

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (CERD)

113th session (05-23 August 2024)

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Palais Wilson, Conference Hall, Ground Floor, Geneva

REF.: Venezuela: Contribution to the 113th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**Introduction**

1. This report is a preparation of the **Non-Governmental Organization Caleidoscopio Humano**, a non-profit organization that was founded in 2018, from the constant concern about the persecution and threats to activists, media outlets, journalists and vulnerable people such as women, girls and adolescents and people from the Afro-descendant, indigenous and LGBTIQ+ community; who are mostly made invisible, discriminated against and stigmatized in the midst of the human rights crisis and the Complex Humanitarian Emergency that has worsened in Venezuela.
2. The document presents an analysis collected from the monitoring of the media, contacts with victims and the collection of testimonies from primary and secondary sources made by the **NGO Caleidoscopio Humano**, from the period 2016 to the present year 2024, about the supervision of the application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by the Venezuelan State.
3. The Complex Humanitarian Emergency that the country is experiencing is clearly political in nature, due to factors such as corruption, erroneous political decision-making and institutional deterioration, resulting in the profound decline of the Venezuelan democratic system, which in turn has led to violations of the rights of the entire population, although with differentiated impacts for groups with greater vulnerabilities.

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

4. In the final recommendations that the Committee made to the Venezuelan State on the Convention, regarding reports 19 to 21 in its last evaluation in 2013, it is necessary to make the reality visible and how the observations have not been complied with, in order to prevent racial discrimination from continuing to violate the rights of certain population groups.
5. Although the State provided the Committee at the time with some results of the 14th Population and Housing Census, it expressed concern about the lack of recent statistical data on Venezuela. It is important to highlight that in the country the last national census published on the website of the National Institute of Statistics (INE) of Venezuela is from 2011. Thirteen years have

passed without official data on Venezuelan demographics, nor specific data on the country's Afro-descendant and indigenous population.

6. Likewise, within the observations, mention was made of the little information on the budget allocated to implement inclusion measures for indigenous and Afro-descendant people, in terms of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, therefore it is worth highlighting that:
7. Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in Venezuela face a series of challenges and conditions of exclusion that limit their access to basic rights, opportunities and full participation in society. These conditions are the result of interrelated historical, social, economic and political factors¹.
8. In Venezuela, indigenous and Afro-descendant communities are among the poorest groups. According to data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC), in 2017, the extreme poverty rate for the indigenous population was 71.8%, while for the Afro-descendant population it was 40.5%, significantly higher than the national average of 25.3%².
9. Indigenous communities have historically been dispossessed of their ancestral lands, which limits their access to means of production and economic opportunities, a fact that has been exacerbated by the mining processes carried out within the framework of the Orinoco Mining Arc on indigenous lands.
10. Afro-descendant communities have also faced discrimination in access to ownership and use of land. Venezuelan indigenous and Afro-descendant communities have less access to education and formal employment, which limits their opportunities to generate income and improve their quality of life.
11. On the other hand, regarding the National Budget Directed to Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, Venezuela's national budget for 2023 was BsD 170,703,832,051, or USD 9,765,665,449. The Venezuelan State does not publish the breakdown of this budget, however, the budget allocated to the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples for 2023 was BsD 34,666,000,000 or USD 1,983,180,778, that is, 20% of the total, destined to serve the more than two million indigenous people living in Venezuela³. In the case of the Afro-descendant population, it is noteworthy that there is no specific Ministry to address the differentiated needs of this population. It is important to highlight that the Committee's recommendations urged the State to ensure the due participation of indigenous and Afro-descendant people. However, indigenous and Afro-descendant communities have limited participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This is due to the lack of adequate representation at government levels and the difficulty in participating in political life due to factors such as discrimination and poverty.

¹ CEPAL.

https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/42716/7/S1800002_es.pdf

² ENCOVI

<https://www.proyectoencovi.com/>

³ Transparencia Venezuela.

