



HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN VENEZUELA: A CASE STUDY OF THE CLOSURE OF THE UN OFFICE IN VENEZUELA IN 2024

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi krisis hak asasi manusia yang terjadi di Venezuela dengan penekanan pada penutupan Kantor Hak Asasi Manusia Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa (PBB) oleh rezim Nicolás Maduro pada tahun 2024. Penutupan ini menunjukkan peningkatan sifat otoriter dan penolakan terhadap pengawasan pihak luar terkait pelanggaran hak asasi manusia yang semakin terstruktur oleh negara. Dengan memanfaatkan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif serta teori realisme dan konsep kepentingan nasional, penelitian ini meneliti cara pemerintah Venezuela menerapkan strategi defensif guna mempertahankan kontrol politik dalam negeri dan kemandirian negara di tengah tekanan dan sanksi dari luar. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kebijakan penutupan Kantor Hak Asasi Manusia PBB oleh Venezuela memperburuk rasa impunitas terhadap pelanggaran hak asasi manusia, memperdalam isolasi diplomatik negara tersebut, serta memperparah krisis sosial dan ekonomi yang dialami oleh rakyat. Penelitian ini menekankan betapa pentingnya memahami dinamika politik kekuasaan dan kepentingan nasional untuk menguraikan hubungan antarnegara serta peran institusi internasional dalam konteks tekanan global yang rumit.

Kata Kunci: Krisis Hak Asasi Manusia, Penutupan Kantor PBB, Otoritarianisme, Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro

ABSTRACT

This research explores the ongoing human rights crisis in Venezuela, with an emphasis on the closure of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Office by the Nicolás Maduro regime in 2024. This closure demonstrates the increasing authoritarian nature and resistance to outside scrutiny of increasingly structured human rights violations by the state. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach as well as the theory of realism and the concept of national interest, this research examines how the Venezuelan government has implemented a defensive strategy to maintain domestic political control and state independence amid external pressure and sanctions. The findings show that the Venezuelan policy of closing the UN Human Rights Offices exacerbates the sense of impunity for human rights violations, deepens the country's diplomatic isolation, and worsens the social and economic crisis experienced by the people. This research emphasizes the importance of understanding the dynamics of power politics and national interests to decipher interstate relations and the role of international institutions in the context of complex global pressures.

Keywords: Human Rights Crisis, UN Office Closure, Authoritarianism, Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro

BACKGROUND

The humanitarian crisis that has unfolded in Venezuela over the past decade is one of the most significant social and political disasters in Latin America. Since the transition of leadership from Hugo Chávez to Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela has experienced hyperinflation, the collapse of public service infrastructure, and shortages of basic goods, driving millions of its citizens to flee the country. Amid this complex crisis, the Venezuelan government's decision to close the United Nations Human Rights Office (UN Office) in February 2024 emerged as the most controversial moment, marking the culmination of years of repression and tension that had been building up over time (Voice of America, 2024).

Amidst the deteriorating situation, the government responded to social discontent by implementing repressive policies. A 2019 UN report has confirmed that violence by the authorities, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions are occurring systematically, and these actions can be categorized as crimes against humanity. The state has turned into a tool of repression for the ruling elite, rather than a protector that frees citizens from threats (de Souza, 2020).

The ongoing oppression within the country has not only had an impact at the local level but has also triggered responses and pressure from the international community. The United States, the European Union, and several countries in the region have responded to human rights violations by imposing economic sanctions, embargoes, and issuing official statements opposing the Maduro government. However, some argue that these sanctions often fail to achieve their intended goals, burden ordinary citizens, and reinforce the government's perception of external threats and Western-backed efforts to destabilize the country. This phenomenon highlights the complexity and contradictions in the relationship between domestic and

international actors within the human rights dynamics in Venezuela (International Crisis Group, 2018)

In the midst of the crisis and the government's repressive response, the role of international institutions has come to the fore. The UN Office in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, is the only institution that has the authority and access to monitor, document, and voice human rights violations independently. In addition to being a data collector, the UN Office also acts as a facilitator for victims of violations and civil society to obtain protection, justice, and advocacy in the international sphere, becoming the last anchor of transparency amid the fragility of national institutions. However, the existence of the UN Office and its independent reports face various obstacles. The Venezuelan government continuously views the organization as a threat to the country's sovereignty. Reports from the UN Office highlighting patterns of oppression, such as the criminalization of the opposition and the torture of political prisoners, are viewed by the government as foreign interference and propaganda aimed at tarnishing the regime's reputation. The situation has become increasingly tense as local human rights activists, such as Rocío San Miguel, have been arrested and their cases have been seriously raised by the UN Office and publicized internationally (Buslychschlüter, 2024).

