



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	Venezuela
Title	Treatment of returnees
Reference period	January 2026 to 15 May 2026
Topic(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Background information (including return trends)2. Treatment of returnees by state authorities3. Access to documentation, housing and property rights4. Societal attitudes towards returnees
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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Venezuela

Treatment of returnees

1. Background information (including return trends)

1.1. Background information

Sources indicate that around eight million Venezuelans¹ have fled the country since President Maduro took power in 2013, as the country experienced ‘economic mayhem, hyperinflation, hunger and increasingly authoritarian rule’.² According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), ‘this is the largest exodus in Latin America’s recent history and one of the largest displacement crises in the world.’³ Main destination countries for Venezuelans include the United States of America (USA), Colombia, Peru, and Chile,⁴ while in the EU+ countries, Venezuelans submitted 91 000 asylum applications in 2025, a 23 % increase from 2024, a majority of those in Spain.⁵

In 2025, large-scale displacement continued in Venezuela.⁶ Several changes affecting Venezuelans living abroad occurred: in Colombia, multiple programs assisting Venezuelans were discontinued.⁷ In December 2025, Panama initiated its first flight returning Venezuelans under its voluntary return scheme.⁸ The president of Chile announced plans to create a ‘humanitarian corridor’ to facilitate returns of Venezuelans residing in the country.⁹ The previous United States policy of not accepting deported Venezuelans back into the country was reversed in early 2025 after which regular return flights started arriving in Caracas.¹⁰ In November 2025, US authorities terminated the temporary protection status for Venezuelans, affecting some 400 000 people.¹¹ Around 17 000 Venezuelans were deported to their country of origin in 2025.¹²

¹ Belgium, CGRS-CEDOCA, Venezuela: Situatieschets, 25 February 2026, [url](#), p. 5; El Pais, The faces of Venezuelan exile: ‘The hope of returning is always there. Now it’s a little closer’, 17 January 2026, [url](#); Guardian (The), ‘Follow the path of exiles’: María Corina Machado’s US-aided escape from Venezuela, 11 December 2025, [url](#); Reuters, Exclusive: IMF ready to aid Venezuela when shareholders give OK, Georgieva says, 15 January 2026, [url](#)

² Guardian (The), ‘Follow the path of exiles’: María Corina Machado’s US-aided escape from Venezuela, 11 December 2025, [url](#)

³ UNHCR, Venezuela Humanitarian Crisis, n.d. [December 2025] [url](#),

⁴ MMC, Venezuelans in the Americas face uncertainty in light of political changes at home and in exile, 17 March 2026, [url](#)

⁵ EUAA, Latest Asylum Trends 2025, Annual Analysis, March 2026, [url](#), p. 15

⁶ EUAA, Latest Asylum Trends 2025, Annual Analysis, March 2026, [url](#), p. 15

⁷ EUAA, Latest Asylum Trends 2025, Annual Analysis, March 2026, [url](#), p. 15

⁸ MMC, Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Latin America and the Caribbean, January – march 2026, Quarter 1, 2026, [2026], [url](#), p. 19

⁹ MMC, Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Latin America and the Caribbean, January – march 2026, Quarter 1, 2026, [2026], pp. 3, 9

¹⁰ NBC News, Migrants returning to Venezuela face debt and harsh living conditions, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

¹¹ Herman Legal Group, End of TPS for Venezuelans and Potential Mass Departures — What It Means for U.S. Immigration Policy, 2025, [url](#)

¹² Belgium, CGRS-CEDOCA, Venezuela: Situatieschets, 25 February 2026, [url](#), p. 5



