



VENEZUELA AS A THREAT TO EUROPE

Ruben Alarcon


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By Ruben Alarcon

Colophon

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Introduction: A Global Crisis with European Implications

Venezuela's crisis is no longer just a regional problem; its effects are increasingly felt across Europe. The country's deep entanglement in organised crime and drug trafficking poses direct risks to European security, as cocaine and other illicit networks increasingly reach EU markets. Its alliances with Iran and Hezbollah, combined with reports of passport fraud and other illicit financial activity, raise the prospect of Europe being indirectly exposed to transnational networks that operate outside international norms. Concerns about Venezuela's uranium reserves add yet another layer of geopolitical risk, linking domestic instability to broader security questions.

Europe is dealing with the human consequences. Nearly eight million Venezuelans have left their country, with Spain and other EU nations experiencing a surge in asylum applications. These arrivals put pressure on reception systems and social services, testing Europe's capacity to respond effectively. The Venezuelan crisis is a stark reminder that events thousands of miles away can have immediate and tangible consequences for European stability and security.

Once a beacon of prosperity, Venezuela now exemplifies the dangers of political mismanagement and authoritarianism. Its descent into economic and social chaos has directly contributed to unprecedented migration pressures in Europe. These interconnected challenges demand urgent, coordinated responses. This paper examines the evidence and outlines key recommendations for European policymakers to address these overlapping security and humanitarian concerns.

1. Venezuela's Decline: A Complex Historical Context

Despite holding some of the world's largest oil reserves¹ and enjoying years of socio-economic prosperity and stability, Venezuela has now emerged as a security threat to its neighboring countries. The country's immense oil wealth, once a symbol of prosperity, has become a curse as the country's dependence on oil has led to vulnerability in times of economic downturn.^{2,3}

In 1998, Hugo Chávez Frías was elected President of Venezuela, pledging to unify political parties and address the country's economic disparities.⁴ Despite a challenging start marked by low oil prices and conflicts with the opposition, Chávez presided over a period of significant economic growth, with Venezuela experiencing an average annual growth rate of 4.5 per cent between 2005

1 https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/data_graphs/330.htm

2 <https://www.cfr.org/background/venezuela-crisis>

3 <https://countrystudies.us/venezuela/22.htm>

4 <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/venezuelas-chavez-era>

and 2013. He reasserted state control over the national oil company, PDVSA (Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.), and directed increased oil revenues toward social programs. Between 1998 and 2011, social spending doubled, as the government implemented price controls, established new social missions, and subsidised essential services such as health care, education, housing, and utilities. These measures contributed to a near-halving of poverty rates between 2003 and 2011 and a 71 per cent reduction in extreme poverty.⁵ However, upon Chávez's death in 2013, Nicolás Maduro inherited the presidency amid a rapidly declining economy. The country faced a severe economic challenge when oil prices plummeted from over USD 100 per barrel in 2014 to under USD 30 per barrel by early 2016, triggering a deep economic and political crisis that persists despite a subsequent rise in oil prices.⁶

Compounding Venezuela's economic troubles, its strained relations with the West led to increased international pressure. In 2015, the US imposed sanctions under the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act, targeting individuals responsible for human rights violations, including high-ranking members of the Bolivarian Intelligence Service (Sebin), the Bolivarian Police, and the National Guard, all implicated in the violent repression of anti-government protests in 2014, 2017, and 2024.⁷ Despite these measures, these security agencies continue to operate. Economic sanctions were further intensified in 2017 under the Trump administration, with the US Treasury Department restricting transactions and operations between US entities and Venezuela,⁸ while the Council of the EU adopted additional restrictive measures in November of the same year. Together with the ongoing economic recession, these sanctions forced the Venezuelan government to seek alternative sources of revenue.⁹

The 2024 Venezuelan presidential election, held on July 28, resulted in a contentious dispute over the outcome. The National Electoral Council (CNE) declared incumbent President Nicolás Maduro the winner with 51.2% of the vote, while opposition candidate Edmundo González was reported to have received 44.2%.¹⁰ However, the CNE did not release detailed vote counts or tally sheets