The conflict reached its peak in February 2024, when the Venezuelan government officially ordered the closure of the UN Office and required all staff to leave the country within 72 hours. This move was in response to sharp criticism of the detention and prosecution of human rights activists, which the government viewed as exceeding its mandate and violating the principle of non-intervention. The closure of the UN Office not only reduces the space for independent advocacy and monitoring but also pushes Venezuela into deeper international isolation, where victims of human rights violations find it increasingly difficult to access fair justice and protection (Fernandez, 2024).

The policy of closing the UN Office is central to this research, as it reflects the climax of a process of crisis, oppression, and domestic-international conflict, as well as marking the expansion of authoritarianism in Venezuela to a new level. The analysis of this policy is not only important to understand the dynamics of power and resistance in Venezuela, but also to enrich perspectives on the role of international institutions in protecting human rights in the midst of a crisis of state sovereignty.

Against this background, this study poses the following main research questions: “What are the key considerations and drivers underlying the Venezuelan government’s decision to close the United Nations Human Rights Office by 2024?” To answer this question, this analysis critically examines the interplay between domestic political dynamics, structural conditions, and external influences that shaped this significant policy move, as well as the attendant implications for human rights conditions and the prospects for international oversight in Venezuela.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To answer the research questions in this study, the author uses the realist perspective. Realism in international relations is a theory that places the state as the main actor that is rational and oriented towards its security and survival interests in an anarchic international system. In this condition, the state tries to maximize its power to maintain its sovereignty and stability, regardless of international norms that are often considered subordinate to national strategic interests.

Realism is a paradigm that focuses on the state, which is the belief that the state is the sole actor and the most influential entity in international politics. Studying international relations is studying the interaction between states. This is because states are political entities that have power, authority, and sovereignty that other international actors do not have. As a result, only states have the power to issue internationally influential political policies. This statement does not indicate that

realism rejects the existence of other international actors. Realism recognizes the existence of non-state actors, namely international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multinational corporations (MNCs), armed groups, and individuals. Realism also considers the significant role of non-state actors, but ultimately, the state has the final say (Rosyidin, 2022).

Political realism in analyzing international relations always bases its views on reality, on what exists, and not on what should be, as claimed by political idealists. In the real world, according to realists, conflict is already at the doorstep due to the inherent violent nature of human beings and because the path chosen by the world's population is more inclined toward organizing sovereign and independent states that tend not to respect authority outside or above their own nation. The thinking of the realists is thus based on the pursuit of power and domination arising from human nature as the fundamental cause of conflict (Azwar, 2014).

In the realist view, the state prioritizes its own self-interest. This thinking follows the precepts handed down by the realist thinkers of the pre-modern era discussed earlier. The purpose of a state in international interaction is explained through the concept of national interest. National interest, according to realists, only emphasizes two aspects, namely security and power. Every state, whether big or small, wants security. If possible, the state will try to be the most powerful because in this way, its security will be maintained. Therefore, a state's main goal in international relations is to protect its national security and strive to become an influential state. While many states focus on economic interests, this will eventually turn into security and power. The underlying logic is simple: the stronger the economy, the more likely it is that the state will utilize it to strengthen its national security. Therefore, it is a mistake for students to think that realists only focus on economic benefits without considering the security and power aspects of the country (Rosyidin, 2022).

According to realism, states do not act based on ideals or global morality but are pragmatic in the face of external and internal threats. In a competitive and high-risk international environment, the rational behavior of the state is to ensure survival by increasing power capacity and avoiding foreign interference that could weaken the sovereignty or legitimacy of the ruler.

