



DEBATE PACK

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Political situation in Venezuela

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1. Background

Venezuela is suffering from acute and interconnected economic, social and political crises.

Economic crisis

The main cause of Venezuela's economic crisis is the steep fall in the global price of oil, on which its economy is heavily dependent, it provides over 90% of its exports (crucial in acquiring the foreign currency Venezuela needs to purchase imports).¹ An overvalued currency, in part due to tight government controls on imports, pushes up the price of goods in the shops. To combat this President Maduro introduced price controls. However this has led to products either not being supplied or going on the black market.

The government's budget deficit was estimated by the IMF to be 15% of GDP in 2016, the government has monetised the deficit by printing money which has led to soaring inflation.² Official figures have not been released since 2015 but the IMF estimates the annual inflation rate was 255% on average in 2016 and is expected to rise to 1,100% by the end of 2017. GDP has fallen by a third in the four years since 2013 and unemployment is at 25%.³

Until now, the government has managed to keep up with its debt repayments. However, its attempts to raise money and avoid default are unlikely to be sustainable for long if current conditions continue.⁴ Exacerbating the difficulties are additional financial sanctions imposed by the US government on Venezuela in late August, including prohibiting US institutions from being involved in new debt or shares issued by the Venezuelan government and the state-run oil company PDVSA.⁵

The economic crisis has led to severe shortages of food and medicine. Hunger is rife with 12.1% of the population eating less than three meals a day, and the Bengoa Foundation for Food and Nutrition estimates that 30% of school age children are malnourished.⁶ Caritas, a Catholic non-profit organisation that is working in Venezuela, produced a (Spanish language) [report](#) in May 2017, which found in the four states they surveyed that 11.4 percent of children under five are suffering either from moderate or severe acute malnutrition. Human

¹ OPEC, '[Venezuela facts and figures](#)',

² IMF, [World Economic Outlook database](#), April 2017

³ Ibid

⁴ "[Venezuela Cut Deeper Into Junk by S&P](#)", Bloomberg, 11 July 2017 and "[Fitch cuts Venezuela's rating over sanctions pressure](#)", Financial Times, 30 August 2017

⁵ [Trump ramps up sanctions pressure on Venezuela](#)", Financial Times, 25 August 2017; "[Venezuela's path to a debt restructuring grows more treacherous](#)", Financial Times, 31 August 2017; and "[Maduro Now Owns Venezuela's Economy—and Its Collapse](#)", Bloomberg, 29 August 2017

⁶ '[Food shortages take toll on Venezuelans' diet](#)', The Guardian, 24 May 2016

Rights Watch's 2016 [country report](#) stated that both infant and maternal mortality rates were rising sharply. The lack of medicines, and the deteriorating health of the Venezuelan people, means that cases of Malaria are [now surging](#). In March 2017, President Maduro asked the UN to assist with the medical crisis.⁷

Political crisis

The political crisis stems from a battle for legitimacy between the government and opposition. Nicolas Maduro the current President of Venezuela, succeeded Hugo Chavez after his death in March 2013. Mr Maduro, who had served as Chavez's Vice President, then won a Presidential election in April 2013, narrowly defeating opposition leader Henrique Capriles by less than 2% of the vote.

In December 2015 the opposition won by a landslide in the elections to the Venezuelan Congress. However, the Supreme Court, which is packed by government loyalists, prevented three opposition candidates from taking their seats, which meant the opposition fell short of the crucial two-thirds majority which would have allowed it to exercise much greater powers.⁸ The Court has also blocked most of the legislation that the opposition Congress has passed by declaring it unconstitutional.

