

CHAPTER IV.B VENEZUELA

1. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (hereinafter “Inter-American Commission”, the “Commission” or “IACHR”) decided to include Venezuela in Chapter IVB of its 2017 Annual Report, pursuant to Article 59 of its Rules of Procedure. The Commission considers that the situation in Venezuela falls within paragraphs 6.ai; 6.a.ii; 6.b; and 6.d.i of that article.

2. Since the Commission has adopted its report *Democratic Institutions, the Rule of Law, and Human Rights in Venezuela*, the executive summary of that report is included below.

3. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights hereby presents its Country Report entitled *Democratic Institutions, the Rule of Law, and Human Rights in Venezuela*, its third report on the human rights situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Venezuela). The decision to produce this report stems from the marked deterioration in the country with respect to the exercise of human rights, and the grave political, economic, and social crisis in Venezuela over the past two years and, especially, in 2017.

4. In this report, the Inter-American Commission addresses the human rights situation in Venezuela by analyzing the impact on them of the dismantling of much of democratic institutional system and the alarming increase in repression, violence, and citizen insecurity. Against that backdrop, it examines the situation with respect to political rights, freedom of expression, social protest, and economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights. The IACHR analyzes, across the board, the specific harm done to individuals, groups, and communities that are at greater risk and/or are victims of historical discrimination and exclusion, such as women; children and adolescents; older persons; human rights defenders; persons deprived of liberty; migrants, refugees, and persons in a similar situation; and others. Based on that analysis, it makes recommendation to the State on how to improve protection and safeguards for human rights.

5. The Commission's analysis of the situation of human rights in Venezuela is based on information received through its various protection mechanisms over the past two years, particularly in 2017. In addition, while preparing its report, the IACHR requested information from both civil society organizations and the State, which are fundamental sources for this report. That information was basic for this report. It afforded insight into the human rights situation, which was then analyzed in light of international obligations applicable to Venezuela.¹ This report has four main focuses, which correspond to the Commission's core concerns with regard to Venezuela: (i) democratic institutions (both individually and as a system); (ii) social protest and freedom of expression; (iii) violence and citizen security and (iv) economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights (ESCER).

6. This report reflects the interdependence and indivisibility that exists between the infringements in Venezuela of civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights. Together those rights constitute an indissoluble whole, which is why -- even though the ESCER are addressed separately in this report, -- the IACHR stresses that the effective exercise of democracy in any State necessarily presupposes the full exercise of all its inhabitants' rights and fundamental freedoms.

¹ Specifically, the Commission bases its analysis on the obligations contained in the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and the Charter of the Organization of American States. Where relevant, it likewise takes into account other inter-American human rights treaties, such as the Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women or Belém Do Pará Convention; the Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons; and the Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities. Consideration is also given to the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

7. This year, the IACHR decided to include Venezuela in Chapter IVB of its 2017 Annual Report, pursuant to Article 59 of its Rules of Procedure. In accordance with the foregoing, the Commission finds that the situation in Venezuela falls within paragraphs 6.a.i; 6.a.ii; 6.b; and 6.d.i of that article, which establishes the following criteria:

a. a serious breach of the core requirements and institutions of representative democracy mentioned in the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which are essential means of achieving human rights, including:

i. there is discriminatory access to or abusive exercise of power that undermines or denies the rule of law, such as systematic infringement of the independence of the judiciary or lack of subordination of State institutions to the legally constituted civilian authority;

ii. there has been an unconstitutional alteration of the constitutional regime that seriously impairs the democratic order; [...]

b. The free exercise of the rights guaranteed in the American Declaration or the American Convention has been unlawfully suspended, totally or partially, by virtue of the imposition of exceptional measures such as a declaration of a state of emergency, state of siege, suspension of constitutional guarantees, or exceptional security measures. [...] The presence of other structural situations that seriously affect the use and enjoyment of fundamental rights recognized in the American Declaration, the American Convention or other applicable instruments. This criterion includes, for example: serious situations of violence that hinder the proper functioning of the Rule of Law; serious institutional crises; processes of institutional reform with serious negative consequences for human rights; or serious omissions in the adoption of necessary provisions to give effect to fundamental rights.

d. The presence of other structural situations that seriously affect the use and enjoyment of fundamental rights recognized in the American Declaration, the American Convention or other applicable instruments. Factors to be considered shall include the following, among others:

i. serious institutional crises that infringe the enjoyment of human rights; [...]