5 <https://nacla.org/is-hugo-chavez-to-blame-for-venezuelas-collapse>

6 <https://www.cfr.org/background/venezuela-crisis>

7 <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/09/07/americas/venezuelan-security-forces-surround-argentine-embassy-intl/index.html>

8 <https://www.sanctionsmap.eu/#/main/details/44/search?search=%7B%22value%22:%22%22,%22searchType%22:%7B%7D%7D>

9 <https://english.elpais.com/international/2024-04-19/how-us-sanctions-have-affected-venezuela.html>

10 <https://directoriolegislativo.org/en/maduro-began-his-third-term-amid-fraud-allegations/>

to substantiate these results. In contrast, opposition groups, led by María Corina Machado, claimed to have collected over 83% of the voting tallies, which indicated that González had secured approximately 67% of the vote.¹¹ Independent analysts, including the Carter Center, have legitimised the tally sheets proving that Maduro lost.¹² The European Union and the Organisation of American States (OAS) have also rejected the election results due to irregularities and lack of verifiable data.¹³

2. The Crime-Terror Nexus: Venezuela's Dangerous Allies

Venezuela's isolation from traditional diplomatic and economic channels has deepened its reliance on alternative, often illegal, partnerships. These alliances serve the dual purpose of securing regime survival and extending its reach through transnational networks.

2.1. The Cartel of the Suns and State-Sponsored Trafficking

Since at least 1999, Nicolas Maduro, Cabello Rondón, Carvajal Barrios and Alcalá Cordones, acted as leaders and managers of the *Cártel de Los Soles*, or "Cartel of the Suns."¹⁴ The Cartel's name refers to the sun insignias affixed to the uniforms of high-ranking Venezuelan military officials. Members of this cartel have been charged with a range of serious criminal activities including narco-terrorism, corruption, drug trafficking, among other offenses.¹⁵ Maduro and the other charged Cartel members have implemented an oppressive ruling over the Venezuelan people while corrupting the legitimate institutions of Venezuela, including parts of the military, intelligence apparatus, legislature, and the judiciary, to facilitate the exportation of tons of cocaine into the United States, Europe and Asia, among other criminal acts.¹⁶ Recent developments in Venezuela's maritime activities have drawn significant international attention. In September 2025, the US military conducted airstrikes on boats departing from Venezuela, alleging they were transporting illicit drugs. These operations resulted in the deaths of at least 17 individuals and have intensified calls for greater cooperation among Western allies to combat drug trafficking originating from Venezuelan waters.¹⁷

11 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/aug/10/gonzalez-proof-win-venezuela-election-vote-tally-maduro>

12 <https://apnews.com/article/venezuela-election-tally-sheets-actas-oas-carter-center-41d1000926d0ab99e522e53bf6c2b916>

13 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/aug/29/eu-foreign-policy-chief-says-he-wont-accept-maduro-as-venezuelan-president>

14 <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/nicol-s-maduro-moros-and-14-current-and-former-venezuelan-officials-charged-narco-terrorism>

15 <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2020/03/26/nicolas-maduro-moros-and-14-current-and-former-venezuelan-officials>

16 <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/nicol-s-maduro-moros-and-14-current-and-former-venezuelan-officials-charged-narco-terrorism>

17 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/29/stephen-miller-venezue>

This criminal cartel operates not only within Venezuela but has extended its reach to the US, Europe, and beyond. The image below illustrates this transnational activity, which showcases their cooperation with Iran, further amplifying the threat to Europe.

