

6 AUGUST 2024

IMPACT OF THE ELECTIONS IN VENEZUELA ON REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

HIGHLIGHTS

Borders remain open from Venezuela to Brazil and to Colombia.

Suspension of diplomatic and consular relations between Venezuela and Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Peru, Panama, Dominican Republic and Uruguay.

Suspension of direct flights between Venezuela and the Dominican Republic, Panama and Peru.

OVERVIEW

Presidential elections were held in Venezuela on Sunday, 28 July 2024. Among the millions of Venezuelans abroad, some 69,211 were registered to vote.¹

Following the announcement of the results by Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE²), suggesting a 51% victory by incumbent Nicolás Maduro (as the candidate of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, PSUV), allegations of irregularities and fraud were raised by the opposition Unitary Platform (represented by Edmundo González Urrutia, who reportedly received 44% of the vote). Since Monday, 29 July, protests have been observed across Venezuela, some accompanied by violence, and according to the government, more than 2,000 arrests³ (including some leading political figures in Venezuela⁴) and at least 20 deaths.⁵

Amidst a tense discourse, including competing claims of victory and accusations between the ruling PSUV and the opposition Unitary Platform, a range of observers and international political actors have called for the publication of polling station results with a view to facilitating a peaceful resolution of the situation.⁶ On 1 August, the country's Supreme Court begun auditing the results of the elections.⁷

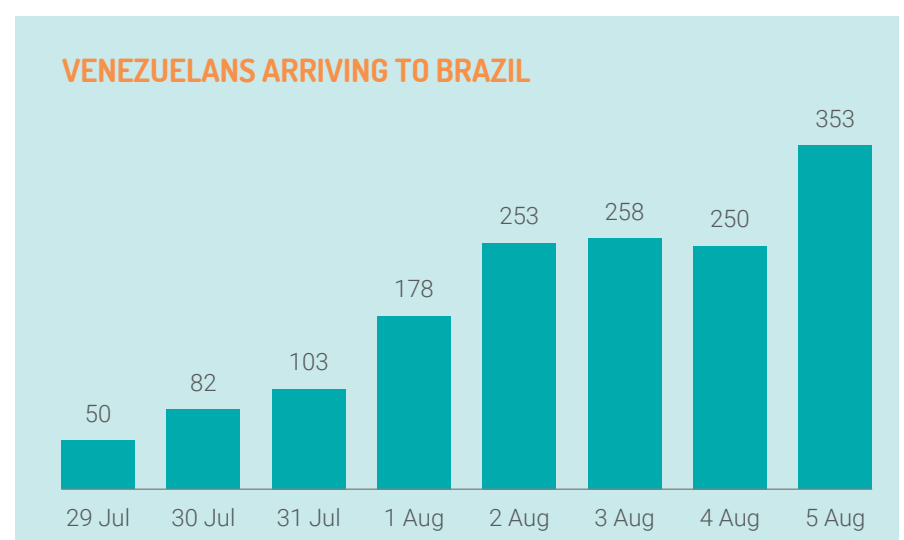
Following declarations by various regional governments on potential irregularities with the vote, diplomatic relations between Venezuela and Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Peru, Panama, Dominican Republic, and Uruguay were suspended, with respective diplomatic personnel leaving the countries, and embassies and consular representations closed. This was

followed by the suspension of direct flights between Venezuela and the Dominican Republic, Panama and with Peru.⁸

MOVEMENT TRENDS

While land borders between Venezuela and its neighbouring states were closed during the weekend of the elections, they regularly reopened on Monday morning (29 July), with irregular routes (*trochas*) having remained unimpeded throughout.

Since the reopening of land borders, movements of Venezuelans have remained at levels significantly below those observed in the first half of July. Along the border with **Brazil**, before the election period, daily arrivals of Venezuelans averaged at 350. On 5 August 2024, the Brazilian Federal Police reported the entry of 378 individuals (353 of them Venezuelans⁹). After several days of gradually increasing arrivals, movements appear to be stabilizing at pre-election levels.



[1] <https://www.infobae.com/venezuela/2024/07/23/millones-de-venezolanos-en-el-extranjero-no-podran-votar-en-las-elecciones-por-las-trabas-que-impuso-el-chavismo/>

[2] http://www.cne.gob.ve/web/estadisticas/index_resultados_elecciones.php (The website of the CNE has been offline since the day after the elections).

[3] <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/world-leaders-voice-concern-as-thousands-arrested-in-venezuela-after-disputed-election>

[4] <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuela-opposition-leader-freddy-superlano-has-been-detained-party-says-2024-07-30/>; https://www.dw.com/es/se-recrudece-la-ola-de-represi%C3%B3n-en-venezuela-contra-los-cr%C3%ADticos-de-maduro/a-69842017?_kx=IWLOBcXNMB790o-hjMC0yccBS4-wtZq5-19u-nViiZY.Rff57d

[5] <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuelans-call-release-relatives-arrested-election-protests-2024-08-02/> (2 August 2024).

[6] This includes (*inter alia*) the [Carter Centre](#), which had an election monitoring mission in Venezuela, the [United Nations Secretary-General](#), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), the [Organization of American States \(OAS\)](#), the [United States of America](#), and a [joint statement by Brazil, Colombia and Mexico](#).