Since the legislative elections there have been a series of political confrontations between the two sides. On 30 March 2017, the Supreme Court took over legislative powers from the Congress, after holding the Congress "in contempt" of its powers.⁹ This move caused international consternation and widespread protests, Maduro's government recognised the over-reach this represented, with the President urging it to review the ruling "to maintain institutional stability." The Court backtracked and reversed its decision on April 1.¹⁰

On 8 April, Henrique Capriles, the 2013 opposition presidential candidate was banned from running for office for 15 years due to "administrative irregularities" during his time as Governor¹¹. This led to waves of protests and the death of several protestors.¹² Clashes between protestors and security forces led to a joint communique from 11 Latin American states calling on Venezuela's government to "guarantee the right to peaceful protest."¹³ The government have responded by calling this "rude meddling".¹⁴ On 5 July, supporters of

⁷ ['Venezuela asks UN for help as medicine shortages grow severe'](#), CNN, 25 March 2017

⁸ The government has defended the legitimacy of its appointments to the Court, but has not denied the partisanship of its appointments, seeing them as acts to counterbalance previous appointees opposed to their agendas. See ['Venezuela: Chávez Allies Pack Supreme Court'](#) Human Rights Watch, 13 December 2004 and ['Venezuela's outgoing Congress names 13 Supreme Court justices'](#) Reuters, 23 December 2016

⁹ ['Venezuela 'coup': Alarm grows as court takes power'](#), BBC News, 31 March 2017

¹⁰ ['Venezuela: Supreme court backtracks on powers bid'](#), BBC News, 1 April 2017

¹¹ ['Venezuela opposition leader Capriles banned from politics'](#), BBC News, 8 April 2017

¹² ['Venezuelans return to streets, roused by ban on opposition leader'](#), Reuters, 8 April, 2017

¹³ ['Venezuela slams nations for 'meddling' over protest call'](#), BBC News, 18 April 2017

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

the government stormed the National Assembly, assaulting opposition members. The government has vowed to investigate, with President Nicolás Maduro saying "I will not be complicit in acts of violence."¹⁵

The most contentious government initiative was launched on 1 May 2017 when President Maduro announced he would convene a Constituent Assembly to revise the country's 1999 constitution (itself the result of a Constituent Assembly called by then President Hugo Chavez.) This move was widely condemned by the international community. Maduro presented the plan as an opportunity for reconciliation, saying it was the "only road to restore peace".¹⁶ According to Reuters some 85% of Venezuelans surveyed in early June opposed revising the constitution.¹⁷

On 16 July the opposition organised an unofficial referendum which resulted in [around 7 million people voting](#) against the formation of an Assembly, but the vote had no legal status. Despite an apparent lack of public support the election to select members of the Assembly went ahead on 30 July. The main opposition parties boycotted the vote and government-supporting candidates claimed all the seats. Governments in the region such as Brazil and Argentina, as well as the UK and US, [condemned the vote](#), and said they did not recognize the legitimacy of the assembly.

The company which supplied the software for the electronic voting machines used in the election [claimed](#) a few days after the election that the results were fraudulent, suggesting there were big disparities in actual turnout and the numbers put forward by the government.

It was widely feared that the new Constituent Assembly would follow the example of its 1999 predecessor and assume for itself wide ranging powers and suspend Congress. Such fears have now seemingly been realised. On the first day of sitting, the Assembly [removed](#) government supporter-turned-critic Attorney General Luisa Ortega from her position. Since then it has [voted](#) to put opposition leaders on trial for treason, and most significantly given itself [the power to pass legislation](#), effectively neutering the opposition controlled Congress. This move was [condemned](#) in the strongest terms by Sir Alan Duncan, FCO Minister for Europe and the Americas.

What next?

Throughout this period anti-government protests have continued. These have often descended into violence. A [report](#) from the United Nations human rights office estimates that of the 124 deaths linked to the protests, 46 came at the hands of security forces and 27 from armed pro-government militias or *colectivos*.¹⁸ The report also points to "the existence of a policy to repress political dissent and instil fear in the

¹⁵ ['Venezuela National Assembly stormed by Maduro supporters'](#), BBC News, 6 July 2017

¹⁶ ['Venezuela to vote amid crisis: all you need to know'](#), The Guardian, 25 July 2017

¹⁷ ['Poll finds 85 percent of Venezuelans oppose constitution revision'](#), Reuters, 10 June 2017.