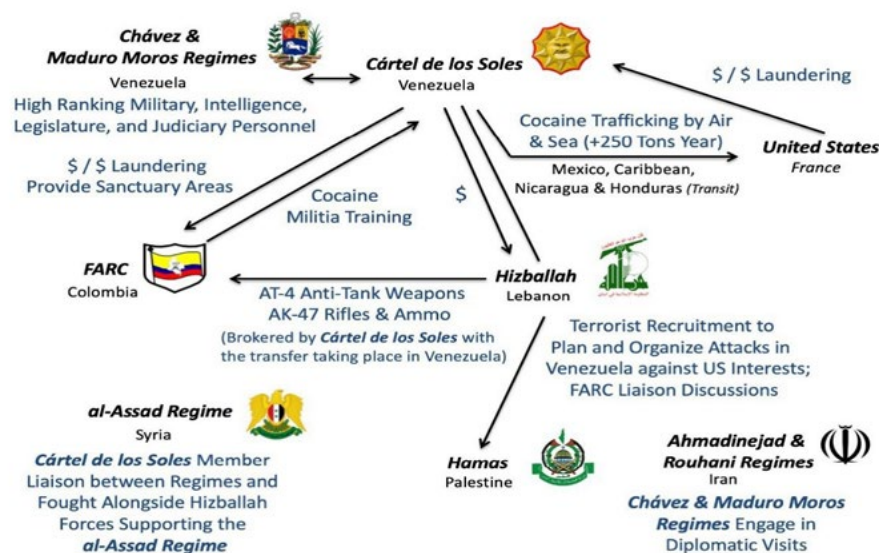


Figure: 1 https://www.securefreesociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/FACT-SHEET_Hezbollah-in-Venezuela-OCT2020-2.pdf

2.2. Hezbollah and Iranian Influence

In response to the international sanctions, Venezuela's government sought new allies and revenue streams, deepening ties with Iran and other anti-Western regimes.¹⁸ This alliance with Iran has led to Venezuela being regarded as a "forward operating base" for Iran and other terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah, IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) and the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).¹⁹ The Venezuelan government's tacit approval of these criminal activities has allowed them to operate with relative impunity, turning a blind eye to their involvement in criminal drug trafficking operations not only in

la-drug-boat-strike

¹⁸ <https://www.voanews.com/a/why-iran-s-growing-influence-in-venezuela-challenges-the-west-/7000632.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/exclusive-report/exclusive-report-irgc-and-hezbollahs-presence-in-south-america/>

Venezuelan territory but also beyond its borders.²⁰ The relationship has also led to the development of a black market for oil, which seeks to circumvent economic sanctions.²¹

Venezuela's close ties with Iran provide the regime with alternative revenue streams and military support, while strengthening the operational capabilities of allied actors like Hezbollah. These alliances also create potential channels for transnational terrorism and illicit trade that could affect European security. The collaboration between Venezuela and Iran underscores the need for targeted diplomatic, economic, and intelligence measures to prevent Europe from being drawn into broader geopolitical conflicts.

Venezuela's natural resources also pose additional geopolitical risks. Reports of significant uranium deposits²² raise concerns about the potential diversion of nuclear materials through illicit networks or foreign partnerships.²³ Coupled with its alliances with Iran, this heightens the prospect of Europe being indirectly exposed to strategic threats emerging from the Western Hemisphere. Policymakers must therefore consider both conventional and unconventional security risks linked to Venezuela's natural resources.²⁴

On the ground, the substantial Lebanese and Shiite Muslim communities in both Colombia and Venezuela provide Hezbollah with opportunities to infiltrate the continent. The radical Lebanese Shiite militants exploit family ties to establish networks of legitimate and illicit businesses, which are used to generate income and launder proceeds to fund operations in the Middle East.²⁵

²⁰ <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/10/28/hezbollahs-terror-threat-in-latin-america/>

²¹ <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2025-02-11/the-black-market-for-oil-will-continue-to-thrive?embedded-checkout=true>

²² <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/venezuelas-troubling-nuclear-ties/>

²³ <https://www.reuters.com/article/markets/oil/iran-helping-venezuela-look-for-uranium-idUSN25530233/>

²⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/snapback-sends-west-back-drawing-board-irans-nuclear-programme-2025-09-27/>

²⁵ <https://oilprice.com/Energy/General/How-Hezbollah-Is-Exploiting-Cocaine-Corruption-and-Chaos-in-Venezuela.html>



Figure 2: <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1726>

These Shiite communities (shown above) have strategically positioned themselves at key hubs of commerce and transport across Venezuela, solidifying their influence in the region. Notably, figures such as Samer Akil Rada, a member of Hezbollah and the brother of Amer Akil Rada, have been implicated in serious criminal activities throughout Latin America.²⁶ Samer's involvement in drug trafficking and money laundering, along with his use of front companies like Venezuelan-based BCI Technologies C.A., highlights the deepening ties between Hezbollah and illicit operations within Venezuela's borders.²⁷

Simultaneously, there is a trade-based money-laundering network (TBML) operating from Margarita Island, Venezuela, facilitating cross-border trade with Maicao, Colombia. This network was previously managed by Ali Mohamad Saleh, a Hezbollah financier sanctioned by OFAC in 2011 & 2012 for terror-finance and drug trafficking.²⁸ In Maicao, a Colombian Free Trade Zone, a Hezbollah support cell connects to the Tri-Border Area of Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina. Through the illicit trade of charcoal, textiles, beef, cigarettes, liquors, and electronics, this

²⁶ <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1726>

²⁷ <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/2024/08/29/key-figure-in-hezbollah-linked-family-charged-in-colombia-with-financing-militant-group/>

²⁸ https://www.securefreesociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/FACT-SHEET_Hezbollah-in-Venezuela-OCT2020-2.pdf

network once managed by Hezbollah financier Assad Ahmad Barakat, who began contracting with the Hugo Chávez regime back in 2001.²⁹

Ghazi Nasserredine,³⁰ a former Venezuelan diplomat stationed in Syria, played a pivotal role in establishing a clandestine structure that provided dual identities to Hezbollah supporters and sympathisers. During his tenure at Venezuela's embassy in Damascus, Nasserredine facilitated high-level meetings between senior Venezuelan officials and Hezbollah operatives. According to DEA informants,³¹ in or around 2009, Nasserredine arranged a meeting in Syria between Hezbollah, Venezuela's then-Interior Minister Tareck El Aissami, and the country's military counterintelligence chief, Hugo Carvajal Barrios. This meeting allegedly set the stage for a cocaine-for-weapons scheme between the FARC and Hezbollah. The deal materialised in 2014 when a Lebanese cargo plane, carrying small arms such as AK-103 rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers, landed at Maiquetia International Airport in Caracas. These weapons were reportedly a partial payment for cocaine supplied by the FARC to the Maduro regime and were subsequently transferred to a military base in Guárico, Venezuela.³²

Beyond facilitating arms and drug deals and the refugee crisis, Venezuela's involvement with foreign actors extends to other illicit activities. Venezuela's embassy in Iraq assisted in selling Venezuelan passports and identity documents to individuals from the Middle East, raising concerns that Venezuela is facilitating the entry of Islamist militants into Latin America and Europe.^{33 34} In these ways, Iran has played a pivotal role in diplomatically, financially and logistically sustaining the Maduro regime and extending its influence across the region.³⁵

²⁹ <https://www.barrons.com/news/us-hits-colombia-based-hezbollah-group-with-sanctions-539f4969>

³⁰ <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/ghazi-nasserredine>

³¹ <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/hp1036>

³² <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/The-Maduro-Hezbollah-Nexus-How-Iran-backed-Networks-Prop-up-the-Venezuelan-Regime.pdf>

³³ <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/08/world/venezuela-passports-in-vestigation/index.html>

³⁴ <https://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2015/11/26/diplomat-venezuela-sold-immigration-documents-to-hezbollah-terrorists/>

³⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/venezuela-rushes-mend-iran-relationship-us-sanctions-loom-2024-03-12/>

