



Venezuela tops list of most corrupt countries

Venezuela concerns watch dog measuring worldwide public-sector corruption

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Venezuela's public sector was the most corrupt country in the hemisphere during 2015, an anti-corruption watchdog said in its new report.

The South American country was also considered one of the most corrupt in the world only ranking higher than Iraq, Libya, Angola, South Sudan, Sudan, Afghanistan, North Korea and Somalia, according to the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.

Venezuela's score was based on the opinions of public sector corruption experts. Corruption, according to the index, has been increasing since Nicolas Maduro was elected president, after Hugo Chavez died of cancer in 2013.

"Poor governance, a concerted effort to quash the voice of the people, coupled with rampant corruption, are leading Venezuela to a terrible destiny," said Mercedes De Freitas, the organization's chapter director in Venezuela, last year.

Miami-Dade County's Doral neighborhood, better known as "Dorazuela," has one of the largest communities of Venezuelan migrants in the country. They have been arriving in larger numbers since Hugo Chavez's policies managed to turn one of Latin America's most affluent countries into what experts now refer to as an economic disaster.

Chavez's "socialism of the 21st Century" meant radically increasing government spending, which put the budget deficit in the red and increased the country's debt with China. Maduro stopped releasing economic statistics in 2014. But the latest CATO Institute's Troubled Currencies Project's estimate put the countries' annual inflation rate at 386 percent.

Aside from Venezuela's decline, Brazil's score also deteriorated. In 2015, Petrobras, an oil giant that was involved in off shore drilling explorations in Cuba, was linked to bribery, kickbacks and money laundering worth more than \$2 billion.

Transparency International chair Jose Ugaz said that more countries improved their scores in 2015.

The index ranked Canada as the country with the least public corruption in the hemisphere. The United States, Uruguay, Chile and Costa Rica followed. The countries with the least corruption around the world were Denmark, Finland, Sweden and New Zealand.