¹⁸ [Human rights violations indicate repressive policy of Venezuelan authorities – UN report'](#), United Nations, 30 August 2017

population to curb demonstrations”, from the government.”¹⁹ These continual clashes, along with the ongoing economic and social crises, have led to speculation about how long the government can stay in power. However, the consensus amongst analysts is that there is unlikely to be any change of regime in the near future.

Constitutional pathways to challenge the government such as a recall referendum on President Maduro have been blocked by the Supreme Court. Large scale opposition protests may be hard to sustain as they are yet to have much impact. Widespread hunger means day-to-day survival is the primary focus of many people, and the government maintains a firm grip over the armed forces and security services. While there has been some small-scale dissent in the armed forces, the Financial Times in May suggested it is unlikely it will turn against the government due to their large-scale involvement in the running of the state, which gives them both power and extra resources.²⁰

It has been [suggested](#) that as pathways to resisting the government narrow, the opposition may radicalise further and begin to use more violent means to confront the government. Such trends have [begun to materialise](#). Phil Gunson, a senior analyst at the International Crisis Group, has suggested that if these continue “Venezuela’s political conflict could morph into a low-intensity civil war.”²¹ With the [failure](#) of international efforts to broker peace, such as Colombian President Santos’s [suggestions of talks in Cuba](#), there are currently no comprehensive plans on the table for a solution to the crisis. The next significant political staging post are local elections scheduled for December; the opposition are yet to decide whether to participate in them or not.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ [‘Venezuelan armed forces stay loyal to President Maduro’](#), Financial Times, 30 May 2017

²¹ [‘Could political tension in Venezuela ignite a civil war?’](#), The Guardian, 5 August 2017

2. Press Articles

The following is a selection of recent press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

Daily Telegraph

Venezuela's pro-government constitutional assembly seizes powers of opposition-led congress

19 August 2017

El Universal

UN Special Rapporteur: Dialogue is of the essence in Venezuela

15 August 2017

New York Times

Trump's comment on Venezuela makes a bad situation worse

16 August 2017

Michael Shifter

Daily Telegraph

Donald Trump threatens Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro with military action

12 August 2017

Barney Henderson

Reuters

Ousted Venezuelan prosecutor says she fears for her life, will keep fighting

10 August 2017

Girish Gupta

Al Jazeera

Venezuela's crisis explained from the beginning

1 August 2017

Sky News

Venezuela: Labour row over crisis in South American nation rumbles on

Alan McGuinness

3 August 2017

BBC News online

Venezuela key opposition leaders seized after poll

1 August 2017

The Independent

CIA chief hints agency is working to change Venezuelan government

25 July 2017

Andrew Buncombe

The Guardian

Venezuela to vote amid crisis: all you need to know

25 July 2017

Virginia López and Sibylla Brodzinsky

The Atlantic

Nicolas Maduro doesn't really control Venezuela

25 May 2017

Moisés Naím

The Independent

A distracted world at last pays attention as Venezuela flirts with outright dictatorship

1 April 2017

David Osborne

3. Gov.uk

Minister appalled by developments in Venezuela **Foreign and Commonwealth Office** **19 August 2017 (updated 21 August 2017)**

The Minister for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan, said:

I am utterly appalled by the decision of the sham-democratic Constituent Assembly in Venezuela to remove legislative powers from the elected National Assembly. This is a shocking blow to democracy in Venezuela, and a direct attack on a legitimate democratic institution. It ignores the will of the Venezuelan people and will only further undermine confidence in Venezuela's democracy. The National Assembly and its Deputies must be respected and their rights honoured.

Poverty in Venezuela continues to rise, with more Venezuelans being forced into poverty every day by bad governance. This is a tragedy in a country with such enormous resources. This move will do nothing to tackle the urgent economic challenges that ordinary Venezuelans face.

It is time for President Maduro and the Venezuelan Government to act responsibly. They need to reduce tension, respect democracy, and take responsibility for working with the Opposition to agree a positive way forward for all Venezuelans. The UK stands with the people of Venezuela and will work with international partners in our collective response to the gravity of this situation.

