

Health and Migration Impact of the Coronavirus on Venezuela, and the Regional Response

Thursday, March 25, 2020



Julio Castro Méndez

COVID-19 Technical Experts Commission
Interim Government of Venezuela

Julio Castro Méndez is a Venezuelan doctor specializing in infectious diseases and internal medicine. Castro has worked as an infectious medicine doctor at the Metropolitan Polyclinic, director of the organization Doctors for Health, member of the Venezuelan Society of Infectious Diseases, and professor at the Institute of Tropical Medicine at the Central University of Venezuela. Since 2019, Julio Castro has been part of President-elect Juan Guaidó's Plan Pais.

After two cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Venezuela on March 15, 2020, Juan Guaidó announced the creation of a Commission of Health Experts to deal with the pandemic, a commission composed of Doctors and academic experts in different specialties, including Julio Castro, who heads the commission, Gustavo Villasmil, from the Venezuelan Society of Internal Medicine, and Edgar Capriles, specialist in Health Economics, among others.



Manuela Bolívar

Deputy, Miranda State
National Assembly
Subcommittee on Women and Gender Equality

Manuela graduated with a degree in psychology from the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (UCAB) and completed a master's degree in public management and studied a leadership program at IESA (Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración) in Caracas.

She served as a university professor at UCAB. In 2014 she was appointed Director of Citizen Care and Participation of the mayor of El Hatillo in the administration of David Smolansky. She was director of social affairs at the Mayor Metropolitan Of Caracas and served as director of training for the Futuro Presente Foundation.

In Venezuela's 2015 parliamentary elections, Manuela Bolívar was elected deputy of the National Assembly by the Miranda state's ready circuit and the Voluntad Popular party. On 7 March 2019, Manuela Bolívar was appointed president of the Subcommittee on Women and Gender Equality. In August 2019 she was appointed by the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, Vice-President of the Special Commission for the Follow-up to Humanitarian Aid.



Carrie Filipetti

Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Carrie Filipetti currently serves as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Cuba and Venezuela in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. Prior to this position, Carrie served as a Senior Policy Advisor for the United States Mission to the United Nations (USUN), where she advised U.S. Ambassador Nikki R. Haley on issues related to counterterrorism, the Middle East, and the Western Hemisphere. Carrie spent five years at The Paul E. Singer Foundation, where she served as Director of Portfolio Management. In this capacity, Carrie oversaw the Foundation’s transition from a one-person relationship-driven organization to a national leader in strategic philanthropy. Also in her capacity as Director of the Foundation, Carrie served as a Senior Advisor

and co-founder of Start-Up Nation, a Tel-Aviv based non-profit that seeks to connect the world with Israeli innovation.

In her spare time, Carrie competes in obstacle course races and is the social coordinator for Washington, D.C.’s 5th Service Platoon in The Mission Continues, a non-profit focused on empowering veterans to continue service to their communities. She also volunteers at the Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department, where she is beginning training to become an EMT and firefighter. Carrie was the Cochran Family Jefferson scholar and an Echol’s scholar at the University of Virginia, where she graduated with a degree in Religious Studies in 2011.



David Smolansky

Chair of Working Group on Venezuelan Migration and Refugee Crisis
Organization of American States

Smolansky holds a B.A. in journalism and MA in political science. He began his career as a politician and a public servant when he co-founded the Venezuelan Student Movement in 2007, leading non violent protests against Hugo Chavez. He also was a co-founder of Voluntad Popular, interim’s government political party in Venezuela, and became Deputy Secretary General of that organization. In 2013, Smolansky was elected mayor of El Hatillo in Caracas, at age 28, becoming the youngest local authority in the country. Security and transparency became the priorities of his administration. As a mayor, he led a decrease of more than 80% of kidnapping and was recognized internationally as one of the most transparent and accountable local governments in his country. In August of 2017, the Supreme Court,

controlled by the regime, ordered his arrest and removed him from office after 4 consecutive months of non violent protests against Nicolás Maduro. He was forced to be in clandestinity for 35 days until he fled the country through Brazil. Smolansky has been based during his more of two years in exile in Washington D.C. where he was a Visiting Scholar at Georgetown University and was recognized with the GCL Impact Award 2018. He has been advocating to restore democracy and freedom in Venezuela becoming one of the main leaders in exile. Smolansky was chosen by Americas Quarterly magazine as one of the top ten people who will rebuild his country. Also, he has been designated by the Secretary General of the Organization of American States as his special envoy for the Venezuelan Migration and Refugee Crisis in the region which is the largest ever in the history of the region with 5 million Venezuelans displaced.

Since he has been in the OAS, Smolansky has made more than 20 visits to the region to promote policies in favor of the Venezuelan refugees and raise awareness internationally about the causes of the mass forced migration of Venezuelans.