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Venezuela: Maduro consolidated control as State-enabled criminality rose, according to new EUAA COI report



The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has published an updated Country Focus on Venezuela. The country continues to experience political tension and socio-economic crises due to ongoing hyperinflation, violent crime, repression, and humanitarian difficulties such as shortages of services and food, despite a recent mild economic recovery. The situation continues to spur emigration, with more than 7 million Venezuelans having left since February 2018.

Building on its 2020 report, the EUAA has published an updated Country Focus: Venezuela. In recent years, President Nicolás Maduro has progressively consolidated power over the various levels of government. Political repression remains widespread, with political opponents being targeted for a wide range of abuses. The government and the political opposition signed a deal to hold Presidential elections in the second half of 2024.

Since 2020, authorities have moved toward **selective political repression** and the **targeting of certain profiles**, often with the collaboration of criminal and armed groups in an effort to avoid international scrutiny. Criminal activities such as robberies, kidnapping, and extortion have increased in recent years. **Several armed groups are present and operate in Venezuela**, including colectivos, sindicatos (criminal groups), megabandas (large gangs), drug cartels and Colombian armed groups; the latter sometimes operate with **the complicity of state security forces** and authorities.

Venezuela's border areas with Colombia continued to be characterised **by high levels of violence**, both by armed actors and the Venezuelan state security forces. Forced displacement, illegal detentions, imposed

social restrictions, extortion and extra-judicial killings have been reported in those areas.

International protection situation for Venezuelan nationals

Between January and June 2023, **Venezuelans lodged 36 000 asylum applications** in the EU+ making them the third largest group applying for international protection, with the number of monthly applications rising from 4 800 in January to 7 000 in June. **Applications were up by 41 %** compared to the same period in 2022. This increase is part of a longer-term trend going back five years, that was interrupted only by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first half of 2023, **over 90 % of applications were lodged in Spain**, almost all being first-time applications.

The EU+ recognition rate for Venezuelan applicants for international protection in the EU+ stood at 2 % in the first half of 2023. However, it should be emphasised that Spain, which issued the vast majority of decisions, tends to grant a **national form of protection** accompanied by residence permits issued on humanitarian grounds; rather than international protection.

At the end of June 2023, there were **39 000 Venezuelan cases awaiting a first instance decision** across the EU+, a 12 % increase compared to the end of June 2022.

Download the Report: Venezuela - Country Focus

Background

The EUAA regularly updates its Country of Origin Information reports, which aim to provide accurate and reliable up-to-date information on third countries to support EU+ national asylum and migration authorities involved in migration and international protection procedures.

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