Foreign Secretary calls for urgent action from Venezuelan government **Foreign and Commonwealth Office** **31 July 2017**

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

Venezuela stands on the brink of disaster and Nicholas Maduro's government must stop before it is too late. The country is turning on itself – more than 100 have died already – and democracy and basic rights are in jeopardy. The dubious Constituent Assembly vote has dramatically deepened the problems and ramped up tensions. It is time for the government to see sense and start working with the opposition on a way forward that brings the people of Venezuela back together.

Foreign Secretary statement on Venezuela **Foreign and Commonwealth Office** **27 July 2017**

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

I am deeply saddened that nearly 100 people have died in protests in Venezuela since the end of March. The citizens of Venezuela deserve

better and urgent action should be taken to stop matters from getting worse.

The UK calls on the Venezuelan Government to refrain from divisive and inflammatory action, including the plan to form a Constituent Assembly later this month. This will only further undermine confidence in the country's democracy. Human rights, the rule of law, the separation of powers and the integrity of democratic institutions must be respected.

The UK joins with the Vatican, the neighbours of Venezuela and our European friends to urge the Government to enter constructive talks with the Opposition. I call on President Nicolas Maduro to change course and break the deadlock for the benefit of all Venezuelans.

Sir Alan Duncan statement on the Venezuelan National Assembly attack

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

6 July 2017

The Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan MP, Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office said:

I deplore yesterday's attack on the democratically elected Venezuelan National Assembly and the aggression towards MPs by pro-government supporters. This unchecked violence is contemptible and unacceptable. I urge the Venezuelan Government to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of the National Assembly and all MPs.

The continued escalation of violence and lack of protection provided by Venezuelan law enforcement organisations to the National Assembly is a threat to the principles of democracy. I call on the Venezuelan Government to respect Venezuela's Constitution and the inviolability of its democratic institutions.

4. PQs

Venezuela: Human Rights

12 Jul 2017 | 2711

Asked by: Dr Lisa Cameron

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations the Government has made to the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on reported human rights violations in that country.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK Government shares the deep concern of the international community regarding the deteriorating political and economic situation. Since April, there have been more than 80 deaths during protests.

This is a critical time for Venezuela, and UK concerns over the situation have led Venezuela to be designated a FCO Human Rights Priority Country.

I met the Venezuelan Foreign Minister, Samuel Moncada, in his previous role as Minister for Europe on 26 October. I raised UK concerns at the deteriorating situation and encouraged the Venezuelan Government to accept offers of international aid to address chronic shortages of basic food and medical supplies.

In March, I hosted a delegation of Deputies from the Venezuelan National Assembly and stressed the importance of an independent and empowered legislature. I issued a statement on 31 March echoing these views, following the Venezuelan Supreme Court's attempt to wrest power from the National Assembly.

In May, then Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay visited Caracas and delivered clear messages to senior government and opposition figures, expressing our concern at the political situation and the need to respect the freedom of speech and the right to peaceful protests.

Following the 5 July attack on the National Assembly and its Deputies by pro-Government supporters, I issued a statement condemning the attack and calling for the Venezuelan Government to uphold the constitution and show respect for its democratic institutions.

Venezuela

11 Jul 2017 | 627 cc145-6

Asked by: Robert Neill

What discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the breakdown in the rule of law in Venezuela.

Answered by: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

My colleagues and I are in close contact with our international counterparts, including most recently at the Organisation of American States summit in Cancun last month. I issued a very strong statement on 6 July, utterly condemning the 5 July attack on Venezuela's National Assembly and its elected Members, and calling for the Venezuelan Government to uphold the constitution and show respect for democratic institutions. That statement was echoed by many colleagues across the world.

