

# How hunger is fueling Venezuela's fast-rising opposition

*Caracas* — Europe has now joined the movement against embattled Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, which continues to grow outside the South American nation. Inside the country, millions of Catholics have also joined the push for change, led by their church. In January, bishops called Maduro's presidency illegitimate.

CBS News correspondent Elizabeth Palmer has visited a parish in La Vega, a working class slum of Caracas, where Mass not only fills the church, it draws an overflow crowd.

Father Alfredo Infanta's spiritual message carries a strong political subtext, though he says it's not directly anti-Maduro, as people must decide for themselves. The Church, however, has called Maduro's presidency unconstitutional. His parishioners might call it something else: a disaster.

Father Infanta took Palmer deeper into the La Vega slum, where there's been no running water for four months and where, if not for a free lunch program offering potatoes, cheese and a dose of vitamins, some kids wouldn't eat at all.

Average inflation last year reached a surreal 80,000 percent. Almost no one in La Vega — or anywhere in Venezuela — can survive on what they make from work. The economy is so broken that an average teacher's salary, about \$6 a month, will only buy a few dozen eggs. Almost half the population of Venezuela would go hungry without charity or food handouts.

Meat is a treat. Ask Enrique the butcher, who sells the cheapest cuts to people lucky to be able to buy once a week. Politically, he's an exception here; he's still loyal to the government.

Asked who he believes is the legitimate President of Venezuela, Enrique says that he believes, along with "90, 95 percent of Venezuelans, that it's our commander, Maduro." He's furious the U.S. has got involved, and says every country the U.S. has "helped," has ended up with misery and destruction.

But that's an opinion you hear less and less; Enrique is actually in a shrinking minority.

Recent polls show more than 80 percent of Venezuelans want Maduro to quit. They agree with the Church, that the President has lost his legitimacy, and he has to go. That sentiment, eager for change, is getting more and more common, especially as huge quantities of humanitarian aid from the U.S. nears Venezuela's borders.

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