cases by 76%”, after the release of this data, she was fired. The citizens are now experiencing Zika and diseases like diphtheria. The indices of street crime have also increased since President Maduro came to power.

The economic and political crisis reached an extreme in Venezuela, refugees enter neighbouring countries, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru require rebuilding their whole lives once more. While those who cannot escape Venezuela, are suffering from a humanitarian crisis that is built upon constant energy and food shortages, diseases which could be solved easily and the lack of medicine which sometimes resulted in death. If the situation does not improve the living conditions will worse off President Maduro denies that there is a humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. Currently, it is hard to know the extent of the health and nutrition situation in Venezuela because the authorities do not release any information anymore.
Definition of Key Terms

Hyperinflation

Hyperinflation is the case when every goods price in a country rises which will cause damage to the country's economy. This happens when the government prints more money to pay its spending's. The effect of hyperinflation is that the population starts to reduce their use of money leading to shops going out of business, leading to unemployment. Due to the unemployment increase, people start to spend less. Cash becomes worthless.

Malnutrition

Malnutrition is when a person lacks proper nutrition. This may be caused by not having access to food, by not having the money to buy food, or not eating the correct food. In Venezuela, the people do not have access to the food due to the constant shortages and when there is food available, they do not have the money to buy it.

Arbitrary arrest

An arbitrary arrest is the violation of the right to liberty of an individual. It is also the case when there is no evidence that the person has committed a crime. In Venezuela, there has been arbitrary arrest of human rights defenders as well as political opposition.

cult of personality

Cult of personality is when an individual uses propaganda, mass media and patriotism to create and idealize the idea of a great leader. This was done for President Chávez many times, for example when a famous telenovela actor, Winston Vallenilla, spoke at the massive rally to support President Chávez.

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is when the government enforces strict obedience from the population. This is maintained by the use of oppression towards the population, for example, the expense of their personal freedom. In Venezuela, this is done by President Maduro regime imposed by the militaries that oppress personal freedom.

Sovereignty
Sovereignty is when a person has total power to impose laws on the population as well as to alter the laws. In the case of Venezuela, President Maduro has total power to control the laws as well as the people. In 2016, when Maduro declared the economic emergency he issued the decree that would grant him total power of Venezuela for 60 days.

**Colectivos**

The “Colectivos” are the armed groups that support President Maduro regime inside Venezuela. They are sometimes used to kill the political opposition and to control the streets of Venezuela from any opposition.

**Sanctions**

Economic sanctions are when there are financial penalties towards a government by one country or more. Economic sanctions can be imposed due to the military, political and economic issues. The United States has imposed sanctions on Venezuela.

**Background Information**

**Economy**

Venezuela was the richest country in South America. They have the largest oil reserve, surpassing even Saudi Arabia reserve. Oil was their main source of revenue. 92% of its revenue comes from exporting oil. When Chávez came to power, he decided that he wanted to have total control of the economic power. He increased the government control on capitals and the exchange rates. He also subsidized utilities and free health care and education. However, it soon turned into an economic mismanagement, the country began to produce less at each minute. Both Chávez and Maduro structured the government so that it was only focused on oil revenues. The situation got worse in 2014 when the oil prices dropped meaning that the government now has less money to import food. At the same time, the value of Venezuela currency dropped. This was what caused the shortages of food as they were not able to import food anymore due to cash being worthless, the lack of medicine and diseases like malaria.

**The health sector**

Venezuela's health sector is now in critical condition, doctors are no longer or rarely available as they have migrated to other countries - Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Chile and Ecuador. Medicines, supplies are not available in stores and pharmacies. Leaving the Venezuelans to rely on home treatments, that
most of the time do not work or they do nothing at all. Around 50 babies are in need of intensive care are born each day in Venezuela. Jaime Lorenzo, head of the Venezuelan medical charity médicos unidos says that there are around 15,000 kidney patients require a dialysis (a treatment that filters and purifies the blood.)