8. On November 21, 2017, the IACHR sent the State a draft copy of this report pursuant to Article 60 section (a) of its Rules of Procedure and asked it to submit comments by the non-extendable deadline of one month. The IACHR also informed the State of its inclusion in the executive summary of the report in Chapter IV.B of the 2017 Annual Report, approved by the IACHR pursuant to articles 59.7 and 59.10 of its Rules of Procedure.

9. The State submitted its response on December 21, 2017,² saying that “the draft Country Report presents a selective and highly biased view of the true human rights situation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, violating the principles that should apply to the treatment of human rights matters.”³ In the State’s view, “to a large extent, this distorted view of the draft Report is the result of significant weaknesses in the methodology used to prepare it,” and “the draft report gives excessive weight to nonobjective sources while the official information provided by the State is excluded almost entirely, despite all the documentation and elements the State provided to the Commission in 2017 through the different mechanisms available.”⁴

² Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ministry of the People’s Power for Foreign Relations, Note [AGEV/2017-000300, comments on the draft country report](#) December 21, 2017.

³ Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ministry of the People’s Power for Foreign Relations, Note [AGEV/2017-000300, comments on the draft country report December 21, 2017](#), para. 4.

⁴ Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ministry of the People’s Power for Foreign Relations, [Note AGEV/2017-000300, comments on the draft country report December 21, 2017](#), para. 5.

10. For its part, the State considers that "the conditions set forth in inter-American law for including Venezuela in Chapter IV.B of the Annual Report of the IACHR have not been met. The Venezuelan Government therefore rejects its inclusion in this chapter and takes note of the Commission's offer [to conduct a country visit], but emphasizes that it is not possible to accept any mechanism that would involve the Venezuelan State's acceptance of its arbitrary inclusion in Chapter IV.B of the 2017 Annual Report."⁵ Moreover, the State indicated its "willingness to have a constructive dialogue with the IACHR toward moving forward in compliance with its international obligations, based on the strict respect for the principles that must govern treatment of human rights matters, including principles of universality, objectivity, impartiality, and non-selectivity."⁶

11. The State concludes by highlighting that:

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a democratic and social constitutional State based on the rule of law and justice, with participatory and protagonist democracy that takes respect for and guarantee of human rights as a fundamental value. Like the other countries in the region, on issues of human rights, Venezuela has strengths as well as weaknesses. However, no objective and nondiscriminatory analysis would lead to the conclusion that the human rights situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela deserves treatment by the Organization of American States different from what it gives to other States.⁷

12. The State's comments have been included in this chapter where pertinent. The Commission approved this report on December 31, 2017.

Democratic institutions

13. For several years now, the IACHR has been observing a gradual deterioration in the democratic institutional system and the human rights situation in Venezuela that has become significantly more intense and widespread since 2015. As the IACHR discusses in this report, there is complex set of issues rooted in interference by the Executive in the other branches of government. This breach of the principle of the separation of powers is most seriously manifested in the alarming behavior of the Judiciary, especially in the past two years. Indeed, the exacerbation of the recent crisis in Venezuela is closely linked to a series of decisions taken by the Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ) that amounted to interference with the National Assembly (AN) and violated the principle of the separation of powers. This situation worsened in 2017 to a point at which Judgments No. 155 and 156 handed down by the TSJ on March 28 and 29, respectively, produced an alteration of the constitutional order. In those judgments, the TSJ did away with the parliamentary immunity of deputies to the AN, established that their acts constituted "treason", granted the Executive broad discretionary authority, and arrogated to itself powers rightfully pertaining to the Legislature. As the IACHR pointed out at the time, those measures represented usurpation by the Judiciary and the Executive of powers constitutionally granted to parliament, as well as a de facto annulment of the popular vote, via which those deputies had been elected.⁸

14. The alteration of the constitutional order in Venezuela was possible due to a series of factors that mean that, in general, the country's democratic institutional system is seriously flawed. In the Commission's opinion, the lack of independence of the Judiciary has a decisive impact on both the Executive's

⁵ Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ministry of the People's Power for Foreign Relations, Note AGEV/2017-000300, comments on the draft country report December 21, 2017, para. 6.

⁶ Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ministry of the People's Power for Foreign Relations, Note AGEV/2017-000300, comments on the draft country report December 21, 2017, para. 7.

⁷ Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ministry of the People's Power for Foreign Relations, Note AGEV/2017-000300, comments on the draft country report December 21, 2017, para. 103.