The case of the closure of the UN Office in Venezuela in 2024 can be seen as a manifestation of the logic of realism, where the Venezuelan government assesses the presence of this institution as a threat to political stability and state sovereignty. The closure is a strategic effort to eliminate external oversight and strengthen internal control in the face of growing political and economic pressures.

International pressure in the form of sanctions and global condemnation of human rights violations in Venezuela is realistically seen as an attempt at political intervention that jeopardizes national autonomy. The state's response by closing the UN Office is a defensive measure to protect itself from external threats in order to maintain control over domestic policies and political narratives.

By adopting a realist perspective, it can be understood that the closure of the UN Office is the result of the dynamics of power politics in a competitive and anarchic international system. States continue to prioritize their survival and strategic interests over normative compliance with international rules, so actions such as limiting the role of international institutions are a logical consequence.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative method by utilizing data obtained specifically through library research. Information was obtained from various written sources such as books, journal articles, research reports, and other academic documents related to the research topic. This approach provides an opportunity for authors to conduct an in-depth analysis of existing theories and results, as well as critically evaluate various

viewpoints and concepts related to the phenomenon being studied. By applying the interpretative method, this study seeks to present an in-depth and contextualized understanding based on reliable sources without taking direct data from the field. Through processing and combining data from the literature, this study aims to generate new insights that can enrich scientific studies in relevant fields (Abdussamad, 2021). This research applied the desk research method as the main way of collecting data. Data was collected through searching and analyzing official documents from the Venezuelan government, reports on human rights from credible international organizations such as the UN, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch, as well as academic works that examine the political crisis and human rights in Venezuela.

This method was chosen because it provides access to reliable primary and secondary sources and allows for the comparison of different views on the topic under study. All documents and reports retrieved have been selected based on their level of credibility and relevance to the research focus, particularly regarding the Venezuelan government's policies and the closure of the UN Office. The source selection process is rigorous to avoid bias and ensure that the data analyzed has a strong empirical basis.

Data analysis was carried out by exploring government policies, especially those related to the closure of the UN Office, and evaluating reactions and responses from the international community. This includes understanding the political motives underlying the policy, the government's narrative on allegations of foreign interference, and assessing the impact of the policy on human rights conditions in Venezuela.

The authors also compared data before and after the closure of the UN Office, using indicators such as statistics on human rights violations, crime rates, and reports of detention and torture of political opposition. This approach is not only descriptive but also critical in assessing the effectiveness and impact of government policies. The

entire process of data collection and analysis was conducted with transparency, recording data sources and methodologies used, to support the validity of the research results and facilitate verification by other parties.

DISCUSSION

Background to the Closure of the UN Human Rights Office by the Venezuelan Government

The closure of the UN Office in Venezuela on February 15, 2024, was a decision that sparked debate by the Maduro government. The announcement of this decision was made by the Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yván Gil, who accused the agency of acting “inappropriately” and functioning as a “private law firm for coup plotters and terrorists” conspiring against the state. The Venezuelan government gave UN staff 72 hours to leave the country, citing that the office had violated the UN Charter and acted in a colonialist and arbitrary manner. This action was taken after the UN Office criticized the detention of Rocío San Miguel, a prominent human rights lawyer accused by the government of being involved in a coup plot and an assassination attempt against Maduro. The detention sparked protests from the international community, including the UN, which called for San Miguel’s immediate release and the right to legal representation. However, the Venezuelan government viewed the criticism as unacceptable foreign interference (Buschschlüter, 2024).

The closure of the UN Office also highlights the growing tension between the Maduro government and the international community over human rights violations in Venezuela. Since 2014, a UN investigative team has concluded that the Venezuelan government has been involved in human rights violations, including killings, torture, forced disappearances, and unfair arrests. The report reveals that these harsh measures are intended to control political opposition and instill fear among civilians (Matos, 2021).

The Venezuelan government often claims that the opposition is involved in a coup or plans to overthrow the state. These allegations are used as justification for taking harsh measures against activists, journalists, and politicians deemed a threat to the stability of the government. The closure of the UN Office is a step taken to reduce international oversight of human rights violations in the country. The prolonged economic crisis is also an important factor underlying the strict policies implemented by the Maduro administration. The deteriorating social conditions due to shortages of food, medicine, and health services have led to social instability. In this situation, the government has taken decisive measures to maintain its dominance over society and suppress voices critical of the regime (Matos, 2021).