Following the capture of President Nicolás Maduro by the United States government in January 2026,¹³ Vice President Delcy Rodríguez was sworn in and expressed her willingness ‘to collaborate’ with the current United States administration.¹⁴ Sources indicate that no significant political changes have taken place since the removal of Maduro.¹⁵ In a report released in March 2026, the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela stated that ‘Venezuela’s repressive State machinery, built up over many years, remains operational following the abrupt apprehension of former President Nicolás Maduro by United States forces on 3 January,’ and ‘the structures that have sustained persecution for years have not been dismantled, nor have State policies been announced to begin that process.’¹⁶ According to Freedom House, Venezuela still struggles ‘with a legacy of severe human rights abuses, corrupt power structures, and an interim regime drawn from the vestiges of the previous administration.’¹⁷ The United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) remains the ruling party, and while some ministerial positions have been reassigned, other figures from the Maduro regime remained in power, and 23 of 24 states are governed by a PSUV governor.¹⁸ In the field of economy, some policies aimed at de-nationalisation and privatization have already taken place.¹⁹

Concerning the returns to Venezuela and the situation of returnees, in 2018, the Venezuelan government initiated the program titled La Gran Misión Vuelta a la Patria (the Great Mission Return to the Homeland, GMVP)²⁰ with the aim of providing direct support to migrants who express their desire to return to Venezuela²¹ and as a ‘scheme to ensure migrants’ safe and dignified return’.²² According to a news article by Efe, citing the Minister of Communication, the program, which facilitates and manages the return of Venezuelans, remains active as a direct response to the needs of those who, after facing situations of xenophobia and vulnerability abroad, decide to return to their homeland.²³ The news source, InfoBae, affirmed in a February 2026 article that the repatriation program was implemented in response to the surge in Venezuelan migration over the past decade, driven by the economic crisis, political

¹³ CNN, Capturing a president: CNN analysis reveals extraordinary risks taken to seize Maduro, 23 January 2026, [url](#)

¹⁴ AP News, Delcy Rodríguez becomes Venezuela’s interim president after Maduro’s ouster, 5 January 2026, [url](#)

¹⁵ Al Jazeera, Exiled Venezuelans dream of returning home. What’s stopping them?, 4 February 2026, [url](#); Belgium, CGRS-CEDOCA, Venezuela: Situatieschets, 25 February 2026, [url](#), p. 4; The Conversation, How Venezuela has – and hasn’t – changed since Maduro’s capture, 8 May 2026, [url](#); Freedom House, Beyond Maduro: Building a Sustainable Democratic Transition in Venezuela, 23 April 2026, [url](#); UN OHCHR, Venezuela: Uncertainty in Venezuela must give way to meaningful human rights change, UN Fact-Finding Mission says, 12 March 2026, [url](#)

¹⁶ UN OHCHR, Venezuela: Uncertainty in Venezuela must give way to meaningful human rights change, UN Fact-Finding Mission says, 12 March 2026, [url](#)

¹⁷ Freedom House, Beyond Maduro: Building a Sustainable Democratic Transition in Venezuela, 23 April 2026, [url](#)

¹⁸ The Conversation, How Venezuela has – and hasn’t – changed since Maduro’s capture, 8 May 2026, [url](#)

¹⁹ The Conversation, How Venezuela has – and hasn’t – changed since Maduro’s capture, 8 May 2026, [url](#)

²⁰ Telesur, Return to the Homeland: At least 273 migrants return to Venezuela from the U.S., 28 January 2026, [url](#); Xinhua, 311 Venezuelan migrants repatriated from Mexico as part of Return to Homeland Plan, 21 March 2025, [url](#)

²¹ Telesur, Venezuela: 328 migrantes retornaron al país como parte del Plan Vuelta a la Patria, 17 April 2026, [url](#)

²² Xinhua, 311 Venezuelan migrants repatriated from Mexico as part of Return to Homeland Plan, 21 March 2025, [url](#)

²³ Efe, Más de 5.000 venezolanos volvieron a su país en cien días del Gobierno de Delcy Rodríguez, 17 April 2026, [url](#)



instability, and deteriorating living conditions in the country.²⁴ Telesur added that ‘the initiative facilitates the voluntary return of Venezuelans who are abroad, particularly those in situations of vulnerability or immigration detention’ and citing officials of the government, added that ‘inter-institutional coordination remains in place to ensure that each reception is carried out under humanitarian and social protection protocols’.²⁵ Estimates of the number of Venezuelans who had returned to the country since 2018 varied by source, ranging from 1 million²⁶ to 1.6 million.²⁷

