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## Venezuela: Maduro consolidated control as State-enabled criminality rose, according to new EUAA COI report



The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has published an updated [Country Focus on Venezuela](#). The country continues to experience political tension and socio-economic crises due to ongoing hyperinflation, violent crime, repression, and humanitarian difficulties such as shortages of services and food, despite a recent mild economic recovery. The situation continues to spur emigration, with more than 7 million Venezuelans having left since February 2018.

Building on its 2020 report, the EUAA has published an updated [Country Focus: Venezuela](#). In recent years, President Nicolás Maduro has progressively consolidated power over the various levels of government. Political repression remains widespread, with political opponents being targeted for a wide range of abuses. The government and the political opposition signed a deal to hold Presidential elections in the second half of 2024.

Since 2020, authorities have moved toward **selective political repression** and the **targeting of certain profiles**, often with the collaboration of criminal and armed groups in an effort to avoid international scrutiny. Criminal activities such as robberies, kidnapping, and extortion have increased in recent years. **Several armed groups are present and operate in Venezuela**, including colectivos, sindicatos (criminal groups), megabandas (large gangs), drug cartels and Colombian armed groups; the latter sometimes operate with **the complicity of state security forces** and authorities.

Venezuela's border areas with Colombia continued to be characterised **by high levels of violence**, both by armed actors and the Venezuelan state security forces. Forced displacement, illegal detentions, imposed

social restrictions, extortion and extra-judicial killings have been reported in those areas.

## International protection situation for Venezuelan nationals

Between January and June 2023, **Venezuelans lodged 36 000 asylum applications** in the EU+ making them the third largest group applying for international protection, with the number of monthly applications rising from 4 800 in January to 7 000 in June. **Applications were up by 41 %** compared to the same period in 2022. This increase is part of a longer-term trend going back five years, that was interrupted only by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first half of 2023, **over 90 % of applications were lodged in Spain**, almost all being first-time applications.

The EU+ recognition rate for Venezuelan applicants for international protection in the EU+ stood at 2 % in the first half of 2023. However, it should be emphasised that Spain, which issued the vast majority of decisions, tends to grant a **national form of protection** accompanied by residence permits issued on humanitarian grounds; rather than international protection.

At the end of June 2023, there were **39 000 Venezuelan cases awaiting a first instance decision** across the EU+, a 12 % increase compared to the end of June 2022.

Download the Report: [Venezuela - Country Focus](#)

## Background

The EUAA regularly updates its [Country of Origin Information](#) reports, which aim to provide accurate and reliable up-to-date information on third countries to support EU+ national asylum and migration authorities involved in migration and international protection procedures.

**Any further information may be obtained from the European Union Agency for Asylum's Press Office at the following email addresses:**

- Press Office: [press@euaa.europa.eu](mailto:press@euaa.europa.eu)
- Andrew McKinlay, Press Officer: [andrew.mckinlay@euaa.europa.eu](mailto:andrew.mckinlay@euaa.europa.eu)
- Anis Cassar, Spokesperson: [anis.cassar@euaa.europa.eu](mailto:anis.cassar@euaa.europa.eu)