⁸ IACHR, Press Release No.041/17, [IACHR Condemns Supreme Court Rulings and the Alteration of the Constitutional and Democratic Order in Venezuela](#), March 31, 2017

interference in the Judiciary and on the Judiciary's interference in the Legislature. A key factor in that lack of independence is, in turn, as we observe in this report, the inappropriate nature of the process for electing TSJ judges and the lack of guarantees of their permanence in that position (tenure). That is why the Commission considers it necessary that measures be adopted to avoid risks to judicial independence in the election, appointment, and tenure of members of the highest court in Venezuela. In particular, care needs to be taken to ensure that in appointment processes notices of vacancy are disseminated in advance along with the deadlines and procedures to be followed; equal and inclusive access of candidates must be guaranteed, as well as ample civil society participation. Candidates must be assessed on their merits and professional abilities, not their political leanings or connections.

15. Another reason that, in the Commission's view, generally explains the lack of judicial independence in Venezuela is the highly provisional nature of judges' terms. There, the State needs to adopt urgent and decisive measures to significantly increase the number of regular, accredited judges and ensure that, even when they are provisional, judges are only removed via a disciplinary process or administrative act that rigorously respects guarantees of due process and, in particular, the requirement to substantiate the grounds for removal from office and access to a judicial review of the decision. Furthermore, given complaints of acts of harassments and threats against judges designed to exert improper pressure on them and influence their decisions, the Commission calls upon the State to refrain from any act of harassment or intimidation, or any action that might imply a threat or direct or indirect pressure on a judge's exercise of his or her judicial function. The IACHR further reiterates the duty of the State to investigate, try, and punish those responsible for such acts.

16. As for the AN, the Commission notes that, even though some of the aforementioned measures adopted by the TSJ were subsequently revoked, there are still serious instances of interference with the Legislature and obstacles to the exercise of its constitutional functions, such as the ongoing claim that members of the AN are in contempt of court and the labeling of their actions as "treason", as well as the ongoing authority of the President of the Republic to amend laws and to constitute mixed (public-private) enterprises without the authorization of Parliament. Accordingly, the Commission calls upon the State to adopt immediate and resolute measures to restore the constitutional order, and guarantee the separation of powers and appropriate exercise of the constitutionally established functions of the AN, including the lifting of the measures referred to above.

17. In that context, President Nicolás Maduro convened a Constituent National Assembly (ANC), which was criticized in respect of its origin and composition as well as for the measures it adopted once it was installed, which exceeded the nature of such an assembly and violated the principle of the separation of powers. Here the Commission considers it important to recall that, as this report points out, Venezuela's own Constitution and applicable law establish that the way said Assembly functions is governed by certain limits set in accordance with the values and principles enshrined in the history of Venezuela as a republic and by compliance with international treaties, agreements, and commitments duly underwritten by the Republic. In light of that and the fundamental principles set forth in the Inter-American Democratic Charter, the Commission calls for a revocation of the measures that exceed the powers of a constituent body and impair the separation of powers and representative democracy and for a commitment to refrain from adopting decisions that exceed those powers.

18. The interferences of the Judiciary and the Executive in the Legislature have been accompanied by a lack of independence and inadequate exercise of the functions of constitutional bodies that are vital for democracy, such as the National Electoral Council (CNE), the Public Prosecutors' Office (*Ministerio Público* -MP), and the Ombudsperson's Office (*Defensoría del Pueblo* - DP). That being so, the Commission considers it essential to take decisive steps to ensure that these bodies function without interference or improper political pressures and comply fully with their constitutional mandate, which is vital for the democratic rule of law in Venezuela.

19. The IACHR points out that the complaints about high levels of corruption in the country further undermine already weak government institutions, Given that impunity encourages and perpetuates acts of corruption, steps need to be taken to ensure that acts reported are investigated independently,

impartially, and promptly, without pressures or discrimination based on membership of certain political parties or on the positions held by those under investigation. Preventive measures are also needed. They include governance imbued with the principles of openness, transparency, and effective public accountability.

20. The problems associated with the weakness of democratic institutions referred to earlier have resulted in widespread impunity and have had a profound impact on the exercise of rights that are fundamental for democracy, such as political rights. The IACHR is particularly concerned about the situation of these rights in Venezuela, Their exercise has been severely curtailed by a series of obstacles. Among the most recent are: the suspension of the Presidential recall referendum process; the putting off for a long time of municipal and regional elections; and serious recent allegations of unfair advantages and fraud in the regional election of October 15, 2017.