Asked by: Robert Neill

The Leader of the Opposition described the regime in Venezuela as offering an "alternative agenda" from which we could learn. The alternative agenda has seen the economy collapse and poverty increase. It has seen scores of people killed in civil unrest and now an attempt to undermine both the elected Congress and the independent attorney general. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Her Majesty's Government strongly condemn the attempt by the Maduro regime to rewrite the constitution and rub out democracy?

Answered by: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Leader of the Opposition does seem to be a great fan of the Venezuelan Government, giving a passable impression himself of Fidel Castro, one sometimes thinks. What is happening to the Venezuelan economy gives us a clear indication of what would happen to the UK economy if ever the right hon. Gentleman were Prime Minister.

Asked by: Catherine West

What practical steps have been taken to deal with famine on the border between Venezuela and Colombia by the British Government?

Answered by: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

There are no easy such attempts; we do not have a bilateral programme, but we are in touch with the United Nations. The hon. Lady's very question illustrates the extent to which the Venezuelan Government have driven their own people to poverty; they are running short of some of the most basic goods on which they have to live.

Engagements

28 Jun 2017 | 626 c594

Asked by: Marcus Fysh

Is the Prime Minister aware of the current crisis in Venezuela, and is it an example of how an experiment in socialist revolution can go horribly wrong?

Answered by: Theresa May | Prime Minister

My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point, and I hope the Leader of the Opposition has heard what he had to say. When we are talking about trade deals in the future, I sometimes think that the

Leader of the Opposition and his shadow Chancellor think that the only good trade deals are with Venezuela, Cuba and North Korea.

Venezuela: Overseas Aid

26 Jun 2017 | 431

Asked by: Tommy Sheppard

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what aid the UK has provided for the citizens of Venezuela in the past five years.

Answering member: Rory Stewart | Department for International Development

Details of all UK ODA can be found in the annual Statistics on International Development.

Venezuela: Politics and Government

26 Jun 2017 | 291

Asked by: Tommy Sheppard

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions the Government has had with the Venezuelan Government on the political situation in that country; and what recent discussions his Department has had with the Department for International Development on foreign aid for citizens of Venezuela.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I met the Venezuelan Foreign Minister, Samuel Moncada, in his previous role as Minister for Europe on 26 October. We discussed the political, humanitarian and economic situation and I shared my concern about the Venezuelan Government's response to protests. In March, I hosted a delegation of Venezuelan MPs from the National Assembly and stressed the importance of an independent and empowered legislature. This was followed by my statement of 31 March echoing those views following a move by the Supreme Court to wrest power from from the National Assembly.

During her visit to Caracas in early May, the then Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay, met senior government and opposition figures to express our concerns about the political situation and the need to respect human rights.

There have been no recent discussions between the FCO and Department for International Development about foreign aid for the citizens of Venezuela. However, on 12 May 2017, the UK joined EU member states in issuing a statement calling on the Venezuelan Government to allow access for external cooperation to meet the urgent needs of the population.

Venezuela: Politics and Government**31 Mar 2017 | 68908****Asked by: Sir Hugo Swire**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in Latin America on the political and economic situation in Venezuela.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We share the concerns of the international community about the deteriorating political and economic situation in Venezuela. Economic mismanagement is producing inflation and shortages of basic goods, with a significant impact upon ordinary Venezuelans. Venezuela became an FCO Human Rights Priority Country in 2016. President Maduro has requested United Nations assistance to boost medical supplies.

The Organisation of American States (OAS) has called for the OAS Democratic Charter to be invoked unless the Venezuelan Government calls elections and releases political prisoners. The UNASUR-supported dialogue between the Government and opposition has stalled.

I met the previous Venezuelan Minister for Europe, Samuel Moncada at the EU-CELAC Foreign Minister's meeting on 26 October and discussed humanitarian issues and the economic situation. At that meeting I also raised the deteriorating situation in Venezuela with several of my Latin American and European counterparts. On 20 March I met a delegation of Venezuelan MPs from the National Assembly to discuss the situation and to highlight our support for an independent and empowered Parliament. The EU Foreign Affairs Committee last discussed Venezuela on 18 July, which was attended by the Foreign Secretary.