3. The Humanitarian Fallout: Migration, Infiltration and

Expansion of Crime Networks

Venezuela's heavy reliance on oil, coupled with a declining production, a volatile economy, mounting debt, and hyperinflation, has plunged the country into a severe socio-economic and humanitarian crisis. This crisis has developed economic inequality among Venezuelans and rendered daily life increasingly challenging. Consequently, by 2025, more than 9 million Venezuelans fled the country since 2014, approximately one-third of its population.^{36,37}

By 2023, more than 7.7 million Venezuelans had fled the country, seeking protection or better living conditions due to the ongoing socio-economic and political crisis.³⁸ Most of these migrants are in Latin American countries, but significant numbers have sought asylum in Europe. In 2025, Venezuelans account for a considerable portion of asylum seekers in the EU, with 49,000 requests, the majority in Spain and France.³⁹ "Venezuela is now the main country of origin of asylum seekers"⁴⁰ (as shown in the graph below). In the last 5 years more than 200,000 Venezuelan asylum seekers applied in the EU. 93% of these refugees have chosen Spain as their place of residency. It's a growing problem for the European Union as these numbers will certainly increase in the years to come, especially considering Nicolas Maduros has rejected the possibility of a fair electoral process.

36 <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/venezuela-crisis>

37 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?end=2014&locations=VE&start=1960>

38 <https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/venezuela-situation>

39 <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/09/08/germany-loses-top-spot-for-eu-country-with-the-most-asylum-requests>

40 <https://euaa.europa.eu/news-events/asylum-applications-down-23-first-half-2025>

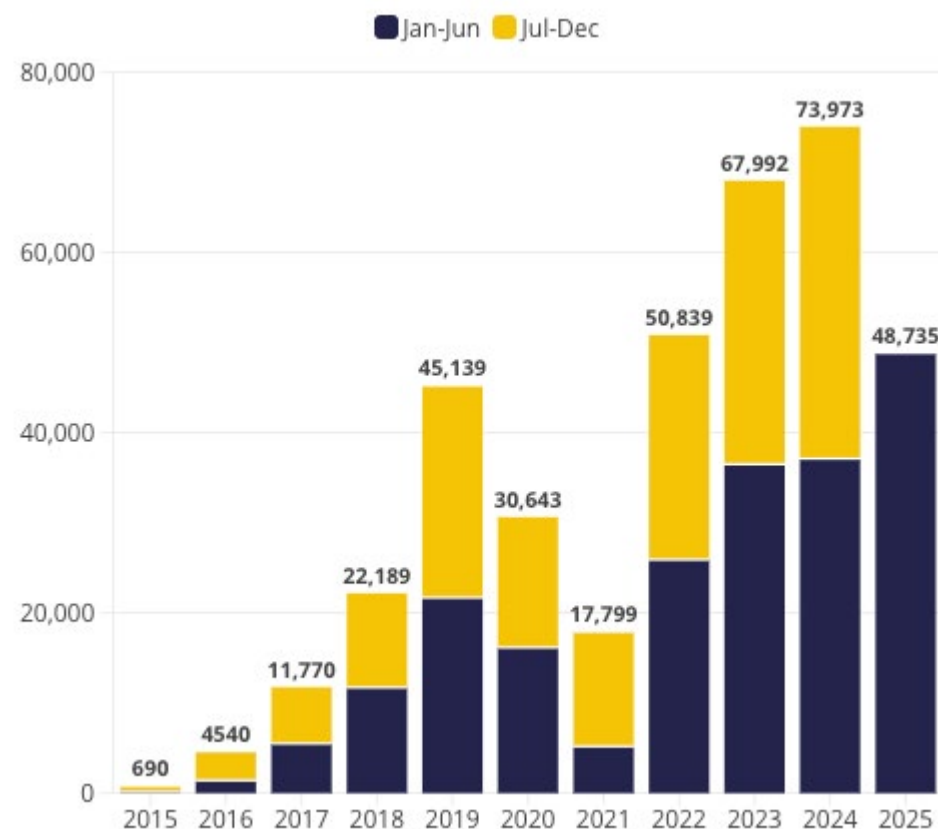


Figure 3: <https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-knowledge/data-analysis-and-research>