21. In Venezuela those who dissent from the Government are victims of serious reprisals, as seen in the frequent detention and destitution of mayors, governors, members of parliament, and opposition figures in general. As emblematic cases, the IACHR points to the worrying acts committed against Henrique Capriles, Antonio Ledezma, and Leopoldo López. In light of the above, the Commission reiterates the need to guarantee, as a matter of priority, full exercise of the political rights of every authority and inhabitant of Venezuela, irrespective of their political sympathies; and the need to refrain from any act of harassment, intimidation, or criminalization of political dissent.

Social protest and freedom of expression

22. As a consequence of the political, economic, and social crisis in Venezuela, thousands of people took to the streets, especially between April 1 and July 31, 2017, in several cities to repudiate the Government of President Maduro and the rulings of the TSJ, as well as to demand better living conditions, given the alarming shortages of food, medicine, and other essentials. In that context, the Commission identified major restrictions and state acts that severely constrained exercise of the right to social protest and freedom of expression, which led it to assert that the effective exercise of those rights had been seriously impaired.

23. With regard to social protest, the IACHR notes the persistence of a regulatory framework that is incompatible with inter-American standards in that it still requires prior authorization for demonstrations and establishes outright bans on the exercise of that right. Also noted is excessive direct use of firearms against demonstrators, along with indiscriminate use of tear gas. Those repression tactics disproportionately impacted children and adolescents, women, and older adults. Furthermore, members of the armed forces were also engaged in demonstration control, even though, as the IACHR has already pointed out to Venezuela, in a democratic system it is vital to establish a clear and precise distinction between domestic security as a police function and national defense as a function assigned to the armed forces, given that they are two, very different institutions in respect of the purposes for which they were created and in terms of their training and preparation. That being so, the State must stop obstructing the legitimate exercise of the right to protest and curtail the use of force against demonstrators; train security officers in the proper use of force; refrain from involving security forces other than the police in said activities; and adopt regulations precluding the use of firearms at demonstrations.

24. The IACHR finds the number of persons killed or detained in connection with arbitrary operations to suppress them unacceptable. Thousands have been detained for taking part in public demonstrations. Most such detentions were made without a warrant, without flagrante delicto, when those detained were on their way to, or at, or after a demonstration, or even when they did not take part in the demonstration because they were deemed to be opposition supporters. The Commission finds it alarming that detainees have been tortured, maltreated, and in some cases sexually abused. The State must with all due diligence and guarantees of due process conduct serious investigations to determine responsibilities within a reasonable period of time and, where applicable, impose the corresponding punishments.

25. Also worrisome is the adoption of measures designed to discourage participation in protests and to punish those that do participate. Even at the highest levels of government statements have been made

stigmatizing and harassing those who take part in demonstrations, opposition leaders, and even human rights defenders. Those who legitimately get together and take part in social protests have also been treated like criminals and have seen investigations and/or judicial proceedings initiated against them for poorly defined offenses, a practice incompatible with a democratic society in which people have the right to voice their opinion peacefully, without fear of any kind of reprisal.

26. The IACHR is particularly concerned that dozens of civilians detained in connection with demonstrations are reportedly being tried and/or sentenced by military courts that do not meet the requirement for independence and impartiality. Contravening the principle of no crime or punishment without prior law (*principio de legalidad*), people are allegedly being randomly charged with "treason," "insurrection," (*rebelión*) and "assaulting guards" (*ataque al centinela*). As a matter of priority, necessary (including legislative) measures must be adopted to ensure that civilians are not investigated, tried and/or sentenced by military courts and to bring any such cases already under way back to ordinary law courts.

27. As regards freedom of expression, severe curtailments to that right have been documented, including censorship and the closing down of media, attacks on journalists, and, in general, harassment and criminalization of those who express political views or dissemination that the State does not approve of. Such measures are not part of any regulatory framework compatible with Venezuela's international obligations in this regard and, in practice, they are geared to silencing critics of the current Government. The harm they are doing to Venezuelan democracy is obvious and requires priority attention.

