

THE POLICE IT'S MORE THAN ITS UNIFORM: THE VENEZUELAN CASE

“Excess of Everything Is Bad”. This proverb so used in the world of sports and nutrition might be also applicable to the citizen’s safety area as well. At least, this is the conclusion to which Acceso a la Justicia reached when reviewing the evolution of the Venezuelan police forces since 2000 to 2018 and the impact they have had on criminality control.

In the report *Panoramic Vision of the police system (2000-2018)*, that the organization made along 2019, it was concluded that if the delinquency indexes, particularly in the number of homicides, has not sensibly reduced in the country during the period under study it is not due to lack of policemen, but by the lack of some of them who are well-trained, capacitated and equipped to comply with its function. In the investigation is stated that since 2006 Venezuela suffers from a “police hypertrophy”, that is, the country has many more policemen than necessary, but they are not capable of efficiently comply with their mission.

In the document, ninety-pages long, you can read the following:

“Thus, it went from a total of 114.463 police officers in 2006 to more than 175.000 at the beginning of 2017. This means that the police force number has had an increment of approximately 53% in that term, increasing the rate of police statistical framing 128 additional points, to reach 557 policemen per one-hundred thousand inhabitants, 207 points above the international standard”

It must be clarified that this number is shown up to 2017 because it has been impossible to find official numbers for 2018. In fact, in the report, the opacity of the public information and the difficulty to access to it’s underscored.

However, the increase in the number of police agents has not translated neither into a significant reduction of the criminals indexes nor into an improvement in the security perception by the citizens. Thus, in the report it was recalled that in 2016 Venezuela reached a homicide rate of 70.1 per 100 thousand inhabitants, as per the numbers offered by the Public Ministry in 2017. This data place the country as the second most dangerous in the world.

On the investigation, it is noted the decrease of the murder rate registered in the last few years, but a warning is made that the decrease is “temporary” and that “does not affect the general trend”.

What should have been and wasn't

In the report special reference is made to the Bolivarian National Police (BNP), body created by the 1999 Constitution whose design was one of the main achievements of the Police Reform Commission (Conarepol by its acronym in Spanish), that the government of late Hugo Chavez put in motion in 2006, after scandals like the mass killing of a group of students in Caracas' Kennedy shantytown or the kidnapping and later assassination of the Faddoul brothers in the hands of police officers.

“The PNB case is emblematic, in just six years (2009-2015) reached an approximate number of 14.739 officers” the report states, in which however, it has been denounced that:

“(in order) to reach these numbers, minimum standards of neither selection, nor training, aren't met, and later, it is uphill to efficiently supervise and control those thousands of armed youngsters, who are put out in the streets after a time of formation that is insufficient”.

The above explains why so many members of the BNP appeared mentioned in crimes.

Lack of Funding

Acceso a la Justicia also investigated the resources of the police security forces to perform its job and found that those have been diminishing non-stop since 2013. Besides, in the last few years, between 90% and 97% of the funds given to organisms like the Scientific, Penal and Criminal Investigations Body (CICPC by its acronym in Spanish) or the BNP are used for payroll, for which there is very little budget room for patrols maintenance, uniforms provision, training, armament, among other fundamental elements for these institutions to aptly comply with its functions. The report made by a group of experts on the matter can be reviewed in its full version clicking [here](#).

¿And how does this affect you, Venezuelan?

Lack of personal safety is one of Venezuelans main concerns and one of the reasons millions have left the country in the last five years. Only in 2019, criminal violence cost more than 16 thousand lives, as per the Venezuelan Observatory of Violence. All this in spite there are more police officers today in the country than at the beginning of the century.