Therefore, as long as Nicolás Maduro clings to power, Venezuela's neighboring countries, the US, and Europe are likely to face a new surge of asylum seekers and refugees.⁴¹ Opposition leader María Corina Machado has warned that if Maduro remains in power, "a wave of migration like never before" could produce three to five million more asylum seeking Venezuelans in a very short period.⁴² One can expect at least 125,000 more asylum seekers to come to the EU borders in the years to come.

41 <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/venezuela/article291055910.html>

42 <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/amid-rising-insecurity-in-venezuela-the-us-and-its-partners-must-prepare-for-a-new-wave-of-migration/>

The refugee crisis has also further impacted European territories. Many Venezuelans have made perilous journeys by boat, seeking refuge on foreign shores. In Curaçao, for instance, official records report 4,261 Venezuelan citizens, yet the R4V platform, which monitors the Venezuelan diaspora, estimates that approximately 14,000 of their compatriots currently reside on this small Dutch Caribbean island. Many of these refugees are women, according to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics in Willemstad.⁴³

Europe is not a passive observer of Venezuelan's crisis. Its proximity to Latin America via historic and economic ties, migration routes, and shared democratic values makes it a stakeholder in the solution of Venezuela's turmoil. Particularly Spain,⁴⁴ has emerged as a key destination due to linguistic and cultural ties. While many migrants seek refuge from economic devastation and political persecution, the scale and nature of the crisis pose unique challenges for European nations.

One could say Hezbollah is in Europe's borders. Not enough people in Europe understand that EU Member States, such as The Netherlands, literally share a border with Venezuela and other Latin American countries. What happens in Venezuela has a direct impact on Europe as can be clear from the numbers above.

The sheer scale of Venezuelan migration has tested Europe's capacity to absorb and integrate displaced populations as the continent deals with Ukrainian and Syrian refugees.⁴⁵ While the majority of migrants contribute positively, the infiltration of criminal elements into these flows cannot be ignored. Notably, the Venezuelan criminal organisation Tren de Aragua has expanded its operations beyond Latin America, establishing a presence in several European countries.⁴⁶ Therefore, a cohesive European approach to asylum processing and border security is essential to manage these risks effectively.

The Trump administration's mass deportation campaign has significantly impacted Venezuelan migrants, triggering secondary migration flows toward Latin America and Europe. In March 2025, the US deported 238 Venezuelans to El Salvador, where they were immediately imprisoned without trial at the Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT), raising concerns about due process and

43 <https://cronicasdelcaribe.com/migracion/censo-de-curazao-confirma-incremento-significativo-de-la-poblacion-venezolana-en-la-isla/>

44 <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/venezolanos-y-colombianos-volvieron-a-liderar-en-2024-las-solicitudes-de-asilo-en-espa%C3%B1a/88736182>

45 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/09/04/venezuela-refugee-crisis-ukraine-syria/>

46 <https://elpais.com/espana/2025-06-23/detenido-en-madrid-mamera-presunto-ca-becilla-de-la-banda-venezolana-tren-de-aragua-conocida-por-sus-atrocidades.html>

human rights violations.⁴⁷ This year, the US administration terminated Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for over 200,000 Venezuelans in September 2025, effective November 7, 2025, leaving many without legal status and increasing their vulnerability to deportation.⁴⁸⁻⁴⁹

47 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/04/11/us/el-salvador-venezuelan-deportees-forcibly-disappeared>

48 <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/news-releases/dhs-terminates-2021-designation-of-venezuela-for-temporary-protected-status>

49 <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/09/03/dhs-ends-protected-status-venezuelans-us-00543039>

4. How Europe Can Act

Venezuela's ongoing crisis poses several security threats to Europe, including drug trafficking, terrorist connections, mass migration, and the potential infiltration of Islamist militants using falsified documents. The country's alliance with Iran and the presence of Hezbollah in Latin America further exacerbate these risks.

