



Written by [Steve Bonta](#) on July 3, 2026

Venezuelan Earthquakes and the Hidden Cost of Socialism

While Venezuela isn't as earthquake-prone as Japan, Chile, or many other countries on the "Ring of Fire," it has been known to have severe quakes at long intervals. The [double quake](#) that struck northern Venezuela on the evening of June 24 was extraordinary, but not unprecedented in severity. The [second quake](#), a magnitude 7.5, was the [second-strongest](#) in recorded Venezuelan history, and the first, which struck 39 seconds earlier with a strength of 7.2, was Venezuela's fourth-strongest. The two temblors rocked the La Guaira region of Venezuela's northern coast, as well as the capital, Caracas, causing apocalyptic damage, the full scale of which is still being sorted out.



AP Images

Colossal Death and Destruction

Hundreds of apartment buildings [collapsed entirely](#), and hundreds more collapsed partly or suffered damage severe enough to render them unusable. The official death toll as of July 2 had reached almost 2,600. It is likely to rise well into five figures, with as many as 70,000 people missing. The sheer devastation of entire stretches of cities and high-rise apartment blocks is probably the worst since the great Haitian earthquake more than a decade ago. One sprawling apartment complex for lower income residents, the [Hugo Chávez apartment complex](#), consisted of 193 buildings prior to the quakes; only three are left standing.

Adding to the chaos is the limited ability of Venezuelan authorities to help with the rescue efforts. Professional rescue teams from many countries, including the United States, Argentina, and El Salvador, have poured into the stricken country to help do what the Venezuelan government cannot: dig through the rubble and rescue the many buried survivors.

Demonstrated Dangers of Socialism

Videos from rescue teams examining the ruined buildings also reveal troubling features of [Venezuelan construction standards](#). One is the near-absence of reinforced steel, a necessary component of earthquake-proofing buildings in countries with such standards, like Chile, Japan, and (for more modern buildings) the United States. Another is the proliferation of expanded polystyrene (EPS), a Styrofoam-like polymer used for insulation, whose utility in tropical coastal cities is dubious, and which may have been placed in lieu of sturdier substances for reinforcement.

It appears that the massive destruction from these two earthquakes may stem from decades of corrupt socialist rule in Venezuela, where private enterprise has been stifled and public graft in awarding building contracts has been the order of the day. The damage from the Venezuelan earthquakes is yet another reminder of the hidden costs of socialism, beyond the gulags and the firing squads: the inability



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of a centrally planned economy and socialist state to hedge against natural disasters, and to respond to them when they do occur.

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