Violence and citizen insecurity

28. Violence and crime have increased in recent years, thereby impairing the day-to-day life of the population as a whole, but especially that of individuals, groups, and communities that have traditionally have been victims of discrimination or at greater risk of rights violations, such as women, children and adolescents, and older adults. It worries the IACHR that the State's response has largely been to militarize citizen security and to co-opt civilians for security force tasks, especially through the Liberation of the People Operation (OLP) and the Zamora Plan (PZ). According to the information received, this has resulted in a steady increase in the number of extrajudicial executions, with 2015 seeing 37% more cases than 2014; and 2016 seeing 70% more cases than the previous year.⁹ Another source estimated that in 2017 Venezuela registered 89 violent deaths per 100,000 inhabitants and a total of 26,616 death persons in the whole national territory.¹⁰ On the other hand, according to official statistics, in 2016 there were 21,752 intentional homicides, or a rate of 70.1 violent deaths per 100,000 residents.¹¹

29. The Commission considers it essential to give priority to eliminating the participation of the armed forces in citizen security activities for which the police are responsible. Likewise, steps need to be taken to ensure that lethal force is used in rigorous compliance with the principles of exceptional circumstances, legality, necessity, proportionality, nondiscrimination, and accountability. It is also vital, in the IACHR's opinion, to incorporate a gender perspective in citizen security, based on the premise that citizens are to be protected, not treated as enemies to combat.

30. Contrary to what the Venezuelan State has done, the Commission reiterates that citizens must not be used for any kind of domestic security strategy. Nor should the role of society vis-à-vis national security be distorted. The State needs to comply with the above, bearing in mind its duty to act with due diligence to prevent human rights violations. Likewise, it must investigate and, where applicable punish and make reparation for any violent acts they may have committed.

⁹ COFAVIC, Ejecuciones extrajudiciales, 40 historias de 6385 vidas ignoradas 2012-2017, 2017, págs. 39-40.

¹⁰ OVV, [Informe OVV de violencia 2017](#), December 28, 2017.

¹¹ Ministerio Público, [Informe de gestión correspondiente a 2016](#), 31 de marzo de 2017.

Poverty and Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights

31. Venezuela is currently in the grip not just of a political crisis, but of a profound economic and social crisis as well, characterized by widespread shortages of food; medicine; and medical treatment, materials and inputs, to name but a few. In 2015 prices rose by 180.9 percent and by April 2016, 80 percent of the population was suffering food shortages.¹² This situation has triggered alarming poverty and extreme poverty indices, along with serious impediments to the enjoyment of the population's economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, such as the rights to food, health, education, and housing. Hardest hit are groups that are traditionally marginalized and discriminated against, such as children and adolescents, women, older adults, and indigenous peoples.

32. To deal with this situation, the State has issued a series of decrees declaring a "state of exception" (*estado de excepción*) and economic emergency." These states of emergency have successively been extended, meaning that in practice the measures they provide for are indefinite. The decrees have also contained measures broadening the powers of the Executive. One of the more worrying measures of this kind has been the militarization of such activities as food distribution. In this area, the Commission urges the State to step up measures designed to reduce poverty and extreme poverty and to take all necessary steps to ensure that available resources are used, as a matter of priority, to avoid deterioration of the population's enjoyment of ESCER and to ensure the entire population's access to those rights, without discrimination.

33. As a consequence of the grave economic and social crisis, disease outbreaks and other impacts on health have taken place, in the context of which the scarcity of medications, materials, inputs, and medical treatment is concerning, particularly due to their impact on pregnant women, children and adolescents, the elderly, and people living with severe illnesses, chronic conditions, or the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and/or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Infant and maternal mortality rates have increased, as has the number of epidemics. By and large, in this scenario, the State has failed to provide the necessary access to health care. The Commission reiterates the need for the State to guarantee the availability and quality of health care by ensuring the provision of qualified medical personnel, medicines, and appropriate hospital equipment. In particular, steps need to be taken to combat the high maternal mortality rates.

34. As regards the right to food, shortages and, in some cases, a complete lack of supply has reached critical levels. For many, this situation has led to excessive weight loss and malnutrition issues and even death, not just the lack of adequate access to food. To deal with this situation, the State has taken some steps such as setting up Local Supply and Production Committee, which the Commission welcomes. However, according to the information received by the Commission, these programs do not accord priority to groups that have traditionally been excluded and discriminated against and there have also been complaints of the application of politically motivate discrimination criteria. The State must guarantee exercise of the right to food based on objective criteria and with a particular emphasis on persons and communities traditionally excluded or discriminated against, such as children and adolescents, persons with disabilities, and older adults.

35. Exercise of the right to education has also been impaired by the crisis in the country, especially in the case of children and adolescents. Dropout rates have increased due to problems with access to food, transportation, and citizen security. Other issues that have impacted the enjoyment of this right have had to do with water and electricity supply problems. Here, the IACHR stresses that the State must allocate the resources needed to ensure high quality, universal, cost-free, and accessible education, tailored to needs, and ensure that it be imparted in safe settings, free from violence and discrimination.

