



ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS) BACKGROUND GUIDE

MID-AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS CONFERENCE
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PRESENTED BY



ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS)

A. RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

There are over 400 million indigenous peoples worldwide, comprising 6% of the global population and 19% of the extreme poor.¹⁰ Indigenous peoples have historically been dispossessed of their lands, leading to political and economic disadvantages within society. While indigenous peoples have retained many of their cultural, social, and economic characteristics, these distinct characteristics are often under threat, as they lose access to land or lose autonomy over their economic, education, and other social systems. For centuries, the land of indigenous peoples has been at the center of this issue, as resources on indigenous land can be desirable commodities that others will seek without regard for the consequences to indigenous populations and their environment. Indigenous peoples have won recognition of their identities and some protections in certain cases, but they continue to be among the world's most vulnerable populations, with a life expectancy 20 years shorter than that of non-indigenous peoples¹¹

To address the rights of indigenous peoples, the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007, outlining their collective and individual rights, including the right to full enjoyment of all human rights, freedom from discrimination, self-determination, and self-governance.¹² UNDRIP outlines the minimum standards for the recognition, promotion and protection of these rights. In 2016, the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples after decades of debate. Like UNDRIP, the American Declaration sets forth minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of indigenous peoples of the Americas.¹³ Additionally, the American Declaration includes rights related to or regarding treaties, children, and peoples in voluntary isolation.

More work must be done to ensure the standards laid out in UNDRIP and the American Declaration come to fruition. Recognition and implementation of such rights should be addressed by all regional bodies. UNDRIP and the American Declaration can be utilized to build upon existing law, policy, and practices to support the rights of indigenous peoples.

¹⁰ <https://www.narf.org/cases/declaration-indigenous-rights-un/>

¹¹ <https://www.narf.org/cases/declaration-indigenous-rights-un/>

¹² https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

¹³ <https://www.oas.org/en/sare/documents/DecAmIND.pdf>

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B. SITUATION IN VENEZUELA

Social and economic instability, exacerbated by ongoing political unrest in Venezuela, has resulted in a humanitarian crisis and regional instability.¹⁴ Venezuela's President, Nicolás Maduro Moros, oversaw the rise of civic unrest following years of hyperinflation, corruption, and economic downturn due to Venezuela's reliance on a mono-economy.¹⁵ In May 2018, Maduro won the Presidential election, which was not supposed to take place until December 2018. He appointed his loyalists to leadership positions in the courts and the National Assembly. The OAS, alongside world leaders, has recognized the 2018 election as fraudulent after opposing political candidates were banned from participating in the election.¹⁶ OAS asserts that the election served as an opportunity to maintain complete control of the country.

Ongoing political unrest, economic decline, and resource scarcity have created one of the most significant migration and refugee crises with over 7 million people fleeing Venezuela.¹⁷ Refugees face dangerous routes to sanctuary and are at a higher risk for exploitation, smuggling, and trafficking. UNICEF has recognized a high rate of unaccompanied children seeking sanctuary, a group that is vulnerable to becoming victims of abuse and exploitation. Neighboring countries within Latin America and the Caribbean including, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru have seen a strain on their social programs following the inundation of Venezuelans; with Columbia holding the highest concentration of refugees.¹⁸

Venezuelans remaining in their homes face a severe lack of access to critical resources such as health care, food, and livable wages. The need for aid has been unmet due to the Maduro regime's impact on the country's ability to receive external humanitarian aid.¹⁹ The dismantling of democratic systems and the severe shortage of critical resources for the people of Venezuela have resulted in a dire social and political crisis, with the Maduro regime under scrutiny by human rights groups such as the IACHR for its crimes against the public and political persecution.²⁰

¹⁴ <https://www.usip.org/publication>

¹⁵ <https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/venezuela-crisis-facts>

¹⁶ <https://usoas.usmission.gov/oas-resolution-condemns-the-fraudulent-elections-in-venezuela/>

¹⁷ <https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/venezuela-crisis-facts>

¹⁸ <https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/venezuela-crisis-facts>

¹⁹ <https://usoas.usmission.gov/oas-resolution-condemns-the-fraudulent-elections-in-venezuela/>

²⁰ https://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2023/155.asp

