



**Venezuela**

2019 Security Welcome Brief  
Civil Unrest Situation

**A. In-country Situation:** Large-scale demonstrations have been carried out throughout Venezuela since January 23, between the opposition and government forces. The entry and distribution of the international humanitarian aid have generated high level of media exposure in which Venezuelan RC has been involved. Therefore, it has been required to mobilize a multidisciplinary team to accompany the branches and to protect any reputational risk, both operational and communicational procedures that may generate any damage to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement credibility in the country.

Based on this scenario, this document is designed to provide General Security Guidelines for any person (RC/RC Personnel) on mission. Although Caracas is a potentially dangerous city, the risks can be reduced if these simple rules and common sense are applied.

The current IFRC Security Phase in Venezuela is **ORANGE**

The IFRC four colour phases system to identify a Security information		
<b>White Warning</b>	The situation is normal	There are not relevant considerations of security awareness
<b>Yellow Warning</b>	Stress situation has been started	There are some considerations raising security awareness
<b>Orange Warning</b>	Emergency situation	Severe risk. Limited access to beneficiaries for the staff of RC/ RC. It is necessary to do security management.
<b>Red Warning</b>	Relocation or Hibernation.	Is not possible to work. There is an extreme risk for RC / RC staff.

**All incidents**, no matter how small, **must be reported to Acting Head of Country Office** Marissa Soberanis - Tel: ( +58 424 229 47 69) Email: [Marissa.soberanis@ifrc.org](mailto:Marissa.soberanis@ifrc.org), by the quickest means possible as soon as it is safe to do so. Incidents will then be written (via SIR) and reported (verbally and in writing) up the security chain. In country Security Officer Andrés Echeverria (+58 0424 152 9501) Email: [rit16@ifrc.org](mailto:rit16@ifrc.org).

## **B. Population**

Venezuela – or to give it its official title, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has an estimated population of 32.78 million (2019).

## **C. Religion**

Venezuela is a predominantly Catholic nation. According to a 2017 survey (GIS XXI), 88% of the population is Christian, mainly Catholic (71%), and the remaining 17% Protestant. Venezuelans without religion are 4 % (2 % atheistic and 2 %, agnostic or indifferent), almost 8 % of the population follow another religion.

**D. Visitor Information:** Visits to Venezuela are strictly for work purposes. It must be coordinated with the focal point of the Technical Office and approved by the Head of Office and the Regional Security Advisor. Each member who is deployed on mission must have the security induction prior to arrival to the country of origin.

**F. IFRC Presence:** In 2018 the IFRC established a technical office with the aim to support the implementation of the Operational Plan. To date, the country office has 2 international Delegates (Programmes and Health Delegates), and more than twenty national staff who work in close coordination with the Venezuelan Red Cross.

All the Technical support services are provided in close coordination with the Americas Regional Office. In addition, to support the capacity building for the possible distribution of humanitarian aid, regional surge experts in operations, psychosocial support, security, communications and logistic have been deployed since mid-February 2019.

**G. General Crime and Security Situation:** Protection and security concerns are emerging as increases in generalized violence and civil unrest, have made it one of the most dangerous countries in the world.

Venezuelans are increasingly leaving the country due to general insecurity and limited economic opportunities.

The most common crimes in Venezuela are:

- Armed robberies
- Internal theft of vehicles or vehicle parts
- Kidnappings
- Express kidnapping
- House burglary
- Assassination
- Intimidation and/or extortion

**C. Cash and Bank Transactions:** Bolívar Soberano is the official currency. Exchange is very dynamic because of inflation, so prior to your arrival in Venezuela, the currency exchange will be coordinated through the Project Manager Delegate, who will advise the best way to make local transactions.

In Venezuela, cash should not be changed. If for some reason you must do it, make sure you change the money in an authorized banking facility and that you transport it in a safe place (do not flash the money and try to spread your money in different pockets or bags).

It is **forbidden** to change on the street or at the airport.

**D. Air and local transportation:** Simón Bolívar International Airport is located in Maiquetía, about 21 kilometres from Caracas. Simply called Maiquetía by the locals, it is the main air gateway to Venezuela. It handles limited flights to destinations in the Americas, the Caribbean and some to Europe.

Given the current situation, specific airlines have been identified for travel to Venezuela. Prior to your mission it is a must to coordinate with the Project Manager Delegate and the Regional Security Advisor to find the best option. During your mission, (long or short stay) you must have a open return (flexible) ticket.

