

MISTRUST TOWARDS POLICE FORCES HAS INCREASED IN LINE WITH THE INCREASE OF GOVERNMENT'S CONTROL OVER THOSE INSTITUTIONS

The government's actions to neutralize the National Assembly elected in December of 2015 and thus govern without submitting to its control not only has earned to it the repulse of the international community but besides has further deteriorated the damaged imaged of the Venezuelan institutions, including that of police forces.

Thus sustains the report *The Venezuelan police service. Between reality and perception (2000-2019)*, in which it is sustained that since 2015 the percentage of citizens victims of criminality that go to the police to report the facts has but decreased in line with the chavismo's closing on the parliament and grabbing absolute power of the country. In 2015, 65% of those affected by crime did not denounce what happen to them, in 2016 the number increase to 66%, as per data from the Life Conditions Poll (ENCOVI by its acronym in Spanish) quoted in the investigation.

In the report you can read the following:

"Institutionalism in Venezuela has decreased due to lack of social mechanisms that guarantee citizens the rule of law and impartiality and independence in the exercise of the public powers. Institutions have been diminished by the power of a political and military minority in government, above citizen's power, acting without limits and violating human rights. The consequence of that has been mistrust and delegitimizing of the justice administration institutions, among those the police system institutions. Thus, the absence of filing complaints for crimes is a recurring conduct of crime's victims, because they know their cases will not have a follow-up whatsoever by the pertinent authorities".

Another date that corroborates that in the last few years an increase of mistrust towards police forces among citizens has increased is that 55% of citizens stated feeling more protected informing their neighbors about any incident with criminals with respect to 30% that stated believing the police protect citizens from crime. These numbers are shown in the Police Violence and Lethality Poll that the Venezuelan Violence Observatory made between the end of 2019 and beginning of 2020, to whose results also refer to Acceso a la Justicia's report.

But if the above was not grave enough, in the report it is recalled that the 2018 Latinbarómetro showed that Venezuelans are those who trust less their Armed Forces with 19%, their police, 12%, and their Judicial Branch, 18%.

Also, the numbers shown by Encovi in its four editions allowed calculating that on average, for the 2014-2017 term, 47% of the people surveyed qualified as bad and very bad, the work done by the police, that is, “per every favorable opinion on the police work there were almost five people who had an unfavorable opinion on the work of the police forces”.

Suspicious Drop

The document, thirty-seven pages long, challenges the rigorousness and veracity of the data on criminal matters given by the authorities on the last few years which show a dramatic drop in the number of crimes registered in the country. Thus, from 2016 to 2018 it would have gone from 216.427 crimes to 114.203.

To give support to the suspicious, in the report it is recalled that almost over the same period the number of Venezuelans who admitted being direct or indirect crime victims increased, did not decrease, as would have happened if the numbers before indicated were true; in fact, the number of crime victims was between 18% and 23%, as per data handled by the ENCOVI and the OVV.

This report is the continuation of another recently presented by Acceso a la Justicia, under the title *Panoramic Vision of the police system (2000-2018)* and in which it was warned that in the country there are more police officers than necessary, but that they are neither well trained nor equipped to efficiently perform their function; and that the recommendations of the Police Reform Commission (Conarepol by its acronym in Spanish), among which there was the professionalizing of the security forces and its demilitarizing, have not been implemented, which explained why crime indexes had not dramatically decreased and why citizens did not feel safer.

¿And how does this affect you, Venezuelan?

Venezuelans do not approve of their police forces and that's why they avoid going to them, even after being victims of a crime. What is the consequence of that

situation? That criminals go unpunished, since if there is no trust on the police institution and people do not file their complaints, it is difficult the police fight crime.

The data contained in this report should prompt authorities to think about them, and those should begin to apply current laws and the proposals issued by the famous Conarepol, which were never applied.