1.2. Return trends

In March 2025, Venezuela and the US reached an agreement to resume repatriation flights for Venezuelan nationals deported from the US.²⁸ During the first 100 days of Delcy Rodríguez's government, more than 5 000 Venezuelan migrants returned to their country.²⁹ In 2025, US government continued deporting Venezuelans to their country of origin, sending there over 6 800 people between February and July; some Venezuelans were also deported to El Salvador, including people accused of gang criminality.³⁰ The return flights from the US to Venezuela continued to be reported in January 2026.³¹ By February 2026, 20 200 Venezuelans had been repatriated under this agreement since the resumption of the repatriation flights.³² Those who had left had faced legal and administrative difficulties abroad, and they included people who lost immigration protection in the United States. Moreover, according to the same source, many Venezuelan migrants opted to return home due to the impossibility of regularising their status and the uncertainty surrounding their continued stay, whilst some expressed their desire to reunite with family and seek new opportunities after months or years away from the country.³³

A study by Georgetown University published in February 2026 found that the ‘Venezuelans continue to leave at much higher rates than they return,’ and noted that ‘the potential for return in the aftermath of President Nicolás Maduro’s capture remains highly uncertain.’³⁵ Similarly, a spokesperson for the UNHCR stated that ‘there had not been any quantifiable spike in people returning to Venezuela.’³⁴

²⁴ Info Bae, Más de 20.000 venezolanos regresaron a su país en vuelos de repatriación durante el último año, 4 February 2026, [url](#)

²⁵ Telesur, Venezuela Repatriates 151 Nationals Under State Return Program, 21 April 2026, [url](#)

²⁶ Xinhua, 311 Venezuelan migrants repatriated from Mexico as part of Return to Homeland Plan, 21 March 2025, [url](#)

²⁷ Telesur, Return to the Homeland: At least 273 migrants return to Venezuela from the U.S., 28 January 2026, [url](#)

²⁸ Reuters, Venezuela, US agree to resume flights of deported migrants, 13 March 2025, [url](#); AP News, Venezuela to resume repatriation of migrants after deal with US, official says, 22 March 2025, [url](#)

²⁹ Efe, Más de 5.000 venezolanos volvieron a su país en cien días del Gobierno de Delcy Rodríguez, 17 April 2026, [url](#)

³⁰ HRW, World Report 2026; Venezuela, 4 February 2026, [url](#)

³¹ Venezuela, Gran Misión Vuelta a la Patria, Arriban a Venezuela 199 repatriados desde EE.UU. en vuelo 99 de Vuelta a la Patria, 16 January 2026, [url](#); Venezuela, Gran Misión Vuelta a la Patria, Gran Misión Vuelta a la Patria retorna nuevo grupo de 273 venezolanos desde EE.UU., 29 January 2026, [url](#)

³² Info Bae, Más de 20.000 venezolanos regresaron a su país en vuelos de repatriación durante el último año, 4 February 2026, [url](#)

³³ Info Bae, Más de 20.000 venezolanos regresaron a su país en vuelos de repatriación durante el último año, 4 February 2026, [url](#)

³⁴ New York Times (The), Trump Celebrated Victory in Venezuela. Will That Bring Its People Back?, 10 May 2026, [url](#)



