



ANTILLES EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

9a Gray St, Port of Spain Trinidad & Tobago, West Indies

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General Secretary: Fr. Donald Chambers

Telephone: 1 868 622-2932 Email: aecgeneralsec@gmail.com Website: aecbishops.org

January 22nd, 2026

Pastoral Statement on Recent Events in Venezuela and the Caribbean

To the people of the Caribbean, to our brothers and sisters in Venezuela, and to all in the international community concerned for peace and justice:

As pastors of God's people in the Caribbean, we write with heavy hearts and deep concern about the dramatic and troubling events now unfolding in our region.

Since our statements in October and December 2025, the situation has escalated in ways that cause profound anxiety. We have learned, from widely reported accounts, of the capture and transfer of Venezuela's president, Nicolás Maduro, and his wife, Cilia Flores, to the United States, and of the uncertainty that now surrounds Venezuela's governance and constitutional order. These developments raise serious questions not only about politics and law, but also about the kind of world we are shaping for future generations.

The legality of these events must be judged by the competent international authorities. Whatever judgments are eventually rendered, we must insist on what the Gospel and the moral law require: respect for human dignity, for due process, and for the rule of international humanitarian law. As Pope Leo recently reminded the diplomatic community, no crisis, however grave, can justify abandoning these foundations, and peace can never be built on the erosion of law, conscience, and the dignity of the human person.

We are equally troubled by the wider implications of actions involving the use of force within the territory of a sovereign nation, as well as by the growing instability in our region, including continued seizures of vessels and disruptions to ordinary life. Such actions risk setting dangerous precedents and deepening a spiral of fear and confrontation. As the Holy Father has warned, when force replaces dialogue and power replaces patient diplomacy, the international community itself is weakened and the future made more fragile.

Above all, we are concerned that the good, the dignity, and the freely expressed will of the Venezuelan people must remain paramount and must be safeguarded. We are especially mindful of the poor, the vulnerable, migrants, fisherfolk, and families who always suffer most when

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nations collide. Their cries must not be drowned out by the noise of geopolitics. Pope Leo has reminded the world that it is always the weakest who pay the highest price for the failures of politics and the ambitions of the powerful.

We therefore renew our appeal:

- for restraint and de-escalation,
- for international mediation, especially through the United Nations,
- for respect for international law and legal process,
- and for a renewed commitment to dialogue and peaceful solutions.

The Caribbean has long cherished the vision of being a peaceful space. We must not allow that hope to slip away. In the words of Pope Leo, peace is not built by intimidation or domination, but by courageously choosing dialogue, cooperation, and mutual trust.

We stand in solidarity with the people of Venezuela in this time of volatility and uncertainty, and we also express our communion and solidarity with the Bishops' Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean, which has expressed concern and solidarity for the people of Venezuela. We invite the people of the Caribbean to pray daily for the people of Venezuela and for their country.

As disciples of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we believe that justice cannot be built on force alone, and that lasting peace is born from dialogue, patience, truth, and respect for human dignity. We pray for the people of Venezuela, for all who lead and govern, and for our own region, that wisdom may prevail over pride, and reconciliation over conflict.

May the Lord guide our nations in the ways of justice and peace, and keep our Caribbean home a place of hope, solidarity, and life.

Signed by the Antilles Episcopal Conference

22nd January, 2026