

COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY IN VENEZUELA

Bolívar

Report 2019/2021

Located on the Guiana Shield, in the Guayana region of southeastern Venezuela, the state of Bolívar is bordered to the north by the states of Guárico, Anzoátegui, Monagas and Delta Amacuro, and to the east by Guayana Esequiba. To the south, it borders Brazil, along the Orinoco and Amazon rivers, to the southwest, with the state of Amazonas, and to the west, with Apure. Its 240,528 km² are inhabited by 1,738,070¹ people and it is the largest state in the country. It is made up of 11 municipalities, 47 parishes and a territory in dispute with neighboring Guyana. Its capital is Ciudad Bolívar and the most populated city is Ciudad Guayana.

The actors who participated in the Interdisciplinary Group to address the Complex Humanitarian Emergency in the state, in order to prepare this report found, among other notable problems, that crime has created sophisticated and efficient forms of organization to exert control over the population, in addition to corruption at the border, prostitution, and the precariousness of basic services and the health system.

COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY IN VENEZUELA

Bolívar

Report 2019/2021



Organized crime is growing and extending its control over civilian life, functioning as a para-state

1. Organized crime has grown in the last three years, especially in the south of the state. Beginning with the pranato, which are criminal groups led by a person who exercises territorial control, or of a mine, and whose margin of action was circumscribed to a small territorial portion. Between 2019 and 2020, pranato structures developed and became moderately organized².

2. These structures came to be grouped in the form of pranatos, trains and systems, so that the system group several trains, and then, the trains group several pranatos, which today prevail in the south of the state and control larger territorial extensions³. They have absolute control of all civilian life in a locality. If you need an identity document, you don't go to the Saime, you go to the leader of the system. It works as a "para-state" that has taken over civil life. They are the "judges of peace". They have replaced absolutely all the structures of the State, to the point of forcing children to go to school. Children don't go because they want to or because their parents want them to, but because the system orders them to. It encompasses all other structures and has a greater territorial dominance⁴. With them has come the recruitment of women and even children and adolescents, as well as the proliferation of new forms of slavery (labor for boys and sexual slavery for girls)⁵.

3. The number of women doing forced labor in mining has been increasing. These jobs that were previously, in 2019, exclusive to men, are now performed by women. Migrations of women to the mines were rather pendular, but since 2019 they no longer return to their homes. Previously, they left to the mines with the idea of doing activities such as cooking, but now they do mineral extraction work⁶. Part of the consequences is that those women are forced to have sex with a gang leader and are not allowed to leave the territory.

The number of women doing mining work under slave-like conditions is rising

COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY IN VENEZUELA

Bolívar

Report 2019/2021



Disappearances and extrajudicial executions take place in the mines, turning them into centers of power where violence reigns

4. Disappearances occur in the mines. University students and parents abandon their activities to go to the mines in search of a livelihood. Women who have gone in search of them, find that they have disappeared⁷. It's very difficult to have an exact or verifiable figure for disappearances and extrajudicial executions, which people have normalized. Before, there was the idea that mining activity could bring money, but now people understand that violence reigns there.

5. Likewise, many communities in popular neighborhoods in Bolívar state are controlled by criminal structures such as those in the mines. Some sectors even have cameras to monitor who enters and leaves. Although the violence exercised by these groups may be felt less in the cities, it is increasing in El Callao, Tumeremo and El Dorado⁸. In La Gran Sabana, a transit point for migration to Brazil, corruption in the justice system is very notorious. Since 2019, abuses of power and lack of protection of human rights are more accentuated. With the restrictions of the COVID pandemic, charging to get safe conduits or PCR tests began, and a fuel black market appeared with prices that in non-mining municipalities reached US\$ 3 per litre and in mining municipalities between US\$ 7 and US\$ 12⁹.

Communities in low-income sectors also face violent crime, while corruption is higher in migration routes

Frequent power failures returned, leaving the streets in the dark and the population without Internet connectivity

6. After several years with electricity deficiencies, power service improved during the last months of 2021, but in 2022 power outages have returned¹⁰. There are sectors that suffer between five and seven 20-minute outages per day. These interruptions also affect connectivity, especially of the state-owned company, "Compañía Anónima de Teléfonos de Venezuela" (Cantv), which presents Internet suspensions of up to three days¹¹. Public lighting is still out in Ciudad Guayana and Ciudad Bolívar¹². After sunset everything is in darkness and the streets are deserted.

COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY IN VENEZUELA

Bolívar

Report 2019/2021



There are some stores that remain open, but people assume the risks of insecurity in the streets¹³. Most of the traffic lights on the main roads are not working¹⁴.

7. Between 2019, 2020 and until mid-2021, the public transportation system was almost completely paralyzed. People had to walk long distances to get from one place to another¹⁵. This year, transport units are instead seen waiting for people¹⁶. However, the severity of the failures in the piped water supply service has remained¹⁷. It arrives for very few hours a day¹⁸ and it has been reported that the quality of the water is very poor, causing illnesses from its use or consumption¹⁹. Even the healthiness of the bottled water sold by private companies is being distrusted, because it is presumed that they filter it, but don't purify it.

While public transportation has been regularized, poor access to piped water supply remains a serious problem

Health problems worsen due to unaffordability of medicines and lack of medical care, many related to post-COVID sequelae

8. The health conditions of the population have worsened. Strokes and heart attacks are frequent because many people with hypertension or cardiovascular problems are not receiving the medicines they need. Although many medicines are available, people do not have sufficient financial resources to buy them. Other health problems that have increased include kidney disease, tuberculosis, which was virtually eradicated²⁰, and hepatitis²¹. In addition, many of the serious conditions that are appearing are the after-effects of COVID-19 disease, and others are related to the side effects of treatment.

COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY IN VENEZUELA

Bolívar

Report 2019/2021



9. As a consequence of the prolongation of the economic crisis, there is an increasing number of cases of workers who find themselves under exploitative working conditions. Many of them fall into the category of modern slavery. Situations have been detected where labor is exchanged for food and groceries and not for the respective monetary remuneration. In other cases, the amounts are reduced, or benefits such as bonuses, incentives and even health insurance are removed. The last balance of the basic basket closed at US\$ 575 per month against a minimum salary of around US\$ 30 per month.

Prolonged economic crisis has increased cases of labor and sexual exploitation, which fall under the category of modern slavery

10. Sexual exploitation is also increasing, with the aggravating factor that there is a growing number of cases of consensual participation, albeit under deceitful working conditions. The same situation exists with transactional sex. Girls and adolescents, with the consent or acquiescence of family members and caregivers, exchange sex for food, clothing or electronic devices²². The regional press has reported the existence of human trafficking in the mining municipalities²³. Early marriage is a form of neo-slavery that has also been on the rise. There are adolescent girls married to men twice their age in search of supposed economic stability and care.

References

¹ UCAB. Insoencovi. <https://insoencovi.ucab.edu.ve/indicadores-demograficos/>

² Observatorio de Ecología Política de Venezuela. Evolución de la violencia en el entorno minero del estado Bolívar (marzo de 2016 – febrero de 2019). <https://www.ecopoliticavenezuela.org/2020/05/26/evolucion-de-la-violencia-en-el-entorno-minero-del-estado-bolivar-marzo-de-2016-febrero-de-2019/>

³ Transparencia Venezuela. ORO MORTAL: Entre el crimen organizado, el ecocidio y la corrupción. <https://transparencia.org.ve/oromortal/>

COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY IN VENEZUELA

Bolívar

Report 2019/2021



⁴ Transparencia Venezuela. Crimen organizado y corrupción en Venezuela: un problema de Estado.

<https://transparencia.org.ve/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Crimen-organizado-y-corrupcio%CC%81n-en-Venezuela-Un-problema-de-Estado-completo.pdf>

⁵ Caleidoscopio Humano. Mujeres y niñas en el estado Bolívar, víctimas de formas contemporáneas de esclavitud.

<https://caleidohumano.org/mujeres-y-ninas-en-el-estado-bolivar-victimas-de-formas-contemporaneas-de-esclavitud/>

⁶ Transparencia Venezuela. El estado Bolívar de vuelta al primitivismo.

<https://transparencia.org.ve/oromortal/project/el-estado-bolivar-de-vuelta-al-primitivismo/>

⁷ UCAB Guayana. Arco Minero del Orinoco es una bomba de violencia contra la mujer.