To address these threats, the European Union should consider the following recommendations as legal and effective measures against the Venezuelan authoritarian regime and to provide an alternative vision for the future of the country:



1. Take a Geopolitical Decision

And Treat Venezuela Similar to Belarus

In 2019, the EU recognised Juan Guaidó as interim president, adopted sanctions under Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2074, and continued to support democratic institutions and humanitarian operations. The EU imposed an embargo on arms and on equipment for internal repression and a travel ban and an asset freeze on individuals and entities responsible for human rights violations and for undermining democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela. The sanctions were last extended

until 10 January 2026.⁵⁰ On 19 December 2024 the European Council reiterated its concern about the situation in Venezuela. It called for the release of all political detainees and for Venezuela to uphold its commitments under international law: 'The European Union will mobilise all the tools at its disposal to support democracy and a peaceful and inclusive transition in Venezuela.'⁵¹

At the same time, it must be noted that this statement was the last item on the agenda and the wording came across as an obligatory afterthought. Neither was the issue framed as it should be framed, namely as a risk to Europe and as part of the authoritarian block (Russia/China/Iran). It is framed on the Council website as an isolated problem that is also affecting Europe. The bigger geopolitical picture is missing in how the EU publicly is framing the situation in Venezuela.

However, as clarified in previous chapters, the situation in Venezuela is more problematic for Europe because of the links with Iran and other bad actors. This geopolitical dimension and its consequences for Europe should guide the EU to a

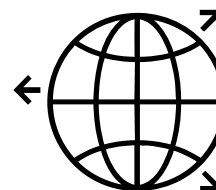
⁵⁰ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/venezuela/>

⁵¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/12/19/european-council-conclusions-19-december-2024/>

much more active policy similar to the EU stance towards Belarus.

After 2020 the EU imposed targeted sanctions under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime (Council Regulation (EU) 2020/1998), and funded civil society and independent media through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and the European Endowment for Democracy. These measures were designed not to replace Belarusian institutions but to reinforce actors working for democratic continuity.

There is therefore an active EU policy for regime change in Belarus by the people of Belarus. The EU is enabling the Belarusian people and opposition to create, over time, the conditions to overthrow the Belarus dictatorship. Belarus is correctly seen as part of the autocratic block and therefore a bigger threat to the EU. Venezuela needs to be understood and treated in the same way. This paper does not plead for an external regime change but for enabling an 'internal regime change' by the people of Venezuela. This is both in the interest of the citizens of EU Member States and in the interest of the people of Venezuela. On the basis of this geopolitical decision; the EU can take a number of measures as follows:



2. Regional Diplomatic Leverage:

Coordinate a targeted diplomatic initiative with the OAS, BRICS nations, the relevant African regional organisations and the EU to encourage countries trading with Venezuela to align with international norms. Link trade incentives and development support to cooperation in human rights, anti-corruption measures, and curbing illicit Venezuelan activities. This approach leverages regional influence to reduce Maduro's ability to exploit external partnerships.

3. Strengthened Diplomatic Oversight:

Limit Venezuelan diplomatic staffing to essential levels and implement regular audits of missions across Europe. Introduce mandatory reporting on consular activity, especially passport issuance, to detect and prevent misuse linked to illicit networks. Combined with enhanced intelligence-sharing, this ensures transparency and accountability.





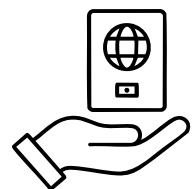
4. Targeted Financial Measures:

Freeze or seize assets of Venezuelan state-owned enterprises operating in Europe that facilitate illicit trade or fund the regime. Extend secondary sanctions to intermediaries and foreign companies assisting in sanction evasion, including those operating via BRICS countries, thereby tightening the financial pressure on Maduro's network.