Venezuela is one of the only countries that a large group of people with HIV have been forced to discontinue their treatment because there has been a lack of antiretroviral medicine. A 2018 report from PAHO stated that nine out of ten people living in Venezuelan were not receiving treatment.

**Diseases**

To place things in context, between 2008 and 2015, there was only one recorded case of measles in Venezuela. Since 2017 there has more than 9300 cases recorded. For Diphtheria, there was not one case recorded between 2006 and 2015. Since 2016 there have been more than 2500 suspected cases and 1500 cases were confirmed.

Diphtheria, a bacterial infection, before was being controlled in Venezuela and only had 5%-10% fatal cases. In the 1990s they were able to control this situation. Today, it’s extremely rare due immunization, however, in Venezuela, there has been an increase in cases. There have also been cases where doctors did not have the correct apparatus to identify the disease and this led to misdiagnosis and this resulted in many cases of death. Such as Eliannys Vivas, who was diagnostic with asthma but in fact had Diphtheria, the 9-year-old girl, later died. The return of Diphtheria, which can be prevented, shows how the country has become vulnerable to health risks.

Zika, another major disease has had an increase to 59,384 cases in 2016. Even though it was at the same time as the outbreak that happened in South America, Venezuela still suffers from it today. Malaria has also been another health issue in Venezuela. In 2016, there was an increase of 76.4% compared to 2015, there has been around 240,613 cases of Malaria. An official document co-written by the Venezuelan health ministry shows that malaria is now endemic in Venezuela. These diseases happen as a result of untreated water, which is where the mosquito grows. These all are preventable disease.

**Hospitals**
Hospitals are lacking basic equipment, there is very little or none at all filtered water. The hospitals suffer major blackouts since there is a lack of electrical infrastructure. Hospitals are on the verge of collapsing. As a result of the lack of infrastructure as well as no basic cleaning products and disinfectants cannot be found, the patients who are in the hospital who already are suffering a critical disease are now acquiring new diseases from other patients. There is hardly any medicine available to the patients. Mark Lockwood, the UN Emergency relief coordinator, visited the Jose Gregorio Hernandez hospital, he said that only $\frac{1}{5}$ of the hospital had power and that water would only run every two days, coming through rusty and broken pipes, which makes the water have a “filthy stench that lingers throughout”. A hospital in Maracaibo, the surgeons have resulted in using their phone’s flashlight to operate patients. The workers are the ones who are the most vulnerable, they are constantly exposed to different illnesses.

People are now being asked to bring their own medical supplies (for example, syringes and scalpels) and food to the hospital. Due to the lack of supply in the hospitals, people have now turned to the black market to find medicines.

**National Nutrition**

Venezuelan people have had to find alternatives to food, as they do not have the money to buy enough for the whole family. A study conducted by Encovi 2017; they questioned the annual living conditions. Eight of the ten responded that there were “eating less” because they did not have the money to buy food or they did not have enough at home.

In the study of Encovi in 2017, there has been an increase in roots and vegetables that families consume as a result of being forced to find an alternative to the more expensive foods. This made the population weight decrease around 11kg. Meals now have a smaller serving size, nine out of ten people cannot afford to buy food, leading to starvation. 8.2 million only have 1 to 2 meals per day. Many do not have minerals, iron and other nutrients present in their bodies as a result of the lack of proper food.

The Venezuelans have turned to eat vegetables and other foods that once were considered as “poor people food”. As a substitute for potatoes, Venezuelans are using Yuca a root vegetable, that is cheap and versatile. It can be boiled or fried.

**Shortages**

March 7th, 2019, a national blackout happened. The buses stopped working, it decreased the already small food supply, paralyzed the oil industry and threatened the lives of those in the hospitals. There was
a problem at the Guri hydropower plant which resulted in most of the country without energy for three days. This blackout developed even further the economic crisis in Venezuela as it declined the oil production by damaging the equipment.

Refugee Crisis

In the 4th of December 2019, a press release from the Human Right Watch announced that Brazil is not able to accommodate the hundreds of unaccompanied children coming from Venezuela. From the 1st of May to 21st of November 2019 529 unaccompanied children crossed the border to the state of Roraima and were then interviewed at the border by the authorities. The mass of unaccompanied children flying Venezuela is due to the humanitarian crisis, these children are just looking for food and shelter but most of the time end up in the streets.