<http://guayanaweb.ucab.edu.ve/noticias-reader-guayana-actual/items/arco-minero-del-orinoco-es-una-bomba-de-violencia-contra-la-mujer-1949.html>

⁸ Crónica Uno. Semana Santa transcurre con tensión en El Callao por guerra entre grupos armados.

<https://cronica.uno/tension-en-el-callao-por-guerra-entre-bandas-armadas/>

⁹ Coalición Anticorrupción. Bolívar | Analizan impacto de la pandemia y riesgos de corrupción en la migración.

<https://coalicionanticorrupcion.com/bolivar-%e2%94%82analizan-impacto-de-la-pandemia-y-riesgos-de-corrupcion-en-la-migracion/>

¹⁰ Primicia. Fallas del servicio eléctrico son cada vez más frecuentes en todo el estado Bolívar.

<https://primicia.com.ve/guayana/regiones/fallas-del-servicio-electrico-son-cada-vez-mas-frecuentes-en-todo-el-estado-bolivar/>

¹¹ Efecto Cocuyo. Reportan falla de internet en el oriente del país y la región Guayana este #11Ene.

<https://efectococuyo.com/la-humanidad/falla-de-internet-oriente-del-pais-y-region-guayana-11ene/>

¹² El Pitazo. Habitantes del casco histórico de Ciudad Bolívar reclaman alumbrado público.

<https://elpitazo.net/guayana/habitantes-del-casco-historico-de-ciudad-bolivar-reclaman-alumbrado-publico/>

¹³ Nueva Prensa. Requieren alumbrado público en el sector La Floresta de Upata.

<https://soynuevaprensadigital.com/npd/requieren-alumbrado-publico-en-el-sector-la-floresta-de-upata/>

¹⁴ Primicia. “Semáforos dañados e imprudencia causan accidentes en Ciudad Guayana”.

<https://primicia.com.ve/guayana/ciudad/semaforos-danados-e-imprudencia-causan-accidentes-en-ciudad-guayana/>

COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY IN VENEZUELA

Bolívar

Report 2019/2021



¹⁵ Todos Ahora. Denuncian que en Bolívar “el pueblo camina largos kilómetros por la falta de transporte público”. <https://www.todosahora.com/noticias-de-venezuela/noticias-de-bolivar/denuncian-que-en-bolivar-el-pueblo-camina-largos-kilometros-por-la-falta-de-transporte-publico/>

¹⁶ Transparencia Venezuela. En ciudad Guayana el transporte es poco, caro y peligroso. <https://transparencia.org.ve/project/ciudad-guayana-transporte-poco-caro-peligroso/>

¹⁷ Correo del Caroní. Afectados por falta de agua en Puerto Ordaz exigen soluciones permanentes en lugar de “pañitos de agua tibia”. <https://correodelcaroni.com/region/ciudad-guayana/afectados-por-falta-de-agua-en-puerto-ordaz-exigen-soluciones-permanentes-en-lugar-de-panitos-de-agua-tibia/>

¹⁸ Crónica Uno. En Bolívar las regaderas quedan casi en desuso por falta de agua en las viviendas. <https://cronica.uno/en-bolivar-las-regaderas-quedan-casi-en-desuso-por-falta-de-agua-en-las-viviendas/>

¹⁹ Transparencia Venezuela. En Ciudad Guayana el agua enferma. <https://transparencia.org.ve/project/bolivar-en-ciudad-guayana-el-agua-enferma/>

²⁰ Correo del Caroní. Guayana entre las regiones con mayor incidencia de tuberculosis en el país. <https://correodelcaroni.com/sociedad/salud/guayana-entre-las-regiones-con-mayor-incidencia-de-tuberculosis-en-el-pais/>

²¹ Primicia. Entre 20 y 25% aumenta el brote de hepatitis en Bolívar. <https://primicia.com.ve/guayana/ciudad/entre-un-20-y-25-aumenta-el-brote-de-hepatitis-en-bolivar/>

²² InSight Crime. La trata de personas, otro mal del Arco Minero de Venezuela. <https://es.insightcrime.org/noticias/trata-personas-arco-minero-venezuela/>

²³ La regadera web. “¿Quién es el Negro Fabio, involucrado en la trata de personas con directora de Sambil Model?” <https://laregaderaweb.blogspot.com/2021/04/quien-es-el-negro-fabio-involucrado-en.html?m=0>