The closure of the UN Office has been widely condemned by various international organizations and Western countries. They view this action as an attempt to hinder further investigations into human rights violations in Venezuela. A spokesperson for the UN Office expressed regret over the decision and reaffirmed their commitment to continue promoting human rights for the people of Venezuela despite facing significant challenges. Overall, the decision to close the UN Office reflects the complex dynamics between the Maduro government's efforts to maintain domestic sovereignty and international pressure regarding human rights violations. This move further tarnishes the Maduro regime's image in the eyes of the world while reducing access to information about the human rights situation in Venezuela (Matos, 2021).

Conspiracy Allegations and the Venezuelan Government's Narrative

The closure of the UN Office dealing with human rights issues in Venezuela in 2024 is one of the most controversial measures taken by Maduro's administration. This policy emerged in response to the complex crisis Venezuela is currently experiencing, which includes political, economic, and social issues that have been ongoing for more than a decade. Venezuela now faces a situation where human rights violations are

becoming increasingly systematic, including arbitrary detention, torture, extrajudicial killings, and repressive actions against political opponents. The UN Office responsible for human rights previously played a significant role in monitoring and reporting these violations and urging the government to respect the rights of its people.

Ahead of the closure of the office, the UN Office has consistently issued statements condemning human rights violations in Venezuela, including the arbitrary detention of activists and political opponents. One incident that attracted attention was the detention of San Miguel on February 9, 2024. San Miguel's detention occurred while she was waiting for a flight to Miami with her daughter and has become an international spotlight, as it is considered a repressive measure against human rights defenders (Voice of America, 2024).

The Venezuelan government has accused San Miguel of involvement in an alleged conspiracy to overthrow Maduro, which is believed to be supported by the United States. However, criticism from the UN emphasizes that the arrest constitutes a violation of the right to freedom of expression and opinion. The UN Office has urged the Venezuelan government to immediately release San Miguel and provide her with the right to adequate legal defense. This detention is considered part of a systematic pattern of repression against critical voices in the country.

The Venezuelan government has accused San Miguel, who also holds Spanish citizenship, of involvement in an alleged conspiracy to overthrow Maduro. The allegations emerged in the context of "Operation White Bracelet," which was claimed to be a terrorist plot to assassinate Maduro and several other high-ranking officials. Attorney General Tarek William Saab stated that San Miguel used her military analysis to leak strategic information to foreign parties, particularly the United States, which is suspected of supporting the plot. The arrest comes amid political tensions ahead of the 2024 general election, in which Maduro faces significant pressure after barring the

main opposition candidate, María Corina Machado, from participating in the political contest (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2024).

The UN condemned San Miguel's detention as a serious violation of the right to freedom of expression and legal protection. The UN Office stated that San Miguel was detained without access to a lawyer for the first 72 hours, which violates international standards regarding the treatment of detainees. In addition, her place of detention at El Helicoide prison is known as a place where torture and ill-treatment of detainees often occur. The UN also emphasized that the use of terrorism charges against human rights activists is a form of systematic criminalization of critical voices in Venezuela (Buschschlüter, 2024).

In February 2024, the Venezuelan government officially decided to close the office on the grounds that the international body had acted "inappropriately" and functioned as a "private law firm" for opposition groups. Foreign Minister Yván Gil stated that the presence of the UN Office was no longer in line with national interests and was instead being used to discredit the Maduro government in the eyes of the international community. This step was also taken after sharp criticism from the UN regarding the detention of San Miguel (Turkewitz et al., 2024).

Maduro's Policies in Response to International Pressure

Maduro has been the target of intense international pressure, particularly from the United States and its allies, which has caused the government to become more defensive and assertive in dealing with the country's economic crisis and human rights issues. In response, Maduro has implemented various policies in the areas of economics, diplomacy, social media, and propaganda to strengthen his authority and protect the Venezuelan people.