Humanitarian aid

In February 2019, Juan Guiadó asked countries to donate food, hygiene products and medical kits. The United States said that they would provide $20 million on humanitarian supply as well as Brazil and Colombia who sent trucks full of supply. However, the military blocked the border with oil tankards and the trucks were forced to turn away. Some of the trucks with the supply were burned. Those who tried to open the border were beaten by the military, this blockade resulted in the death of two indigenous people. The international aid also tried to pass through the border that the country has with Brazil, however, Maduro closed it as an attempt to stop any aid from coming into the country. Which resulted in the death of two civilians when the Venezuelan police force fired at the protesters.

Use of force, killings and arbitrary arrest

In July 2017, the Attorney General Luisa Ortega Díaz released information that her firm was investigating around 2000 cases of injured people and in more than half the cases it was found that their human rights were violated. She was fired one month after.

In the report done by the UN in 2018, stated that the security operations known as the Operations for the Liberations of the people, they identified that the OLP uses unnecessary force and this has led to the killing of 505 people, 24 of those were children. To stay in power Maduro relies on the military to use force when needed.

In 2018, the government recorded 5, 287 killings for “resistance to authority” in security operations. The OHCHR reported that 357 officers were being investigated “alleged extrajudicial killings”.

Page 6 of 17 | Research Report
**Arbitrary arrest**

Many men have been arbitrarily arrested as a way to scare the political opposition and anyone who presents to be a threat to the government. These people who have been arbitrarily arrested include political and social activist, protesters, human rights defenders, members of the armed forces and media workers. The government arrest these people even when there the judicial court rules in their favour. From the 1st of August 2017 to 30th of April 2018, there were 570 persons, 53 being children, were arbitrarily detained.

**Torture**

The human rights watch has recorded that the security forces have used excessive force towards civilians. There have been stories that the members of SEBIN have used electrical shocks, severe beating, rape, and suffocation with plastic bags. An underground place called ‘La Tumba’ in Venezuela is where torture is practiced, the prisoners suffer from diarrhea, fever and hallucination and vomiting and most of the time are rejected medical care. The UN reports include that the officers torture the prisoners with beatings, electrical shocks, burns, rape, sexual threats and asphyxiation.

**Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

**Russia**

Russia and Venezuela have had a close relationship since 2006 when Chávez was still the president. Russia supports President Maduro regime and they do not recognise Juan Guiadó as President. During the humanitarian blockade in February 2019, President Maduro announced that Russia would send 300 tons of food and medical supply. This was one of the only shipments that were allowed by the military to pass the border. The shipment delivery was only confirmed by the Pan-American health organisation and announced that the delivery was of 7.5 tonnes.

In the Security Council, Russia has vetoed any resolution to suspend Venezuela from the United Nation. Russia has also warned the United States of consequences if a military intervention happens. Russia has also given Venezuela two “nuclear-capable bombers to the region” as a way to show their support.
In a meeting of the Security Council on the 26th of February 2019, the Russian representative said that the council should not focus on what is happening inside of Venezuela but around it. That it was not an attempt to deliver humanitarian aid through the Colombia border but “to breach the frontier of an independent state”. He also mentioned that it should be left to Venezuela to resolve their own problems and that it should respect national sovereignty.

Venezuela has been received billions of dollars from Venezuela as well as the state-owned oil company Rosneft. Russia does expect to receive the money back even with the ongoing economic crisis in Venezuela.

Cuba

Cuba and Venezuela have been allies since Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez as they had similar political views. In the beginning, they agreed that Venezuela would receive doctors, teachers and sports instructors in return of Cuba receiving regular “shipments of subsidies Venezuelan oil”. In April 2019, Raúl Castro said that he would never abandon Venezuela even with the blackmail, sanctions on Cuba over its support of Maduro regime, coming from the USA. The sanctions from the US have resulted in energy shortages in Cuba. The US blames Cuba for the survival that Maduro regime is having. Cuba is an important ally because it the main political supporter in the Americas. Reportedly, Cuba supplies Maduro with armed forces and military advisers as well as teachers, nurses, engineers and doctors.