5. Counter-Terrorism Coordination:

Expand EU law enforcement and intelligence collaboration to identify Venezuelan-linked Hezbollah or IRGC operatives. Increase scrutiny of Venezuelan passport holders entering the EU, including biometric verification and cross-referencing with terrorism watchlists, to reduce the risk of militant infiltration.



6. Migration Management:

Establish EU-Venezuela humanitarian corridors to facilitate safe, legal migration and relieve pressure on southern European reception systems. Support integration initiatives in high-intake countries such as Spain and Portugal, prioritizing housing, employment, and social services for displaced Venezuelans.



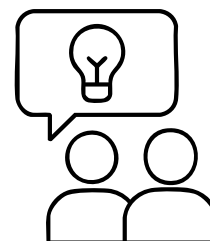
7. Military Transition Guarantees:

Engage with opposition parties to develop a monitored military reform process. Offer guarantees for non-violent personnel while ensuring accountability for human rights abuses. Complement this with truth and reconciliation mechanisms to encourage defections from Maduro's security apparatus and promote stability. Moreover, the opposition will have to clarify that it will not engage in massive firing of civil servants and security personnel of the current regime. This is essential to reduce violence and reduce resistance to regime change. A major reason that security personnel stay with the Maduro regime is out of fear for their jobs. Reducing this fear is therefore needed to enable a transition to democracy.



8. Ideological and Societal Alternatives:

Support initiatives that strengthen democratic governance, civil society, and local economic empowerment in Venezuela. Fund educational programs, community development projects, and civic initiatives that unite diverse political factions around shared societal goals, providing a long-term foundation for recovery and reform.



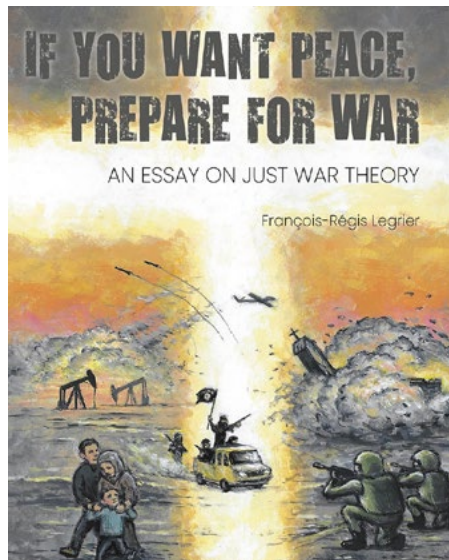
9. Clarity towards the people and opposition of Venezuela

These steps need to be accompanied with the clear message to the people of Venezuela that it is their responsibility to rise up against the Maduro regime and that no external actor will invade and impose regime change. Moreover, support for the opposition needs to come with the clear understanding that they will lead an uprising against the Maduro regime. In that framework, the EU needs to understand that it is highly unlikely that this regime will be removed through non-violent means only. However, especially the military transition guarantees will significantly reduce violence.

These recommendations aim to address the multifaceted security threats posed by Venezuela and to support efforts towards a resolution of the crisis while enhancing European and international security.

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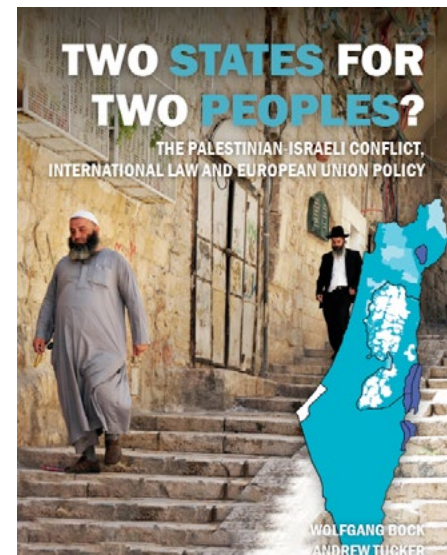
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