Following the Maduro's capture, the question of return of Venezuelans living abroad remains unclear.³⁵ As Belgian CEDOCA has put it: 'the Venezuelan diaspora has adopted a wait-and-see approach. There is as yet no sign of a large-scale return.'³⁶ Some 20 % of Venezuelans answered that they would return to Venezuela.³⁷ Following the January 2026 development in Venezuela, UNHCR conducted a survey in six countries on the intentions to return to Venezuela. The report found that 'while large-scale return movements have not materialized, returns to Venezuela continue and a growing share of recent returnees report an intention to remain.'³⁸ The same survey found that in general, 35 % of the respondents 'expressed an inclination to return', out of which 9 % expressed 'immediate intent'.³⁹ Family reunification was cited as the most important reason to consider return, and 'economic recovery and political stabilization' were cited as a key requirement to do so.⁴⁰ On the migration trends to and from Venezuela, Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) found that the removal of Maduro has not changed existing movement patterns and concluded that 'while more people do not appear to be motivated to leave, neither do they appear motivated to return.'⁴¹ According to a survey by MMC conducted in the first quarter of 2026, 11.4 % of Venezuelans living abroad said that they would like to return in a near future, while other 9,6 % would consider it but not immediately.⁴² The MMC indicates the lack of data to fully investigate the issue: 'As MMC has already pointed out, the political, security and economic consequences, and in turn their likely impact on migration and return patterns, remain obscure.'⁴³

Venezuelans would consider returning if conditions in the country changed for the better.⁴⁴ Some Venezuelans abroad expressed fear of being imprisoned upon return.⁴⁵ According to the Interim president Delcy Rodriguez, 'Venezuelans in exile would be welcomed back with open arms', following the adoption of the new amnesty law.⁴⁶ By early March, 247 people

³⁵ Belgium, CGRS-CEDOCA, Venezuela; Houding van de autoriteiten ten aanzien van migratie, 9 April 2026, [url](#), p. 23; MMC, Venezuelans in the Americas face uncertainty in light of political changes at home and in exile, 17 March 2026, [url](#)

³⁶ Belgium, CGRS-CEDOCA, Venezuela; Houding van de autoriteiten ten aanzien van migratie, 9 April 2026, [url](#), p. 4

³⁷ Los Angeles Times, 'We just want our lives back.' Maduro's gone, but what's next for 8 million Venezuelans who fled?, 12 January 2026, [url](#)

³⁸ UNHCR, Intentions to Return to Venezuela, March 2026, [url](#), p. 2

³⁹ UNHCR, Intentions to Return to Venezuela, March 2026, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁰ UNHCR, Intentions to Return to Venezuela, March 2026, [url](#), p. 6

⁴¹ MMC, Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Latin America and the Caribbean, January – march 2026, Quarter 1, 2026, [2026], [url](#), p. 8

⁴² MMC, Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Latin America and the Caribbean, January – march 2026, Quarter 1, 2026, [2026], [url](#), p. 9. See also: Efecto Cocuyo, La mayoría de la diáspora venezolana descarta regresar en el corto plazo, según estudio del ODV, 2 March 2026, [url](#), and Observatorio de la Diáspora Venezolana (ODV): [url](#)

⁴³ MMC, Venezuelans in the Americas face uncertainty in light of political changes at home and in exile, 17 March 2026, [url](#)

⁴⁴ El País, The faces of Venezuelan exile: 'The hope of returning is always there. Now it's a little closer', 17 January 2026, [url](#); CNN, Voices of the Venezuelan diaspora after Maduro's ouster: How millions live abroad as they wonder if it's time to return, 24 January 2026, [url](#); UNHCR, Intentions to Return to Venezuela, March 2026, [url](#), p. 9

⁴⁵ Al Jazeera, Exiled Venezuelans dream of returning home. What's stopping them?, 4 February 2026, [url](#); NBC News, Venezuelans in U.S. call Trump's move to end deportation protections a 'betrayal', [url](#); Los Angeles Times, 'We just want our lives back.' Maduro's gone, but what's next for 8 million Venezuelans who fled?, 12 January 2026, [url](#)

⁴⁶ France24, Venezuela begins prisoner releases as Rodriguez promises return for exiles, 24 February 2026, [url](#)



have been released from prison,⁴⁷ while estimated 400 political prisoners remained imprisoned as of April 2026.⁴⁸ The amnesty system reportedly lacks transparency and any independent oversight.⁴⁹ People who want to benefit from it must submit an application.⁵⁰ Each application for amnesty must be approved by a judge, and Venezuelans abroad would have to appear at court in Venezuela in person; furthermore, several categories of applicants are excluded, for example, people accused of having ‘called for or supported an armed uprising’.⁵¹ According to a France24 article dated 21 February 2026, some 1 560 people have submitted their applications;⁵² this includes journalists, activists, opposition members and human rights activists, among others.⁵³