China

China supports the regime in Venezuela and views Venezuela as an important trading partner for them. Over the past decade, “Beijing has lent Caracas some $70 billion” analysts believe that Maduro owes “$13 billion to China”. In general, China has invested billions of dollars in oil companies in Venezuela. In September 2018, President Xi Jinping said that China would “provide whatever help it can offer.” China does not agree that foreign forces should interfere and that all countries should stay calm. China has criticised the international interference countries have with the Venezuelan affairs. While China still supports Maduro regime it has opened its doors to speak to the opposition.

Turkey

Turkey supports President Maduro regime. Recently, both Presidents have visited the countries and have started trade agreements. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was shocked with what President Trump said “You will respect the results of the elections. Trump’s remarks shocked me, as someone who believes in democracy”.

Page 8 of 17 | Research Report
United States of America

When the Venezuelan blackout happened during the 7th of March to 10th of March 2019, the officials blamed the opposition, the United States of creating the blackout, as a way of sabotage. However, no evidence was presented. The relationship between Venezuela and the United States was already fragile even before President Trump announced that he recognized Juan Guaidó as the President of Venezuela and not Maduro. The US also believes that Maduro re-election was a fraud. The US criticizes that Maduro government uses forces and suppresses political opposition. In a press release of USAID on the 25th of September 2019, Secretary Pompeo said that the government would give around $119 million humanitarian assistance to further show their support to the Venezuelan people. $36 million of the total amount is for aid inside Venezuela. President Maduro states that the aid sent by the United States is part of a plan to remove him from power.

The United States has imposed sanctions on Venezuela oil reserves as well as other aspects, it froze its assets and stopped the transaction between the two countries. This was done to pressure President Maduro into stepping down from his post as well to isolate to country and to cut it from receiving support from its allies, China and Russia. This did not only stop the Venezuelan government but also all the American companies that do business with Maduro. They wish to stop those who contribute to Maduro government. This measure was also done to make companies choose to do business with Venezuela or with the United States. Venezuela blamed the United States for their economic state.

Norwegian Refugee Council

The Norwegian Refugee Council in 2018 gave food to “8,563” Venezuelans, gave shelter to 478 Venezuelans and 15,778 people benefited from their ICLA (information, counselling and legal assistance) programme. They help in the education sector, the legal sector and giving shelter and settlement for them.

European Union

The European Union has stated that they wish Venezuela holds new elections. The European Commission has been sending humanitarian aid since 2016 to Venezuela. In total since 2018, they have sent “€117.6 million”. Their humanitarian aid includes emergency shelter, food, access to clean water and sanitation and education to children.
The Human Rights Council

The Human rights council has created a new independent fact-finding body which will help investigate the extrajudicial killings, the human rights violations, the abuse and torture. This resolution was presented by the Lima group.

OCHA (The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)

OCHA has vaccinated more than 8.5 million, gave medicine to more than 975,000 people in health facilities. They distributed food and agricultural support to more than 50,000 people and ensured that more than 350,000 people have access to filtered water. They provide education support to more than 16,000 as well as giving out information to 35,000 people about protective services. They provided nutritional support to more than 100,000 pregnant women and children. OCHA has also been creating a new response plan to help 2.6 million Venezuela’s. For this to happen they were able to acquire $223 million from donors.

Timeline of Events

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1998

Hugo Chávez elected President and launches the “Bolivarian Revolution” which bring a new socialist and populist economy as well as a new constitution.

2001

President Chávez enables laws that are intended to redistribute land and wealth

January 2005

President Chávez signs decree on land reform. This eliminates Venezuela’s large state and benefits the less fortunate.

2nd of June 2010

Chávez declares economic war due to shortages.

2013

Maduro comes to power after President Chávez death

February - March 2014

shortages and crime indices increase, mass protest begin which results in 43 deaths. The security forces arrest the opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez.