<https://transparenciave.org/analisis-de-presupuesto-2023/>

12. Although the State provided information on indigenous and Afro-descendant populations, there is no specific data or indicators that provide a better perspective on the current situation experienced by people. In fact, an ethnic-racial self-recognition census carried out by the Venezuelan State in 2016 showed that only 8% of the Venezuelan population considers itself "black", 4% identify as indigenous, 21% as mulatto, 33% as mestizo and 32% as white⁴. When comparing these results with anthropological studies of Venezuelan society, it is clear that the social stereotype that insists on associating blackness with poverty or illiteracy permeates the self-perception of millions of people who, although afro-descendant, do not identify as such out of shame, fear or self-loathing.
13. The current government has not done enough to overcome these adversities because, although it is a left-wing government, it is a deeply conservative and Eurocentric left-wing one. This problem is worsened by the refusal of a good percentage of society to recognize the existence of racism.
14. Ultimately, the State must promote programs of integration and intercultural training, which deconstruct the established paradigms regarding black people and promote a more just and equitable society.
15. The State in its report stated the protection of the peoples of the Amazon region, however, from the moment that the national Executive promulgated the Mining Arc with the state of Bolívar as a fundamental part of its existence, the human rights of those who live in the areas of influence, such as Canaima, began to suffer consequences due to illegal mining. One of the cases is the Yanomami indigenous people in the south of the country. Since times not precisely determined, they have already practiced artisanal mining for subsistence purposes and Canaima is no exception⁵.
16. With the creation of the Mining Arc and the State taking over the country's gold mining areas, illegal armed groups also arrived. The immediate consequence was the precariousness of indigenous people's lives, forced displacement and the rise of violations of other human rights.
17. For its part, child malnutrition is not foreign to this population; on the contrary, they experience the consequences of the Complex Humanitarian Emergency in the country more deeply, a situation that was evidenced by the Kapé Kapé organization, which documented that, by 2021, 56% of indigenous households in Venezuela had severe food insecurity, and 37% moderate food insecurity.
18. In this sense, the precarious conditions have pushed entire indigenous families to migrate to other places in order to survive, many of them subjected to violence and cruel and inhuman treatment in the new host sites.
19. Indigenous children have been impacted differently in the midst of the generalized crisis that Venezuela is experiencing, but what is most worrying is

⁴ Caleidoscopio Humano.

<https://caleidohumano.org/mas-alla-del-color-desafios-del-racismo-estructural-en-venezuela/>

⁵ Kape Kape.

https://kape-kape.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/INFORME-2-DE-VIOLACION-DE-DERECHOS-HUMANOS-EN-COMUNIDADES-INDIGENAS-2021-II-PERIODO_opt.pdf

that there is not the slightest political will to reverse the damage that not only leaves this part of the population behind, but also the historical legacy of an entire nation.

20. Although the State indicated in paragraph 30 of its report that the National Executive presented the second Economic and Social Development Plan of the Nation 2013-2019, which was approved as a Law by the National Assembly, including among its goals to improve the habitat and infrastructure for indigenous peoples, accelerate territorial demarcation through the delivery of property titles to communities; the situation is different.
21. For starters, the Yukpa community has been the victim of forced evictions from its ancestral lands by landowners, mining companies and the State itself. These evictions have been carried out without the prior, free and informed consent of the community, and in some cases have been accompanied by violence⁶. The Yukpas have difficulty accessing the land and natural resources they need for their subsistence, due to the expansion of the agricultural, livestock and mining frontier, and the lack of title to their lands. In addition to this reality, there is a perpetually tense situation on the border between Colombia and Venezuela, which results in the presence of irregular groups, which usurp the Yukpa communities, ancestral owners of these lands.
22. The State reported progress against structural discrimination, including the recognition of the right of older men and women belonging to indigenous peoples to enjoy a retirement pension or financial assistance from a perspective of the life expectancy and particularities of each indigenous people.
23. On the contrary, the reality is different for this population. According to the Convite Organization, approximately 3.8 million older adults in Venezuela are at risk. They claim that the country is not prepared for the aging of the population and that the lack of care programs has left this generation in a vulnerable situation.
24. The Organization added that this situation is aggravated for those older adults who live alone due to the diaspora. According to the Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants of Venezuela (R4V), there are approximately 7.3 million Venezuelans who emigrated from the country. The situation is even worse for the indigenous older adult population, who, due to the distance from large urban centers and the structural difficulties established by the Venezuelan State, see their right to a decent pension decimated.
25. Regarding women, the State reported that it adopted the Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence and the creation of bodies such as the Coordination of Afro-descendant Women and the Coordination of Indigenous Women. However, according to the Kapé Kapé organization, indigenous women have been forced to emigrate and are especially vulnerable to human trafficking networks, sexual exploitation, prostitution or sexual abuse⁷.

⁶ Rutas del Conflicto

<https://rutasdelconflicto.com/notas/el-pueblo-yukpa-sigue-peligro-respuestas>

⁷ Kapé Kapé

26. Between January and June 2018, 14 femicides of indigenous women were recorded and 15 were victims of sexual abuse. The economic crisis and the poor functioning of public services have pushed them to look for work in the mines or to accept offers of domestic work that are misleading, since when they arrive at these places they are victims of sexual abuse or are sold for grams of gold. **Caleidoscopio Humano** has documented situations of trafficking of indigenous women at the south of the Orinoco, who are sold as a target, for prices that vary according to their age and the extraction zone to which they will be transferred⁸.

<https://kape-kape.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/INFORME-ANUAL-DE-LOS-DERECHOS-DE-LOS-PUEBLOS-INDIGENAS-EN-VENEZUELA-RESUMEN-EJECUTIVO.pdf>

⁸ Caleidoscopio Humano.

<https://caleidohumano.org/venezuela-nuestros-pueblos-originarios-y-su-derecho-a-existir-ante-un-viejo-y-nuevo-enemigo/>