Venezuela Keeps Spot on Human Rights Council as UN Urges Nations to Take Its Refugees

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## As the United Nations urges nearby countries to take more responsibility for refugees from the famine-stricken socialist experiment in Venezuela, it is failing to put any significant pressure on President Nicolás Maduro’s government for its appalling human rights record—made worse by Venezuela’s continued presence on the U.N.’s Human Rights Council.

The U.N.’s refugee agency (UNHCR) announced Friday that the number of asylum applications from Venezuelans had “soared” with almost 50,000 applying for asylum in 2017, almost double the 27,000 that applied in the entirety of 2016.

The socialist dictatorship has been hit by mass starvation and countless stories of horrific human rights abuses. Millions [voted](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-40624313) in an unofficial referendum Sunday against Maduro’s plan to create a Constituent Assembly, which opponents say would be used to consolidate his power.

The main destination for asylum seekers was the United States, which has 18,300 asylum seekers, with Brazil, Peru, Spain, and Mexico among the other top destinations for those fleeing the socialist nation. UNHCR noted that that number only represents a “fraction” of those in need of protection, as many choose not to register as asylum seekers.

The body said that because of “bureaucratic obstacles, long waiting periods and high application fees,” many Venezuelans choose to leave through illegal means instead. It estimated that there could be 300,000 Venezuelans in Colombia alone who are in what the body called “an irregular situation.” It also warned about the risk those fleeing face in neighboring countries, particularly a high risk of exploitation.

The agency announced that it was upping its efforts to help states register more immigrants and formulate a response plan. It also urged neighboring countries “to protect the rights of Venezuelans, particularly the right to seek asylum and to have access to fair and effective asylum procedures.“

Yet while the refugee body has been putting pressure on neighboring countries to step up their game, Secretary-General António Guterres and agencies like the Human Rights Council have struggled to find their voice on the issue.

Venezuela sits on the Human Rights Council, as do other countries with poor human rights records such as Saudi Arabia and Cuba—something which U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley has repeatedly brought attention to, previously calling the Council a “haven of dictators.”

“It’s hard to accept that this Council has never considered a resolution on Venezuela, and yet it adopted five biased resolutions in March against a single country—Israel,” she [said](http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/06/06/haley-grills-u-n-human-rights-council-venezuela-chronic-anti-israel-bias/) in June. “It is essential that this Council address its chronic anti-Israel bias if it is to have any credibility.”

Guterres himself made a [statement](https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-07-14/statement-secretary-general-venezuela-scroll-down-spanish) Friday, expressing a “wish for peace and democracy in Venezuela.”

“A national dialogue is urgently needed in Venezuela between the Government and the opposition to achieve two major objectives: the eradication of violence, abuses and fanaticism; and the preservation of an agreed constitutional path,” he said.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights Prince Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein’s spokesperson made a slightly stronger [statement](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21874&LangID=E), saying the situation is “of deep concern” and urged “all in the country to use only peaceful means to make themselves heard.”

The statement also noted accounts that “some members of the Venezuelan security forces have used repressive tactics, intimidating and instilling fear, to try to deter people from demonstrating” and urged the government to end the practice of processing civilians through military tribunals and charging them with military crimes, a universally recognized human rights abuse.

The Human Rights Council has not given any indication it will seek to organize an emergency session to discuss the situation in Venezuela. Additionally, Zeid’s office’s statement sits in stark contrast to his fiery words against President Trump, whom he once [compared](http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/06/05/u-s-top-contributor-u-n-agency-headed-arab-prince-compared-trump-isis/) to ISIS.

Breitbart News asked Guterres’ spokesman Friday if the Secretary-General was concerned about the lack of action from the Human Rights Council on Venezuela. Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said that the Council was the “master of its own work.”

The lack of pointed statements or significant action to prevent the further deterioration of what was once Latin America’s wealthiest nation—while at the same time demanding neighboring countries be more open to refugees—highlights the U.N.’s long record of having a blind spot on a number of abuses by left-wing countries while inflating alleged abuses or concerns committed by America and Israel.