June 2014

The global oil price drops drastically.

26th of November 2015

Government announces to the public that will reduce public spending

13th of May 2016

President Maduro declares ‘state of emergency’

7th of April 2017

The supreme court banned a candidate from the opposition to participate in the elections, this resulted in violent riots between the police and the citizens which lead to 66 deaths.

2018

President Maduro was re-elected even though there were claims of fraud and opposition coalition.

2019

The United Nations has recorded that more than 4 million Venezuelans have fled the country.
5th of January 2019
The United States imposes sanctions on Venezuela

23rd of January 2019
Maduro orders all American diplomats to leave Venezuela within 72 hours.

8th of February 2019
Humanitarian aid from the US arrives at the border with Colombia but is blocked from entering the country.

21st of February 2019
President Maduro closes the border with Brazil

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Mandate of the special rapporteur on the right to food, 24-26 June 2009 (2000/10)
- The Rio treaty
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 10, 1948 (A/RES/217(III) A)
- Resolution on the right to food (A/HRC/40/L.12)
- Resolution on the promotion and protection of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 10-28th of September 2018 (A/HRC/38/L.1/Rev.1)
- Resolution on the Human Rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, 10th - 28th of September 2018 (A/HRC/39/L.11)
- Strengthening cooperation and technical assistance in the field of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 9th- 27th September 2019 (A/HRC/42/L.38/Rev.1)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue
UN involvement

The United Nations agencies, WHO, OCHA, UNICEF have been involved in gathering funds to send humanitarian aid to Venezuela. The UN’s Financial Tracking Services recorded that $24 million was gathered in 2018. Since the UN still recognizes Maduro as the President of Venezuela the humanitarian aid which contains emergency relief packs, medicine, food, hygiene and water can pass through the borders. The UN urges for Maduro to cooperate in order to promote human rights and it urges the countries of Latin America to monitor the situation of human rights in Venezuela.

The resolution of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela urges that the Venezuelan authorities release all of the political opposition from prison. It also urges for them to give their population the right to water, food and sanitation. It also presents that the high commissioner should keep monitoring the situation. It urges that the Venezuelan authorities cooperate to grant the population better living conditions.

The Human Rights Council has been doing investigation on the killings as well as the violations of human rights so that they are able to have a clear data of what is happening as it has not been published by the Venezuelan government.

Sanctions

As mentioned previously, Obama and Trump have imposed several sanctions on Venezuela as an attempt to pressure President Maduro of stepping down from power. The sanctions on oil could block around $7 billion in PDVSA’s (petroleum company in Venezuela) assets. This makes companies choose with which country they are going to work with. This is still an ongoing process and Maduro’s opponents are hoping that more Latin American countries will impose sanctions like the US. However, the sanction could worsen the living standards of those in Venezuela.

Venezuelan aid live show

In the 22nd of February 2019, the Venezuelan aid live show happened in the Columbia border. There were many different stars present and it was broadcast in social media. This was to pressure President Maduro into allowing the Humanitarian aid to pass through the border the next day. It aims to achieve awareness about the seriousness of the Humanitarian Crisis as well as the refugee crisis. The other aim was to raise funds to donate to the most cities in need.

Possible Solutions
Countries could intensify their diplomatic and economic pressure towards Venezuela. They could continue with the sanctions; however, this can cause the humanitarian crisis to worsen as a bystander effect of the economic sanctions.

One solution to be able to get the humanitarian aid inside of Venezuela is to accept and recognize that Maduro is the President. With this President Maduro will consider the idea of the aid passing through the borders instead of blocking them or burning them.

A forced Humanitarian intervention. The use of American troops to deliver the aid which is a challenge to execute. The other way is for the American troops to create safe zones inside Venezuela; however, this could be seen as an act of war by Venezuela and would lead to confrontations between the countries.

A military operation. To use military force to remove Maduro from power but this could escalate the geopolitical tension. Russian and Chinese troops could join Maduro troops to try to stop the military force from coming in. This could lead to a bigger problem.

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