The IFRC will provide use a vehicle to the National Society for the use of all personnel in Venezuela. The NS will provide the driver for all movements and will be available based on the needs of the mission. Likewise, our staff is authorized to travel (if necessary) in ICRC vehicles with all their emblems and / or with Diplomatic Plaque / International Mission (to include UN vehicles).

Authorized times to travel and work in Venezuela are from **0600hrs to 1800hrs**. All personnel must to coordinate their arrival at the airport or local transportation during this timeframe.

There are several police forces and their checkpoints on the routes. When you see them, stop and always have (at least a copy of) your passport and current documentation.

All security incidents or threats will be reported to the Metropolitan Police, the Municipal Police or to the nearest Bolivarian National Guard (Guardia Nacional Bolivariana - GNB) Post.

There is Traffic Police in Venezuela. You will be able to recognize them because they wear different uniforms. Keep in mind that complaints of minor theft, or on public roads, will not necessarily lead to an effective investigation, arrest or recovery of property: for this reason, it is recommended that all personnel on mission in Venezuela have their belongings properly insured and secured.

Street robberies and robberies in public transportation are common. Extreme caution is advised (including transporting or using electronic devices such as laptops or telephones in cars). Stay within the principal areas of the cities and avoid any outlying areas and / or unknown areas. Do not use electronic devices or computers in public spaces.

The border with Colombia is not safe, so avoid unauthorized missions, tours or excursions through the states of Amazonas, Apure, Barinas, Bolívar, Táchira and Zulia.

**IMPORTANT:** The use of public transportation and taxis is strictly forbidden, and as a visitor you are not allowed to drive in Venezuela. **Ignorance or direct non-compliance with these regulations, will mean a serious breach to the Security Regulations, and your mission will end immediately.**

**E. Health:** In recent years, there has been a serious shortage of supplies and vaccines, and the current crisis has led to further shortage of medicines and food, which has implications for the country's well-being.

All IFRC personnel mobilized to the country, must bring their own supply of medications should they be in medical treatment or require such medication.

Before your arrival to Venezuela, you must have your vaccinations up to date. Follow the IFRC mandatory for delegates and staff vaccines: **Hepatitis A & B, Anti-Rabies, Typhoid Fever, Seasonal Influenza, Influenza A H1N1, Diphtheria and Yellow Fever**

**F. Medical Assistance/Issues:** If you need a doctor, the primary hospital is:

Clinica el Ávila (near ICRC office, and located in a safe area)

**Address:** Av. San Juan Bosco, con 6ta. Transversal, Edificio Clínica El Ávila, P.B., Urb. Altamira, Caracas, Venezuela

<https://www.clinicaelavila.com/contactos.php>

**Telephone:** +58 212 276 11 11 / 10 52

- In case of severe and rapid beginning illness contact the Country Representative.
- In case of medical evacuation needed, the Acting Head of Office will contact the Health Delegate in Geneva and Security Regional Coordinator, to facilitate Emergency Medical Evacuation according to IFRC MEDEVAC Procedures in Venezuela.

If ambulance is needed, use Venezuelan Red Cross ambulances. Identify yourself as Red Cross Delegate through the following numbers:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Contact: VRC EOC +58 212 578 25 16
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Contact: Venezuela Acting Head of Country, (+58) 424 229 47 60
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Contact: Secretary General Mario Santimoni Baquero; Mobile (+58) 414 320 43 47

**G. Hotel Security:** The Acting Head of Country coordinate your stay in a safety hotel, prior your arrival.

Take some preventive measures to avoid unpleasant experiences, even in the best of hotels.

- Never give your room number to “strangers”.
- Never invite anyone to your room.
- Never leave valuables lying around in your room while you go out, even for the shortest moments (Lap-top, Mobile phone etc.)
- Never leave a bag or valuables unattended in conference/meeting room, restaurant, swimming pool area, cars, etc.
- Avoid staying in hotels where “dignitaries” stay, since they attract all kinds of attention (paparazzi, demonstrations, bomb threats, etc.).

- Always use safety lock on the door, even during day-time.
- Always use room-safe for valuables, or use lockable storage for valuables at the front desk, but make sure they issue a receipt for your items. If this facility is not available, then carry the valuables with you in a bag, preferably locked away in the booth of a car.