In this context, the closure of the UN Office can be understood as a move to consolidate power and reduce international influence. The Maduro government has

long faced criticism from several countries and international organizations regarding human rights violations, including the arbitrary detention of activists and political opponents. By closing the UN Office, Maduro seeks to eliminate international scrutiny and create a narrative that his government does not need outside intervention. This decision reflects the government's defensive strategy to reduce international scrutiny of its actions while maintaining control over the domestic narrative. By using anti-imperialist rhetoric, Maduro is trying to build domestic solidarity and strengthen support from pro-government groups. Additionally, this move also shows the government's efforts to divert attention from the worsening economic and social crisis by blaming foreign powers as the main cause of the country's instability (Santamaria, 2019).

One of Maduro's main strategies for dealing with international pressure is trade diversification. Maduro sent oil exports to countries such as China, Russia, and Turkey when the United States imposed economic sanctions that harmed Venezuela. The goal was to reduce dependence on Western markets while strengthening ties with non-Western entities that support the government. Additionally, Maduro introduced the Petro digital currency in 2018. This currency is based on blockchain technology and supported by countries such as Venezuela. In 2018, Maduro devalued the Petro, a currency declared devalued by the Venezuelan government. The main goal was to stabilize the national economy and counter international threats. The Petro is not widely used, either domestically or internationally. Many Venezuelans cannot understand it due to the country's technological deficiencies and high import prices. The Petro is not widely used, either domestically or internationally. Many Venezuelans cannot understand it due to the country's technological deficiencies and high import prices (Karsteen & West, 2018).

Maduro has successfully implemented diplomatic measures to address international issues, particularly those involving Western countries such as the United

States and Europe. This reaffirms the government's confrontation with criticism of human rights violations and the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. Maduro has consistently rejected humanitarian aid from Western countries, including the United States, explaining that it is merely a tool of political intervention aimed at weakening the government. Maduro allowed trucks carrying food and medicine imposed by the United States on Venezuela-Colombia in 2019. He referred to the aid as "fake" and considered it part of a campaign to overthrow his government. In his statement, Maduro asserted that Venezuela "does not need pity" and rejected the notion that the country is experiencing a humanitarian crisis, despite ample evidence of severe food and medicine shortages across the region. However, amid his rejection of aid from Western countries, Maduro has received support from international allies such as Russia, which sent 300 tons of supplies to Venezuela. This reflects that Maduro's rejection of Western aid is based more on political considerations than practical reasons (Jack, 2019).

In this context, this closure policy can be considered a direct response to growing international criticism. Since Maduro took office, Venezuela has been subject to several sanctions from Western countries, particularly the United States, which accuses the Venezuelan government of human rights violations and undermining democracy. In response to these sanctions, Maduro has often stated that they are part of an international plan to destroy Venezuela's sovereignty. The Venezuelan government has also used anti-imperialist rhetoric to increase solidarity within the country. By referring to criticism from abroad as foreign interference, Maduro seeks to strengthen his political support among citizens who feel threatened by outside forces. In this context, the decision to close the UN Office is not merely an administrative measure but part of a more comprehensive political strategy to maintain power amid various pressures both domestically and internationally.

Implications of the Venezuelan Government's Action to Close the UN Human Rights Office

The Venezuelan government's decision to close the UN Office is a deeply regrettable step, given the vital role this institution plays in monitoring and improving human rights conditions worldwide. This action is not merely an administrative change but also reflects the complex internal political dynamics and their impact on Venezuelan civil society and international relations. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the profound implications of this decision on various aspects of life in the country.

The closure of the UN Office raises questions about the Venezuelan government's commitment to universal human rights principles. This move could be seen as an attempt to avoid international scrutiny, which in turn could potentially worsen the human rights situation in the country. As a result, civil society groups vulnerable to human rights violations may lose access to the protection and assistance previously provided by the UN office.

In addition, the implications of this action also relate to the political and diplomatic spheres. The closure of the UN Office could affect Venezuela's relations with other countries and international organizations concerned with human rights. This could potentially lead to further isolation and limit Venezuela's ability to participate in global dialogue on important issues (Matos, 2021).

