



March 2019

VENEZUELA

Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela

Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ has been engaged in a relationship of solidarity and accompaniment with the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela for more than 60 years. Now we watch with deep concern the recent talk of United States military intervention in that country and the humanitarian impact of U.S. sanctions on Venezuelan oil. Every time Venezuela, or any other country in Latin America and the Caribbean, has suffered a military episode in its recent history, the lives of the poorest and the most vulnerable populations have been severely damaged.

Advocacy Recommendations

We encourage contacting your legislators with the following advocacy messages:

- Support for HR1004 Prohibiting Unauthorized Military Action in Venezuela
- Support for dialogue with no conditions through the Latin American and European-led International Contact Group
- Affirm the right of the Venezuelan people to self-determination
- Call for an end to U.S.-imposed economic sanctions on Venezuela Mission partner programs aid marginalized communities and families

Venezuela: Intervention and the Politicization of International Aid

Introduction

International focus has turned to Venezuela in recent months as the U.S. has very publicly backed self-proclaimed president Jean Guaidó in challenging Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and much-needed humanitarian aid has been leveraged as a political tool in support of regime change.

Aid as Political Intervention

Humanitarian aid is supposed to be neutral: to meet human needs and to do no harm. The humanitarian aid proposed by the U.S., in coordination with Guaidó, is arguably being used as a cover for a regime change agenda and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations (U.N.), and other relief agencies have declined to participate in these U.S.-led efforts and offered words of warning.

"We will not be participating in what is, for us, not humanitarian aid," stated Colombia's ICRC spokesperson, Christoph Harnisch. In a press briefing in early February, U.N. spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric, shared, "Humanitarian action needs to be independent of political, military, or any other objectives. What is important is that humanitarian aid is depoliticized and that the needs of the people should lead in terms of when and how humanitarian assistance is used."

There are significant humanitarian needs as more than half of families in



Venezuela are unable to meet their basic food needs and more than 3 million people have fled the country. During this time the Maduro administration did accept aid from sources not seen as politicized, including the ICRC and the U.N.

One reason for the humanitarian crisis is the decrease in government social programs because of U.S. sanctions on Venezuelan oil. The most recent round of sanctions prohibit corporations under U.S. jurisdiction from purchasing oil from Venezuela's PDVSA (the state-owned oil company) - an estimated loss of \$11 billion in revenues in 2019. In the past, Venezuela has been celebrated for its vast social programs that are largely supported by oil revenue, which accounts for 95% of the country's export earnings. De Zayas, the former UN special rapporteur, said that if Washington's immediate interests are the well-being of the Venezuelan people, it should lift the sanctions. "If we want to help Venezuela, we need to let the country buy and sell like anyone else."

The conversation about humanitarian aid and intervention came to a head when the aid organized by USAID and Guaidó arrived at the Colombia/Venezuela border. Photographs of the aid being rejected and of a truck on fire flooded the media. President Maduro said: "Humanitarian aid has been turned into a spectacle to justify a military intervention of our country." U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo posted a photo of a blocked road on Twitter and said: "The Venezuelan people desperately need humanitarian aid. The U.S. & other countries are trying to help, but Venezuela's military, under Maduro's orders, is blocking aid with trucks and shipping tankers." Opinions about this incident were loud and starkly opposed. A U.S. State Department video alleged that Maduro ordered the trucks of aid to be burned, but eventually the New York Times published video footage which confirmed that an opposition protester started this fire. Dujarric, of the UN, said: "When we see the present stand-off, it becomes even more clear that serious political negotiations between the parties are necessary to find a solution leading to lasting peace for the people of Venezuela."



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