

UN chief calls on Venezuela's politicians to 'avoid escalation', end suffering of the people

Reports of violence and casualties linked to unrest in Venezuela should be investigated transparently and independently, UN Secretary-General [Antonio Guterres](#) said on Thursday, before calling for calm.

In a statement issued by his Spokesperson, the UN chief urged all parties to "lower tensions" in the South American country, which is riven by economic and political crisis, after deadly clashes in the capital Caracas between security forces and thousands of demonstrators opposed to the Government of President Nicolás Maduro.

"The Secretary-General is concerned over reports of casualties in the context of demonstrations and unrest in Venezuela and calls for a transparent and independent investigation of these incidents," said Stéphane Dujarric.

At this "critical" time, Mr. Guterres "urges all actors to lower tensions and pursue every effort to prevent violence and avoid any escalation", the Spokesperson added.

The development follows Wednesday's declaration by opposition leader Juan Guaidó that he had become the country's interim president until fresh elections could be held. Mr. Maduro was officially sworn back into office for his disputed second term, following elections mired in controversy, just two weeks ago.

What we hope is that dialogue can be possible, and that we avoid an escalation that could lead to the kind of conflict that would be a total disaster for Venezuela – *UN chief Guterres*

Issued from the World Economic Forum ([WEF](#)) in Davos, Switzerland, where Mr. Guterres gave a keynote address, his statement highlighted "the urgent need for all relevant actors to commit to inclusive and credible political dialogue to address the protracted crisis in the country, with full respect for the rule of law and human rights".

[Speaking during a Facebook Live event](#) in Davos, the UN chief would not comment on those governments which have decided to officially recognize Mr. Guaido's claim to the presidency, saying only that all sovereign governments are in charge of their own decision-making, but expressed concern over "the suffering of the Venezuelan people."

"So many have left the country, with the economic difficulties that everybody faces, and with the political polarization", he said, adding: "What we hope

is that dialogue can be possible, and that we avoid an escalation that could lead to the kind of conflict that would be a total disaster for Venezuela, for the Venezuelan people and for the region.”

The UN chief said during the interview, that “if dialogue is not possible, then what are we doing? In all circumstances in the world – even the most difficult circumstances – we need to push for dialogue.”

According to the [World Food Programme \(WFP\)](#), three million Venezuelans have left their country in recent years owing to a lack of food, medicine and the loss of their livelihoods.

In addition to the humanitarian crisis, grave human rights abuses have been reported by the UN, including killings, the use of excessive force against demonstrators, arbitrary detentions, ill-treatment and torture.

In a [report](#) issued in June last year, the UN human rights office ([OHCHR](#)) documented “credible, shocking accounts of extrajudicial killings” during crime-fighting operations carried out between 2015 and 2017.