2. Treatment of returnees by state authorities

Information on treatment of returnees by state authorities was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

Both voluntary returns and deportations to Venezuela are governed under the government programme GMVP.⁵⁴ According to the Belgian COI unit CEDOCA, ‘the Venezuelan government is attempting to control the narrative surrounding migration by presenting itself as a protector of its citizens when they return home. [...] Upon arrival in Venezuela, the authorities welcome the returnees, publicly presenting them as victims of deception and exploitation abroad.’⁵⁵ The returnees also undergo security background checks⁵⁶ as well as health checks.⁵⁷

According to a statement from 29 November 2025, ‘the Great Mission Return to the Homeland remains fully active, guaranteeing protection, accompaniment, and comprehensive guidance to all Venezuelans who wish to return.’⁵⁸ Delcy Rodríguez has reportedly urged the migrants to return.⁵⁹ According to an April 2026 article by Efe, the Great Mission Return to the Homeland promotes access to employment, healthcare, and housing to ensure that the

⁴⁷ Freedom House, Beyond Maduro: Building a Sustainable Democratic Transition in Venezuela, 23 April 2026, [url](#)

⁴⁸ Freedom House, Beyond Maduro: Building a Sustainable Democratic Transition in Venezuela, 23 April 2026, [url](#)

⁴⁹ Freedom House, Beyond Maduro: Building a Sustainable Democratic Transition in Venezuela, 23 April 2026, [url](#)

⁵⁰ France24, More than 1,500 prisoners set for release under Venezuela's new amnesty law, 21 February 2026, [url](#)

⁵¹ Belgium, CGRS-CEDOCA, Venezuela; Houding van de autoriteiten ten aanzien van migratie, 9 April 2026, [url](#), pp. 3-4

⁵² France24, More than 1,500 prisoners set for release under Venezuela's new amnesty law, 21 February 2026, [url](#)

⁵³ France24, More than 1,500 prisoners set for release under Venezuela's new amnesty law, 21 February 2026, [url](#)

⁵⁴ Belgium, CGRS-CEDOCA, Venezuela; Houding van de autoriteiten ten aanzien van migratie, 9 April 2026, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁵ Belgium, CGRS-CEDOCA, Venezuela; Houding van de autoriteiten ten aanzien van migratie, 9 April 2026, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁶ Belgium, CGRS-CEDOCA, Venezuela; Houding van de autoriteiten ten aanzien van migratie, 9 April 2026, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁷ Xinhua, 311 Venezuelan migrants repatriated from Mexico as part of Return to Homeland Plan, 21 March 2025, [url](#)

⁵⁸ Venezuela, Gran Misión Vuelta a la Patria, Official Statement, Great Mission Return to the Homeland, 29 November 2026, [url](#)

⁵⁹ New York Times (The), Trump Celebrated Victory in Venezuela. Will That Bring Its People Back?, 10 May 2026, [url](#)



returns are comprehensive and dignified, according to an official statement.⁶⁰ Corroborating information could not be found.

The GMVP aims to ‘reintegrate [the returnees] into their families and communities, provide them with comprehensive socioeconomic protection for their return and inclusion in economic life, within the framework of respect for their human rights.’⁶¹ Information on the implementation of the programme could not be found in consulted sources in time constraints.

On the other hand, a Venezuelan lawyer living in the US stated that ‘the government in Caracas often portrays Venezuelans abroad as enemies, or treated as if they no longer belong,’ adding that ‘there is no mechanism to guarantee a safe return; on the contrary, the risks have increased.’⁶²

3. Access to documentation, housing and property rights

Information on access to documentation, housing and property rights for returnees was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

According to Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), applicants for Venezuelan passport must have a valid national ID that can be obtained only in Venezuela.⁶³ If they left the country ‘irregularly’, they cannot renew their passports abroad.⁶⁴ At the same time, if they returned without a valid passport, their entry into the country cannot be properly registered and ‘thus rendering them “ineligible” to apply for a passport in Venezuela and requiring them to apply for one from abroad’, making it ‘frequently impractical or impossible.’⁶⁵

