

CRISIS IN CARACAS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - South America

The political crisis in Venezuela took a dangerous turn when [Juan Guaidó, the new head of the National Assembly](#), declared himself “acting President”, challenging the authority of President Nicolás Maduro. Soon after Mr. Guaidó’s announcement, the U.S., Canada, Brazil and a host of other Latin American countries recognised the 35-year-old leader from the Popular Will party as interim President. A furious Mr. Maduro cut diplomatic ties with the U.S. and ordered American diplomats to leave in 72 hours. Venezuela has grappled with an economic and political crisis of its own making for almost two years now. When oil prices started falling from its 2014 highs, it badly hit an economy that was over-reliant on petroleum exports and was borrowing heavily to fund its over-spending on social welfare programmes, which former President Hugo Chávez liked to describe as a “Bolivarian revolution”. Mr. Maduro’s government was clueless when the economy started collapsing. At least 90% of the people now live below the poverty line, inflation is forecast to touch 10 million per cent this year, food and medicine shortages are widespread, and the economic woes have triggered a massive migrant crisis — nearly three million are estimated to have fled the country in recent years.

A failed coup in Venezuela

The opposition, whose attempts to overthrow the Socialists, including the 2002 coup against Chávez, had failed in the past, launched protests against Mr. Maduro. The government used brute force to suppress them, while the economic situation deteriorated. This left Venezuela in a constant state of economic hardships and violent street protests over the past two years. The main opposition boycotted last year’s presidential election, which Mr. Maduro won with 67.8% vote. Mr. Guaidó’s claim is that the election was not free and fair and therefore Mr. Maduro is not the legitimate President — a claim that the U.S. and its allies back. While Mr. Maduro shares a lot of the blame for the mismanagement of the economy, forcibly removing him from power with support from foreign nations may destabilise the country further, even leaving aside the legality of such a move. Mr. Guaidó may have hoped that by anointing himself a rebel President with backing from the U.S., he could win the support of sections of the armed forces, without which he cannot unseat Mr. Maduro. But that plan appears to have failed with the military declaring its loyalty to President Maduro. To be sure, the people of Venezuela deserve a better deal from a government that has led them to untold suffering and forced millions to flee the country. Destabilisation by interfering in the political process is not the solution, however. What is required is a coordinated international effort to restore some degree of economic and political normalcy. In the long run, it is up to the people of Venezuela to decide their own political destiny.

The Meghalaya government must urgently ensure that all illegal mines are shut down

END

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](#)

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com