[7] <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuela-court-asks-all-presidential-candidates-begin-vote-verification-process-2024-08-01/>

[8] https://x.com/inacvzla/status/1818109594591281373?s=12&t=ULaWCgEe4617gSYuMmvc_Q

[9] Other nationalities having arrived in Brazil over the past days included Argentinians, Brazilians, Chinese, Colombians, Mexicans, Peruvians, Portuguese, and Cubans.

According to the monitoring activities of an R4V partner, among the most recent arrivals, more than half intend to remain in Brazil, with some 44% looking to return in the foreseeable future. Their main reasons for them leaving Venezuela were concerns about post-election protests (31.4%), employment opportunities (25.7%) and fear of violence and security concerns (22.8%).¹⁰

Along the border with **Colombia**, movements observed by R4V partners and *Migración Colombia* remained at low levels. In view of the evolving situation in Venezuela, cases of persons in need of international protection have been identified and referred to the authorities and partners for assistance, while R4V partner observations indicate that some seven out of ten Venezuelans are presently leaving their country due to ongoing disturbances and a fear of a worsening of the situation.

The R4V Platform in **Ecuador** (GTRM) observed low levels of movements of refugees and migrants (lower than usually observed), with those who had intended to return to Venezuela adopting a “wait and see” position. In **Peru** and in **Chile**, the National R4V Platforms highlight that while no unusual population movements have been observed, that the governments have increased their border control measures,¹¹ in the case of Chile also deployed additional military presence along its northern border, in preparation for a possible “wave of Venezuelan migrants”.¹²

REGIONAL PREPAREDNESS

R4V Platforms across the region are closely monitoring the situation as well as any resulting movements of refugees and migrants from Venezuela. Anticipating possible developments in Venezuela and relating outflows, National R4V Platforms across the region are also providing technical support to local authorities in the development and updating of contingency plans, and information related to the response capacity of partners, especially in border areas of Brazil and Colombia.

Regularization activities led by the governments of Colombia, Ecuador and Uruguay are ongoing, supporting Venezuelans with opportunities to stabilize their situation and to integrate into their host communities.

PROTECTION CHALLENGES

The Regional Protection Sector in close collaboration with partners across the region has identified the following practical

consequences and impact resulting from the evolving situation in Venezuela, including the decision of the government of Venezuela to suspend diplomatic and consular relations with Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Peru, Panama, Costa Rica, and Dominican Republic.

- The interruption of consular services for Venezuelans in these countries limits their **capacity to obtain and renew personal documentation**. As documentation requirements cannot be met, this will impact:
 - **Ongoing and planned regularization and family reunification processes**
 - **Visa processing and access requirements**
- The resulting inability to access regular routes of entry and exit may require refugees and migrants to make **increased use of irregular crossings**, escalating linked protection risks such as smuggling and trafficking, abuse and exploitation, gender-based violence, as well as health risks.
- The suspension of direct flight connections between Venezuela and the Dominican Republic, with Panama and with Peru, coupled with the above interruption of consular services will impact **familiar reunification processes** due to flight suspensions and the inability to process corresponding visas and obtain required documentation.
- The increased presence of military forces at borders in Chile, Ecuador and Peru can serve to deter the increasing number of Venezuelans with international protection needs (incl. members of political parties, those involved in electoral activities, and other risk profiles) and vulnerable migrants from seeking protection, lead refugees and migrants to resort to irregular entries, and even lead to instances of *refoulement* or deportations.
- Due to uncertain outlook for Venezuelans in the region, **mental health concerns** and emotional support needs are expected to further aggravate the already widespread needs for psychosocial support. The situation not only affects Venezuelans’ emotional stability, but also intensifies psychological stress, increasing anxiety levels among the refugee and migrant communities.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

To mitigate prevailing protection challenges faces by Venezuelan refugees and migrants across the region, and to support their integration in host communities, the R4V Platform calls for host governments to either recognize or to extend the recognition of expired Venezuelan passports and ID documents, and to consider revising existing cut-off dates for national regularization programs.¹³

Considering the evolving situation in Venezuela, the R4V Platform urges countries presently considering returns of Venezuelan nationals to their home country to suspend these activities.

Considering the precarious state of financing of the R4V response (only 9% of the RMRP is funded), support from the international community is in dire need to support refugees and migrants from Venezuela across the region with urgent humanitarian aid, protection services and socio-economic integration opportunities.

[10] Considering the relatively small number of arrivals and therefore of individuals surveyed, these results may not be representative of the Venezuelan refugee and migrant population reaching Brazil following the elections.

[11] https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/per%C3%BA-refuerza-control-migratorio-para-evitar-otro-%C3%A9xodo-de-venezolanos/85477065?_kx=IWLOBcXNMb790o-hjMC0yccBS4-wtZq5-19u-nViiZY.Riff57d

[12] <https://www.emol.com/noticias/Nacional/2024/08/02/1138555/gobierno-evalua-establecer-cuotas-venezolanos.html>

[13] In the case of Colombia, the cut-off date of 20 May 2023; in Uruguay, the cut-off date of 29 May 2024; in Ecuador, the cut-off date is under consideration.