A joint report by UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP about mixed movements in Central and South America found that ‘Venezuelans had the lowest rate of passport possession (10 %) and the highest proportion of expired passports, consistent with ongoing challenges in passport issuance and renewal.’⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Efe, Más de 5.000 venezolanos volvieron a su país en cien días del Gobierno de Delcy Rodríguez, 17 April 2026, [url](#)

⁶¹ Venezuela, Gran Misión Vuelta a la Patria, Official Statement, Great Mission Return to the Homeland, ¿Qué hace la Gran Misión Vuelta a la Patria? ¡Reunir familias!, n.d., [url](#)

⁶² Miami Herald, Hope calls to them, fear keeps them away: South Florida Venezuelans on returning home, 3 April 2026, [url](#)

⁶³ Canada, IRB, Venezuela: Availability of passports; requirements and procedures to obtain a passport within the country and from abroad; content, appearance, and security features; prevalence of fraudulent passports (2024–January 2026), 9 February 2026, [url](#)

⁶⁴ Canada, IRB, Venezuela: Availability of passports; requirements and procedures to obtain a passport within the country and from abroad; content, appearance, and security features; prevalence of fraudulent passports (2024–January 2026), 9 February 2026, [url](#)

⁶⁵ Canada, IRB, Venezuela: Availability of passports; requirements and procedures to obtain a passport within the country and from abroad; content, appearance, and security features; prevalence of fraudulent passports (2024–January 2026), 9 February 2026, [url](#)

⁶⁶ UNICEF, UNHCR, and WFP, Mixed Movements Monitoring; July - September 2025, 3 February 2026, [url](#), p. 7



In April 2026, the New York Times reported that Venezuelans living in the United States who wished to return to Venezuela faced significant difficulties in obtaining the necessary travel documentation, as many no longer possessed valid passports. According to the article, in numerous cases passports have been confiscated by US authorities upon arrival in order 'to speed up deportation should they be denied asylum'. Venezuelan authorities alternatively allow entry with a travel permit issued by the Venezuelan government; however, such permits can only be obtained in Caracas or at selected Venezuelan consulates in Latin America. The article further noted that the permit must be requested in person by a close relative of the applicant, who is required to provide the reasons for the return as well as a travel itinerary.⁶⁷

Applying for a passport has been described as a lengthy process and some citizens, including journalists and people critical of the government, had their passports canceled.⁶⁸

According to a study by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) from February 2026, over 91 % of Venezuela's population live below the poverty line and access to healthcare, housing, formal employment, and education remained 'severely constrained'; additionally, there are reports of 'continued political repression.'⁶⁹

Concerning the living standards of returnees, an article by National Broadcasting Company (NBC) News from August 2025 reported that many returnees to Venezuela 'are finding harsher living conditions than when they left' upon their return.⁷⁰ Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints.

Further information on the political and socio-economic situation can be found in the EUAA COI Query, [Venezuela: Humanitarian and socio-economic situation](#), dated 20 May 2026.

4. Societal attitudes towards returnees

Information on societal attitudes towards returnees could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

⁶⁷ New York Times (The), Many Venezuelans Want to Go Home. But They Can't Get Passports., 10 April 2026, [url](#)

⁶⁸ Abigail Weitzman and Cecilia Menjívar, Venezuelan Migration: Past, Present, and Future, in: Georgetown University, Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, 2 February 2026, [url](#)

⁶⁹ MPI, Post-Maduro, a Measured Approach to Venezuelan Migration Is More Essential than Ever, February 2026, [url](#)

⁷⁰ NBC News, Migrants returning to Venezuela face debt and harsh living conditions, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

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Belgium, CGRS-CEDOCA (Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (Belgium), COI unit), Venezuela: Situatieschets [Venezuela: Situation Overview], 25 February 2026, https://www.cgra.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_venezuela_situatieschets_20260225.pdf, accessed 13 May 2026

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