Increased Human Rights Violations

One of the most direct implications of the closure of the UN office is reduced international oversight and increased human rights violations. Without independent oversight from the UN, the Venezuelan government may feel freer to continue repressive practices such as arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings. Previous reports from the UN indicate that the government led by Maduro has been

involved in systematic crimes against humanity. With the loss of oversight, the risk of human rights violations is expected to increase. A report by a UN fact-finding team noted that since 2014, systematic violence has been used as a tool to suppress the opposition and terrorize the Venezuelan people. One of the most direct implications of the closure of the UN Office is an increase in human rights violations (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

Before the closure of the UN Office in February 2024, Venezuela faced extremely high murder rates, reaching around 50 per 100,000 inhabitants, making it one of the highest in the world. After the closure, official data collection became difficult, but a small decrease of around four percent is estimated. This decline still requires further verification due to the lack of independent oversight and transparency of data from the Venezuelan government (Ramirez, 2018).

The Tren de Aragua criminal gang is one of the main actors in organized crime in Venezuela, controlling prisons and engaging in various serious crimes, such as murder, kidnapping, and human trafficking. The Venezuelan government claims that it successfully dismantled this gang in 2023, with its activities said to have decreased by around 70 percent. However, independent reports indicate that the gang remains active, particularly in conducting criminal operations abroad, such as in Colombia and Chile (Cortez, 2023).

Approximately 8 million Venezuelans have left their country since 2014, with around 6.5 million of them moving to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Following the general election, 43 percent of Venezuelans interviewed expressed their intention to leave their homeland, according to local survey results. Many individuals have left, including politicians, polling station officials, and voters.

Various factors contribute to the exodus of Venezuelans, including the extremely poor economic situation and persecution. Travel restrictions to other countries, such as visa requirements imposed by the United States, as well as limited

access to asylum and legalization, poor integration programs, and discrimination and xenophobia in neighboring countries, have forced some people to take dangerous routes such as the Darién Gap, a risky wilderness on the border between Colombia and Panama, where they face torture. Between January and October 2024, over 198,000 Venezuelans have crossed the Darién Gap.

More than 20 million Venezuelans, out of a total population of 28.8 million, live in multidimensional poverty due to economic uncertainty and poor public services. They have permanently lost the means to meet their basic needs. According to HumVenezuela, an independent platform of civil society organizations, 14.2 million of them face an urgent humanitarian situation. In March 2024, the humanitarian organization Convite in Venezuela estimated that around 28.4 percent of pharmacies in the country do not sell essential medicines, and many of the medicines that are available are also unaffordable for many people. The Venezuelan population is experiencing hunger, which affects 5.1 million individuals. The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food noted that economic and political sanctions, as well as the use of state food programs as a tool, are obstacles to the fulfillment of the right to food. The ongoing humanitarian crisis is driving many people to adopt extreme measures to survive, such as reducing expenses, increasing working hours, skipping meals, bartering goods for sex, or leaving the country (Human Rights Watch, 2025).

Kidnapping cases in Venezuela remain high and are a serious problem, especially in areas bordering neighboring countries. After the closure of the UN Office, there has been no significant change in the number of kidnappings, which remain a major threat to residents and migrants. Violence against Venezuelan migrants has increased by about 15 percent since the closure of the UN Office, especially in migration destination countries such as Colombia and Mexico. Migrants are often targeted by criminal gangs and corrupt security forces, with minimal legal protection, leaving them vulnerable to violence and exploitation (Rizzi et al., 2025).

Law enforcement against criminal gangs before the closure of the UN Office was weak. After the closure, the government claimed a 20 percent increase in law enforcement, but independent reports still point to various weaknesses in the legal process and detention of gang members, including a lack of transparency and adequate legal protection. Deportations of gang members from migrant destination countries increased by about 50 percent after the closure of the UN Office. However, legal proceedings against them were very limited, resulting in many gang members being released after deportation, which could potentially strengthen criminal networks in both their countries of origin and destination.

Prison conditions in Venezuela remain dire and have not seen significant improvement. Prisons are overcrowded, controlled by criminal gangs, and prone to violence, further exacerbating security issues and human rights violations within the country's correctional system. Violence by security forces, including human rights violations such as torture and arbitrary detention, continues to occur frequently both before and after the closure of the UN Office. There has been no significant change in these violent practices, which are also part of efforts to suppress activists and the opposition (Ellis, 2025).

