

Venezuela | As crisis deepens, NGOs express concern about UN agencies' work in the country

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120 independent Venezuelan NGOs are urging the UN to ensure its agencies operating in the country keep the promotion and protection of human rights to the fore in their work.



[Versión en español](#)

120 Venezuelan NGOs have [expressed grave concern](#) about the approach of UN agencies operating in the country, as the human rights and humanitarian crisis in the country deepens. This follows a similar call three years ago. According to the NGOs, the agencies are 'keeping silent, hiding information and accepting restrictions and conditions on their work placed on them by the national government'. This must change urgently, say the NGOs, with all parts of the UN fulfilling their mandate to demand human rights accountability.

The Venezuelan NGOs voice specific concerns about the fact that representatives of UN agencies and the Resident Coordinator attended the swearing-in of President of Nicolás Maduro on 10th January 2019. This despite the fact that the presidential electoral process has been widely condemned, [including by the InterAmerican Commission of Human Rights](#).

'All UN agencies have the promotion and protection of human rights at the core of their mandate. This role becomes all the more important in situations of political and economic crisis,' said ISHR's Eleanor Openshaw.

The Venezuelan NGOs fear the agencies' approach affects the credibility of the work of these agencies and makes more difficult that of other UN bodies. This includes the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), mandated to provide the UN Human Rights Council with a report on the human rights situation in Venezuela in June, with an oral update in March and September. The OHCHR has closely monitored the situation in Venezuela, publishing two strong reports making evident the depth of the human rights crisis and how it has worsened over the last years.

This is not the first time that Venezuelan NGOs have expressed concerns about the Resident Coordinator and UN agencies operating in the country. Three years ago, 82 organisations alerted the then Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, to what they considered failures to operate in line with principles and practice outlined by the UN itself. These are set out in the initiative 'Human Rights Up Front', designed to strengthen the prevention of serious problems around the world. The hoped-for changes were not forthcoming.

120 organizaciones de la sociedad civil venezolana exigimos a la ONU una actuación coherente y apegada a los derechos humanos en la respuesta a la [#emergenciahumanitaria](#) en Venezuela pic.twitter.com/FU8C253lvG

— Codevida (@codevida) [January 16, 2019](#)

'These concerns risk getting lost in coverage of the recent political developments in Venezuela,' said Openshaw. 'It is important they are heard and responded to, as an effective engagement by UN agencies will be key to the future of human rights in the country, whatever the political outcomes in the short and medium term.'

The human rights situation in the country worsens by the day, [with repressive tactics employed against](#)

[protestors by State forces](#) and the [detention of journalists](#) increasing concerns about attempts to crush those calling for accountability.

'The situation in Venezuela is grave and the role of UN agencies in calling for the respect of rights in the country is key,' said Openshaw. 'The voice of such a large number of well-regarded organisations calling for change must be heeded.'

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