Venezuela: Conflict, Stability and Security Fund**03 Nov 2016 | 51145****Asked by: Kevan Jones**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, which projects in Venezuela have received funds from the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

There are no projects in Venezuela that have received, or are currently receiving, funding from the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF).

Venezuela: Human Rights**02 Nov 2016 | 50132****Asked by: Mike Gapes**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the human rights situation in Venezuela.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The British Government is concerned by the latest developments in Venezuela, in particular the political, economic and security challenges, which are having a serious impact on the human rights of ordinary Venezuelans. I discussed those concerns with Venezuelan Minister for Europe, Samuel Moncada, on 26 October and urged the Venezuela Government to respect the human rights of its citizens.

The United Kingdom co-signed a Joint Statement at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on 29 September, expressing international community concern over developments in Venezuela. This Joint Statement was supported by 28 other countries. We have played an active role in preparations for Venezuela's upcoming Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council, submitting a statement of recommendations and posing questions to the Venezuelan Government regarding their human rights record.

Venezuela has been designated a Foreign and Commonwealth Office 'Human Rights Priority Country' for 2016/17. Designation allows us expand our work on human rights and democracy in Venezuela, through bilateral projects supporting political dialogue, women's rights and good governance.

Topical Questions

14 Sep 2016 | 614 c887

Asked by: David Nuttall

What assessment has my right hon. Friend's Department made of the humanitarian situation in Venezuela?

Answered by: Priti Patel | International Development

Of course, international assessments of Venezuela note that it is suffering a deep economic crisis and not just with inflation, but also because there is a health emergency there—a shortage of medicines and a humanitarian crisis. Strangely enough, Venezuela's economic and political policy models have of course been championed by the Labour party, and we can now see what those policies have led to, with the economic catastrophe in Venezuela.

Venezuela: Human Rights

09 Sep 2016 | 43571

Asked by: Martin Docherty-Hughes

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the economic situation in Venezuela on human rights in the region.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

This Government shares international concerns about the situation in Venezuela. Inflation and shortages of food and medicine are having a significant impact on ordinary Venezuelans, with many traveling temporarily across the border with Colombia to purchase basic goods.

Earlier this year 60 Venezuelan non-governmental organisations called on the Venezuelan Government to accept humanitarian aid, highlighting the reported scarcity of 80% of medicines and medical supplies.

We continue to encourage constructive dialogue between the Venezuelan Government and opposition political parties. We have raised our concerns over the deteriorating situation in the country directly with Venezuelan Ministers, urging respect for human rights and democratic values. We continue to encourage the Government to change its stance on humanitarian aid.

Our Embassy in Caracas promotes human rights, democracy and good governance. In April, Venezuela was designated a Foreign and Commonwealth Office Human Rights priority country for 2016/17. This allows us to expand our work, collaborating with both Venezuelan and international partners, including using British Overseas Development funding, to help resolve issues around food and medicine shortages.

Arms Trade

08 Sep 2016 | 44223

Asked by: Dr Tania Mathias

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, to which countries of concern on human rights the Government has authorised arms sales in the last year.

Answering member: Mark Garnier | Department for International Trade

From January 2015 – March 2016 licences have been granted for military goods to the following countries of human rights concern:

Afghanistan; Bahrain; Bangladesh; Burundi; Central African Republic; China; Colombia; Democratic Republic of Congo; Egypt; Iraq; Israel and The Occupied Palestinian Territories; Maldives; Pakistan; Russia; Saudi Arabia; Somalia; South Sudan; Sri Lanka; Sudan; Syria; Turkmenistan; **Venezuela**; Yemen and Zimbabwe.

Further details on all licences granted for export are publically available as Official Statistics at www.gov.uk.

All export licences are issued in strict accordance with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria and any sanctions or embargoes that may be in place at the time an application is submitted for consideration.

Venezuela: Overseas Aid
05 Sep 2016 | 43568

Asked by: Martin Docherty-Hughes

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to assist those suffering from hunger in Venezuela.

