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USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2020 - Chapter 1 - Venezuela

Overview: Venezuela remained a permissive environment for known terrorist groups, including dissidents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Colombian-origin ELN, and Hizballah sympathizers.

In 2020, Interim President Guaidó and the National Assembly condemned the regime’s complicity with the ELN and FARC dissidents. In November the National Assembly passed a resolution declaring the regime’s Special Action Force a terrorist organization for its role in extrajudicial killings inside Venezuela. The democratic opposition has warned that the regime lost control of Venezuela’s borders and territory and was at risk of turning Venezuela into a “failed state.” Some members of the illegitimate Maduro regime and armed forces maintained financial ties with FARC dissidents, ELN, and Venezuelan paramilitary groups. Analysts warned of increasing border clashes between these groups over illicit trade and for territorial control, particularly on Venezuela’s border with Colombia. The ELN continued to expand its presence beyond its historic base in the border zone with Colombia and to consolidate its social control where its presence is strongest. According to local and international media, ELN was present in 12 of Venezuela’s 23 states (with particular strength in Amazonas, Anzoátegui, Apure, Bolívar, Táchira, and Zulia states). Media reported an increasing role for the ELN in state-subsidized food distribution, contraband (gas, basic goods, meat), extortion, illegal mining, and recruitment propaganda, at times through control of radio stations.

2020 Terrorist Incidents: Maduro and his associates’ complicated relationship with terrorist groups was characterized by both conflict and cooperation. Given increasingly scarce resources, there was greater confrontation among ELN, FARC dissidents, and regime-controlled government forces. In September the press reported that 19 persons died in a shootout between the Venezuelan Armed Forces and the FARC dissident Frente 10 group in Apure state, although Maduro’s associates have refused to publicly acknowledge such skirmishes, preferring to blame generic criminal elements rather than the FARC dissidents.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: There were no changes to Venezuela’s counterterrorism legislation in 2020.

The illegitimate Maduro regime controlled the judiciary and used terrorism charges to suppress dissent and oppress the political opposition and civil society. In 2020, Interim President Guaidó’s uncle, Interim Government commissioners, and multiple National Assembly deputies aligned with the opposition were accused of terrorism without evidence. In June the regime initiated legal action to declare the Popular Will political party — one of four major opposition parties in Venezuela and Interim President Guaidó’s former party — a terrorist organization. NGOs and union leaders have also been falsely accused without evidence. In inventing these “terrorist plots,” the regime blamed the United States and Colombia, without merit.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Venezuela is a member of the CFATF, a FATF-style regional body. Venezuela’s National Financial Intelligence Unit is a member of the Egmont Group. There were no significant terrorism finance developments in 2020.

Countering Violent Extremism: There were no CVE efforts underway in 2020.

International and Regional Cooperation: Venezuela is a member of OAS-CICTE. The Interim Government worked with regional partners to implement the Interamerican Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (also known as the Rio Treaty), invoked in 2019, to address the Maduro regime’s illegal activities, relating to terrorism and its financing. Interim President Guaidó participated in the January Western Hemisphere Counterterrorism Ministerial, hosted by Colombia, and pledged to work closely with Colombian President Duque on the regional threat posed by ELN, FARC dissidents, and other nonstate armed actors in Venezuela. During the ministerial, President Duque declared Hizballah a terrorist organization, which the Interim Government supported.

ecoi.net summary:

Annual report on terrorism
(covering 2020)

Country:

Venezuela

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