Without independent oversight from the UN, the Venezuelan government may feel freer to continue repressive practices such as arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings. Previous reports from the UN indicate that the Maduro-led government has been involved in systematic crimes against humanity. With the loss of such oversight, the risk of human rights violations is expected to increase. A report by a UN fact-finding team notes that since 2014, systematic violence has been used as a tool to suppress the opposition and terrorize the Venezuelan people.

Previously, the UN Office served as an independent monitor, issuing reports and recommendations regarding the human rights situation in Venezuela. With the closure of the office, access to accurate information about human rights violations has

become increasingly limited. This situation has the potential to lead to an increase in violations without an effective oversight mechanism, thereby worsening the humanitarian conditions in Venezuela.

With the loss of UN oversight, the international community loses an important channel for obtaining accurate and reliable information about the human rights situation in Venezuela. Reports previously submitted by the UN Office were often used as the basis for diplomatic action and international sanctions against the Maduro government. Without these reports, efforts to pressure the government to respect human rights will become increasingly difficult. This situation could also result in reduced global attention to violations occurring in the country.

Isolation by Western Countries

Venezuela's international isolation, particularly by Western countries, has deepened following the closure of the UN Office and other repressive measures taken by the Maduro government. These actions not only reflect a rejection of international criticism but also have the potential to worsen Venezuela's diplomatic and economic relations with countries that were previously neutral or supportive of it.

Sanctions imposed by the United States and its allies have become the main instrument in efforts to isolate Venezuela. These sanctions include the freezing of Venezuelan government assets abroad, a ban on transactions with Venezuelan authorities, and penalties for individuals or entities that provide support to the Maduro regime. These sanctions aim to isolate Maduro financially and force the government to stop human rights violations. However, the impact of these sanctions is often felt by the general public, who are finding it increasingly difficult to access food and medicine (Matos, 2021).

Venezuela also faces exclusion from important international forums, including Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS). Brazil's veto of Venezuela's

application for BRICS membership in October 2024 was a strategic blow to Maduro's efforts to diversify his economic alliances amid international isolation. This decision shows that even regional allies are beginning to withdraw their support when the political situation is unstable and opaque (Plummer & Rocha, 2024).

Deepening international isolation has the potential to worsen Venezuela's already dire economic conditions, exacerbated by hyperinflation and a humanitarian crisis. Without access to global markets and financial resources from Western countries or other strategic alliances, Venezuela faces significant challenges in its economic recovery efforts. This could lead to increased economic vulnerability and limit the government's policy options in addressing the ongoing crisis.

Risk of Declining Foreign Investment

The closure of the UN Office in Venezuela in February 2024 has the potential to have a significant impact on the foreign investment climate in the country. With increasing human rights violations and repressive actions against opposition groups, foreign investors may be reluctant to invest in Venezuela. The political and social uncertainty plaguing the country could be a deterrent for foreign companies considering investment, particularly in strategic sectors such as oil and gas.

The political uncertainty caused by the actions of the Maduro-led government, including the closure of the UN Office, creates an unstable environment for investors. Investors tend to avoid markets that are considered high-risk, and the current situation in Venezuela shows signs of significant uncertainty. In this context, foreign companies may delay their investment decisions or even withdraw from the Venezuelan market. This would reduce the much-needed capital inflows required for the country's economic recovery.

Although the country's appeal lies in its oil wealth, the size of its domestic market, and its abundance of natural resources, foreign direct investment (FDI) into

Venezuela has declined in recent years due to political and economic instability in the country. According to the UNCTAD World Investment Report 2024, the country saw an FDI inflow of USD 688 million in 2023, compared to USD 1.65 billion in the previous year, representing a decrease of 58.3 percent. By the end of the same period, total FDI was estimated to reach USD 26.58 billion, equivalent to approximately 27.4 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). The climate of uncertainty arising from the "Bolivarian" reforms (which include violations of private property rights, currency controls, increasingly strict regulations, nationalization, and so on), as well as the inefficiency of the port system and the decline in oil prices (which contribute 96 percent to currency flows), are all obstacles to investment. The Venezuelan government has implemented regional and revolutionary policies while still opening opportunities for much-needed foreign investment. However, the "Bolivarian" socialism implemented by the government, which is largely interventionist, does not support the development of FDI flows and hinders the realization of the country's potential. The law enacted in 2014 regarding foreign investment reduces the legal rights of foreign investors compared to the previous system (UNCTAD, 2024).