#### **H. Some additional security and protection measures in Venezuela:**

- Do not show valuable objects in the open (if they are not for work purposes, do not bring them to the country). These can be, but are not limited to cameras, jewellery, money, laptops, telephones, etc.
- During your stay, keep photocopies of all your documentation, including passport, visa, entry stamps and air tickets in a safe place. It is advisable to always have copies on hand and/or have scanned all your documents in an email, especially during a mission.
- Do not talk with strangers and avoid accepting papers and objects from them. A very common modus operandi for theft is through scopolamine (burundanga), a psychotic contact drug that inhibits the will and leaves no visible trace or memory of what happened.
- It is forbidden to walk at night through deserted or poorly illuminated streets.
- If you find yourself in a robbery situation, do not try to resist and simply hand over what you have, the obedience with the perpetrator is strongly recommended. It is likely that they will hurt you if you resist.
- Do not walk outside, if you are talking on your mobile phone.
- If you are traveling by car, close the doors and wind the windows up. Also, do not leave objects or documents in sight when parking. **Do not travel at night.**
- Inform immediately any security incident or accident. Always remember to conduct yourself following the guidelines of the Security Regulations, the Code of Conduct and your professional and security training. Your safety and the safety of the people who are with you are always a concern. Stay Safe!
- Remember that any safety incident should be reported immediately to the Representative in Venezuela, the security officer and the Regional Security Coordinator. This report must be written in the SIR format within 24 hours.
- Hotels and Residences - Remember the rule from second (2nd) to seventh (7th) floor only. Rooms near the emergency stairs, but not at the corners / sides.
- Only hotels and residences previously authorized by security will be used.
- All your meetings must be held **IN PRIVATE PLACES** - If you do not want it to be known .... Do not speak in public spaces. Internet, telephone (including WhatsApp and Messenger), hotel lobbies and other public spaces are monitored by security services.
- Remember that every Venezuelan person, **ALWAYS** wants to know What are the International Organization's public opinions and thoughts, and they will **ALWAYS** ask. In Venezuela talking about

your political and social opinions can get you in trouble. Therefore, in public, whether in the lobby, restaurant or any other public place..... No comments to anyone!

ALL internal mission will be taken place with an approved mission / movement order and with primary and secondary means of communication.

AL missions will be deployed with a security plans that will have as a minimum:

1. Context.
2. Mission Order and Objectives
3. Communications – Primary and Alternate.
4. Routes – Primary and Alternate.
5. Office and Lodging locations and route.
6. Vehicle Information.
7. Redeployment Measures / Plan.

Daily communications and status will be kept with the senior delegate in Venezuela.

## **I. PRIMARY CONTACTS:**

### **IFRC in Venezuela**

IFRC Acting Head of Office: Marissa Soberanis

Telephone: (+58) 212 571 51 09 y 579 15 13, Mobile (+58) 424 229 47 60

IFRC in Country Security Officer: Andrés Echeverría

Telephone (+58) 0424 152 9501

### **IFRC Delegation Driver's**

**Wilmer Coronado:** (+58) 416 2120133

**José Palacios:** (+58) 424 1697942

### **IFRC Vehicle Plates**

**Toyota Fortuner: AM064SA**

**Toyota Hilux: A36ET4A**

### **Venezuelan Red Cross**

Venezuelan Red Cross Emergency Centre (EOC): (+58) 212 578 25 16 y 212 578 09 97

### **ICRC Mission**

Security focal point: Tel. Office (+58) 212 265 77 40, Mobile: (+58) 424 189 53 16 **Stay Safe!**

### **Head of Country**

IFRC Acting Head of Office: Marissa Soberanis




Telephone: (+58) 212 571 51 09 y 579 15 13, Mobile (+58) 424 229 47 60

### **Regional Security Coordinator**

Jorge Zequeira. Tel: +507 6674 1584 / +507 6949 5546

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## Annexes

Documents
<p><b>SECURITY INCIDENT REPORT</b></p>  <p>Security%20Incident %20Report%20Formæ</p>
<p><b>SECURITY TRAVEL CHECKLIST</b></p>  <p>Travel security checklist 2018 SUGVA</p>
<p><b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b></p>  <p>ACKNOWLEDGEMEN T%20-%20Security.dc</p>

**Stay Safe!**