Answering member: Rory Stewart | Department for International Development

The current political, social and economic problems in Venezuela, in particular shortages of food and medicine are concerning. DFID is supporting Venezuela through our core contributions to United Nations' (UN) agencies, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department and the Red Cross, all of whom are currently working to support food and medicine distribution systems to the most vulnerable people in Venezuela.

Venezuela: Human Rights
02 Aug 2016 | 42489

Asked by: Calum Kerr

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has made representations to his Venezuelan counterpart on reports of detention without charge, arbitrary detentions, the excessive use of force by security forces and other human rights violations in that country.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Government shares the concern of the international community regarding the deteriorating political situation in Venezuela. The then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), conveyed his concerns at the detention of prominent political opposition figures, and human rights more generally, directly to the Venezuelan Foreign Minister and Deputy Foreign Minister at bilateral meetings held in London during 2015. He has also discussed Venezuela extensively with counterparts from across the region.

Since 2012, we have funded 22 human rights and democracy projects in Venezuela, with both Government and Non-Government Organisations. These projects have varied from protecting the rights of indigenous people to supporting political dialogue and reconciliation and the promotion of electoral reform.

Venezuela was designated a Foreign and Commonwealth Office Human Rights Priority Country for 2016/2017 in April. This status will allow us to further expand our work on human rights and democracy in the country, including project work with local communities.

Venezuela: Economic Situation
02 Aug 2016 | 42488

Asked by: Calum Kerr

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the government of Venezuela on the ongoing economic situation and food shortages in that country.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Government shares the concern of the international community regarding the deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela. We have urged all sides to work constructively together in the best interests of the country and the people of Venezuela. We support the planned dialogue between the Venezuelan Government and Opposition, facilitated by the Union of South American Nations regional body. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials are in contact with their counterparts in the Department for International Development and the EU to discuss what future assistance might be offered, if requested by the Venezuelan Government.

Venezuela: Politics and Government
02 Aug 2016 | 42299

Asked by: Calum Kerr

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent reports he has received on the steps taken by the Venezuelan government in response to shortages of basic commodities and political unrest in that country.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Government shares the concern of the international community regarding the deteriorating political, economic and social situation in Venezuela.

We have urged all sides to work constructively in the best interests of the country and the people of Venezuela. We support the planned dialogue between the Venezuelan Government and Opposition, facilitated by the Union of South American Nations regional body.

We are aware of the acute shortages of basic foods and medicines. On 10 July, parts of Venezuela's border with Colombia were opened temporarily for the first time since August 2015. This allowed thousands of Venezuelans to cross into Colombia to purchase basic food and medicines. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials are in contact with their counterparts in the Department for International Development and the EU to discuss what future assistance might be offered, if asked by the Venezuelan Government

5. Written Statement on the Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report 2016

Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report 2016

20 July 2017 | Boris Johnson | Foreign and Commonwealth Office | HCWS90

I have today laid before Parliament a copy of the 2016 Foreign and Commonwealth Office Report on Human Rights and Democracy (Cm 9487).

The report highlights policy developments on human rights issues overseas in 2016.

The report assesses the human rights situation in 30 countries which FCO has designated as its Human Rights Priority Countries. These are: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Burma, Burundi, Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Libya, Maldives, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, **Venezuela**, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

This report focuses on how the Government is striving to protect and promote human rights around the world. In the two centuries since Britain became the first country to outlaw the slave trade, this country has helped to lead the struggle for justice and decency. The Government's approach towards human rights stands in this long tradition, based on the firm belief that our values are not only right in themselves but the key to prosperity and development.

**The report can be read in the Further Reading section below*

6. Further reading

Human Rights & Democracy: The 2016 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report, Cm 9487, July 2017

(See page 47 for the section on Venezuela)

Venezuela - Human Rights Priority Country, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 8 February 2017

Venezuela Solidarity Campaign (Webpage)

The **All-Party Parliamentary Venezuela Group** was formed after this list was last updated (2 May 2017).

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