Although Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world and a favorable geographical position, the country also experiences one of the highest inflation rates in the world, widespread corruption, high levels of poverty and violence, economic and political instability, significant government interference, and a restrictive legal system. Furthermore, the judicial system is significantly influenced by the executive branch, and although Venezuela's legal system supports FDI, it can be manipulated by the executive branch. As a result, FDI in Venezuela has increased less in recent years compared to most countries in Latin America. Furthermore, many MNCs from the United States, such as General Mills, General Motors, Kimberly-Clark, Exxon Mobil, Bridgestone Firestone, Kellogg's, United Airlines, and Delta Airlines, have left the country in recent years. Those MNCs either left by selling their assets at low prices or

by completely relinquishing them. Around 150 MNCs are still maintaining their presence. The poor business conditions in Venezuela are reflected in its position on international indices: the country ranks 178th out of 180 economies in the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index and 174th out of 184 countries in the latest Economic Freedom Index (Lloyds Bank, 2025).

Overall, the data shows that Venezuela has experienced a drastic decline in FDI since the onset of the economic crisis in 2013. The shift from positive figures at the beginning of the decade to significant net outflows in recent years highlights the significant challenges the country faces in its efforts to attract foreign investors back. Political uncertainty, international sanctions, high inflation, and inconsistent economic policies have eroded investor confidence in Venezuela's future economic growth potential.

International sanctions imposed by Western countries, combined with the government's repressive actions, have led to a decline in investor confidence in Venezuela's economy. When investors find that the government does not respect international norms and systematically violates human rights, they are more likely to avoid investing in that country. This decline in confidence can result in a decline in FDI, which is a vital source of economic growth and job creation.

Venezuela has the world's largest oil reserves, yet the country's energy sector has experienced a dramatic decline in production over the past few years. The closure of the UN Office could exacerbate this situation, as foreign investors may be reluctant to invest in oil exploration and production projects without guarantees of security and stability. With reduced investment in the energy sector, the country's oil export revenues will come under further pressure, which in turn will worsen the already difficult economic conditions.

The decline in foreign investment may also force the Venezuelan government to seek alternative sources of financing that are riskier, such as loans from countries

with specific strategic interests, for example, Russia or China. Reliance on such financing could undermine Venezuela's economic sovereignty and increase the risk of uncontrolled foreign debt. In the long term, this situation could create a deepening debt cycle.

CONCLUSION

The closure of the UN Office dealing with human rights issues in Venezuela in February 2024 was a very significant step that had a widespread impact on the country's political, social, and economic situations. In a political context, this decision reflects Maduro's efforts to remove international scrutiny of human rights violations committed by his government. The closure came after the UN Office criticized the detention of San Miguel. By expelling UN staff, Maduro has strengthened his authoritarian regime, silenced criticism, and hindered transparency, thereby deepening the democratic crisis and strengthening government control over the opposition and the media.

The social impact of the closure of the UN Office is significant, as it removes an important source of documentation and protection for victims of human rights violations. Previously, the UN Office played a role in monitoring and reporting cases of arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings carried out by Venezuelan security forces. Without the presence of this institution, civil society becomes increasingly vulnerable to government repression.

Economically, although the closure of the UN Office is not directly related to economic policy, its impact is significant in the context of the ongoing crisis. Political uncertainty and intensifying repressive actions under Maduro's leadership have eroded investor confidence and exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. The international isolation exacerbated by the closure of the human rights office has intensified economic sanctions and limited international aid, deepening the difficulties faced by

the Venezuelan people in accessing basic needs such as food, medicine, and health services. This situation reinforces the vicious cycle of poverty and socio-economic instability in the country.

Maduro's role in this crisis is central, as his government has systematically used its power to suppress the opposition and control information. The UN fact-finding mission report reveals that Maduro and his government officials are directly involved in the planning and implementation of serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and systematic torture. The decision to close the UN Office is part of Maduro's strategy to maintain power by eliminating international oversight and silencing critical voices calling for democracy and justice.

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