



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on June 11, 2018

Sickness — Fiscal, Human, and Cultural — Sinking Venezuela Further Into Darkness

[The latest poll from Gallup](#) — the 2018 Global Law and Order Index — places Venezuela at the very bottom of the 140 nations it surveyed. This is the second year in a row that Venezuela is perceived by its citizens to be the most dangerous place in the world to live.

One-quarter of the population reported that they had been assaulted at least once in the last 12 months, while more than four out of 10 claimed they had been robbed in the last year. This places the socialist-ravaged South American country behind Afghanistan and South Africa in Gallup's ratings.



Additional evidence of the continuing breakdown of Venezuelan society, thanks to socialist policies, showed up on Sunday with the first case of polio being reported in the country in 30 years. Long considered to be eradicated, it, along with other diseases such as diphtheria, tuberculosis, measles, and malaria, are gaining purchase among Venezuelans, especially those in the poorest neighborhoods. Dr. Jose Felix Oletta, Venezuela's former minister of health, explained: "The [polio] virus especially affects people in conditions of malnutrition and unvaccinated, as in this case."

And that's because President/Dictator Nicolas Maduro's policies (called "Chavismo" for his predecessor Hugo Chavez) have all but removed essential medicines and vaccines from pharmacists' shelves.

As reported repeatedly by *The New American* and elsewhere, the poor are reduced to picking through garbage dumps to find food to feed themselves and their families. But it is now reported from Caracas that they have gone one step further: seizing the plastic bags in which the garbage is placed and trading the bags themselves for food and other essentials on the black market. As the *Wall Street Journal* noted:

This sounds absurd, but it is believable in a country where extreme poverty has spread like the plague. Human capital is fleeing. Oil production is plummeting, and the state-owned oil company is in default. The garbage bag, imported with dollars, is a thing of value.

The sickness that is now Venezuela has permeated down to the most vulnerable: Young girls and women are being enticed into prostitution and then into slavery. According to an investigation by the Mexican newspaper *El Universal*, sex traffickers entice them with promises of well-paying work and then capture them and send them out of the country to serve as sex slaves.

It's aided by cultural decline. The network aiding the traffickers, contacts uncovered by the newspaper, consists of drug cartels, weapons traffickers, corrupt policemen paid to look the other way, soldiers seeking self-gratification, and border officials being bribed to ignore the flow. In Mexico, for example, those traffickers pay up to \$1,000 to immigration officials at Mexico City's international airport to allow



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these girls, some as young as 11, into the country from Venezuela. From there they are shipped to Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Peru. A Venezuela study reported that, as the economic conditions have declined, sex trafficking has risen enormously, from an estimated 60,000 in 2016 to almost 200,000 this year. And the study suggests that that number could rise to 600,000 by 2020, less than three years from now.

The Venezuelan culture has been destroyed by socialist practices, practices that initially were inflicted on the populace long before Maduro's arrival. Rent controls were set in place in 1939 but not rigorously enforced until 1960 when Romulo Bentancourt gained power. Since that time not a single apartment building has been built in the country.

Carlos Andres Perez seized the presidency in 1974 and mandated salary increases for the entire country, along with a minimum wage. He instituted price controls, put limits on foreign investment, nationalized the oil company, took virtual control of the coffee and cocoa industries, and seized the previously independent central bank.

When Luis Herrera Campins took control in 1983, he announced exchange controls and placed price controls on everything that Perez had ignored: cement, hotels, banking, meat, milk, sugar, and even parking lot fees.

Fast forward to February 1999 when Chavez was inaugurated, followed by Maduro in 2013.

Even if (or when) Maduro is removed from office, the spectre of socialist destruction will remain. American Founding Father John Adams pointed out the uniqueness of the U.S. Constitution: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." But once the foundations of a moral and righteous society have been rotted away by the cancer of collectivism, "what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3).

An Ivy League graduate and former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.

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