36. Finally, the Commission observes that, while the establishment of social programs may have had a positive impact for some segments of the population on their exercise of the right to housing, there have been serious complaints that mitigate that progress, such as failure to formalize title deeds and numerous

¹² Analítica, [Escasez de alimentos básicos en el país supera el 80%, según Datanálisis](#), May 27, 2016.

complaints of homes being raided, destroyed and even burnt down in connection with the OLP movement. In light of the above, the State needs to adopt resolute measures to guarantee legal certainty for home tenure and to refrain from interfering, in any way, with the right to housing in connection with OLP or other operations.

37. Overall, the IACHR calls upon the State to step up measures to mitigate the situation of poverty and extreme poverty and avoid impairment of the exercise of ESCER, and to ensure that such measures focus on guaranteeing the full enjoyment of those rights without discrimination, thereby generating the conditions required for genuine equality. In particular, the State must refrain from any act involving differential treatment based on political view in respect of the exercise of those rights and it must conduct serious investigations into the allegations that have been made in that regard. It is likewise essential that the resources available be used, as a top priority, in favor of persons, groups, and communities that suffer discrimination or are excluded from society.

Historically excluded persons, groups, and communities at greatest risk

38. Bearing in mind the economic and social crisis that the country is undergoing, the Commission conducts, across the board and throughout the report, an analysis of its particular impact on the human rights of persons, groups, and communities at greatest risk and traditionally subject to discrimination and exclusion. With regard to women, the IACHR voices its concern at the high levels of gender violence and trafficking in persons ([Chapter IV.A](#)); the specific impact on women of the Government's citizen security plans ([Chapter IV.B.1](#)) and the putting down (repression) of social protest ([Chapter III.A.2](#) and [4](#)); and the different and more serious impact on women of the economic crisis, particularly as regards food shortages, access to health care, and sexual and reproductive rights ([Chapter V.B](#) and [C](#)).

39. With regard to children and adolescents, the IACHR addresses the particular impact on them of violence and citizen insecurity ([Chapter IV.A](#)), as well as impairments to the right to life and integrity stemming from security plans ([Chapter IV.B](#)) and the putting down of social protest ([Chapter III.A.2](#)). The IACHR likewise expresses its concern at regulations regarding children and adolescents at odds with (criminal) law ([Chapter IV.C](#)) and the impact of the economic crisis on enjoyment of the rights to food, health, and education ([Chapter V.B, C](#) and [D](#)). The IACHR also refers to the impact on older adults of citizen insecurity ([Chapter IV.A](#)), of the use of force to put down social protest ([Chapter III.A.2](#)), and of the food shortages the country is experiencing ([Chapter V.B](#)). The Commission also looks at the impact of the crisis on indigenous peoples, especially in terms of malnutrition and access to food indices ([Chapter V.B](#)).

40. As regards persons deprived of liberty, the Commission voices its alarm at complaints of arbitrary detentions in connection with citizen security strategies ([Chapter IV.B.1](#) and [2](#)); at complaints of arbitrary arrests of demonstrators and their subsequent subjection to torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, including rape ([Chapter III.A.4](#)); and, in particular, at the violence occurring in detention centers and the deterioration of prison conditions, which are characterized by overcrowding, lack of food, and lack of medical care ([Chapter IV.C, V.B](#) and [C](#)).

41. With respect to the situation of human rights defenders, the IACHR repudiates the numerous threats and acts of harassment and criminalization to which they are subjected for denouncing the human rights situation in Venezuela, and for defending or representing persons detained on account of their political views or for having taken part in demonstrations ([Chapter III.A.3](#) and [4](#)). Likewise, the Commission voices its concern at the harassment and persecution of political opposition figures in Venezuela ([Chapter II.B.2](#)).

42. Regarding migrants, refugees, and others in a similar situation to refugees, the IACHR reiterates its concern at the large number of Venezuelans who have been forced to migrate to other countries in the region in recent years for numerous reasons, especially forced migration as a survival mechanism given the grave crisis in Venezuela and the effects of its sequel of shortages of food, medicines, and medical treatment ([Chapter V](#)), violence and lack of security ([Chapter IV.A](#)). The IACHR also recognizes the efforts by some countries in the region to provide protection for Venezuelan migrants.

43. The Inter-American Commission reiterates its offer to work with the State, and with Venezuelan society as a whole, to ensure effective compliance with the recommendations put forward in this report, thereby contributing to more robust defense and protection of human rights in a democratic context in Venezuela. The IACHR in turn reiterates its interest and willingness to visit the country.