



## Introduction

- Since the ascendancy of President Hugo Chavez in 1999, Venezuela has been viewed as a haven for the working class, with good government-provided jobs and a generous welfare system supported by its booming oil industry. Chavez heavily emphasized his working class background and pro-worker aims in his political rhetoric.
- However, the truth is more complicated. Though Venezuelan leadership uses the rhetoric of workers' rights, in practice they prioritize loyalty to the government. The 2000s saw both threatened and real mass firings of workers considered disloyal to Chavez.
- Today, Venezuela's oil workers are forced to labor despite poor compensation and hazardous conditions.

## Statistics: Venezuela in Crisis

- Total Population: 28.65 Million
- Labor Force: 14.21 Million
- 2017 Unemployment Rate: 27.1%
- 2017 Per Capita GDP: \$12,500
- 2017 GDP Real Growth Rate: -14%
- 2017 Inflation Rate for Consumer Prices: 1087.5%

## How many bolivars you need for one US dollar

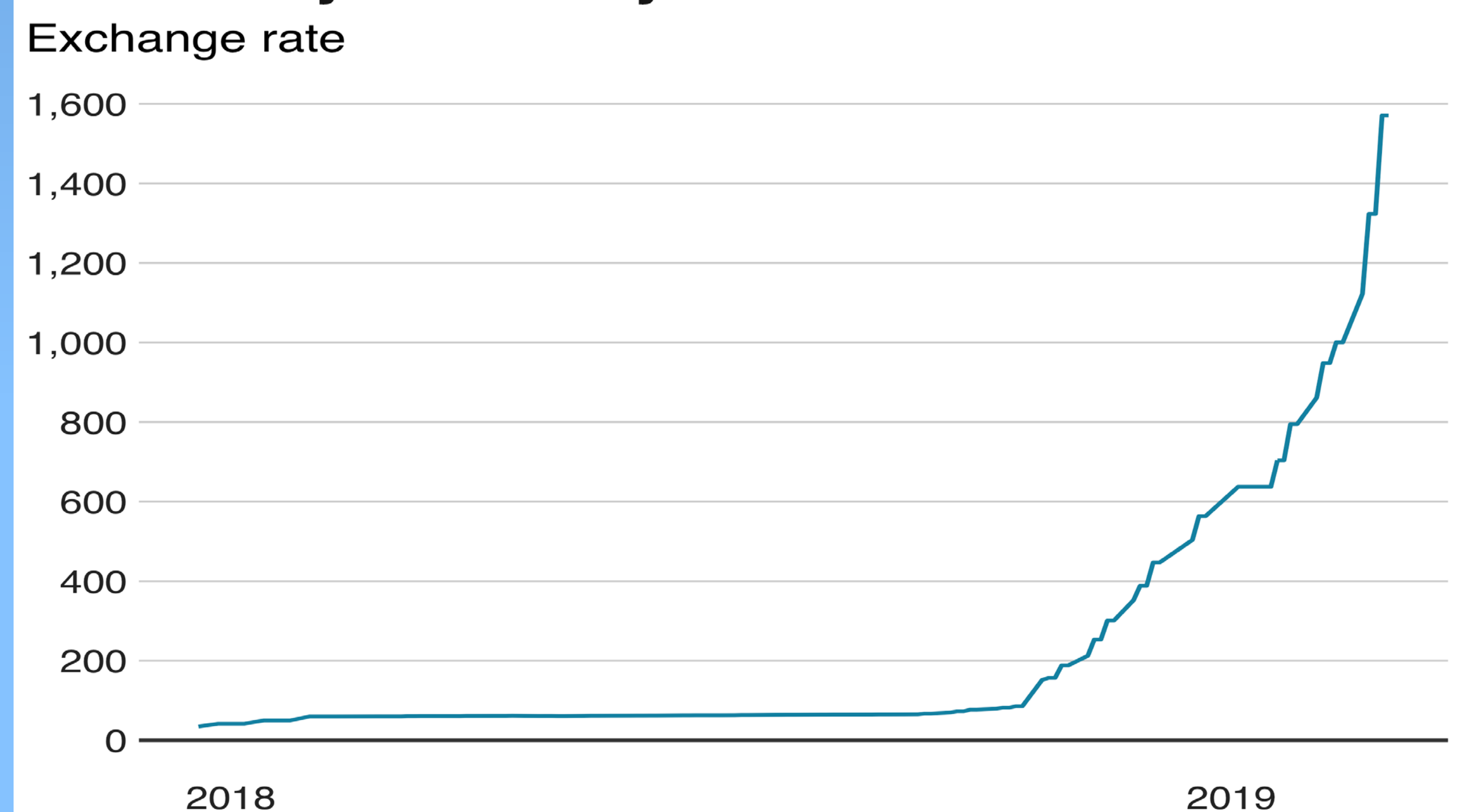


Figure 1: Venezuelan Bolivar to USD Exchange Rate 2018-2019 Courtesy BBC

## Oil Workers' Conditions

- **2003**, Chavez fires 18,000 striking oil workers for disloyalty, replaces them with ones loyal to him.
- **2007**, record oil revenues. Chavez does not adequately reinvest in oil infrastructure, instead prioritizes welfare. Beginning of current decline in oil production.
- **2009**, threatened firings of workers who did not join pro-Chavez organizations. Government claims not doing so is subversion of the revolution.
- **2010**, beginning of crisis in Venezuela.
- **2013**, death of Chavez, Nicolas Maduro takes over.
- **2018**, oil production is at record low.
- Oil workers are expected to do heavy labor while malnourished and fatigued.
- Infrastructure is decaying, breakdowns are common. Combined with the above, accidents are becoming more frequent.
- Government is preventing workers from quitting and punishing those that do.

## Venezuela's economy collapsed under Maduro

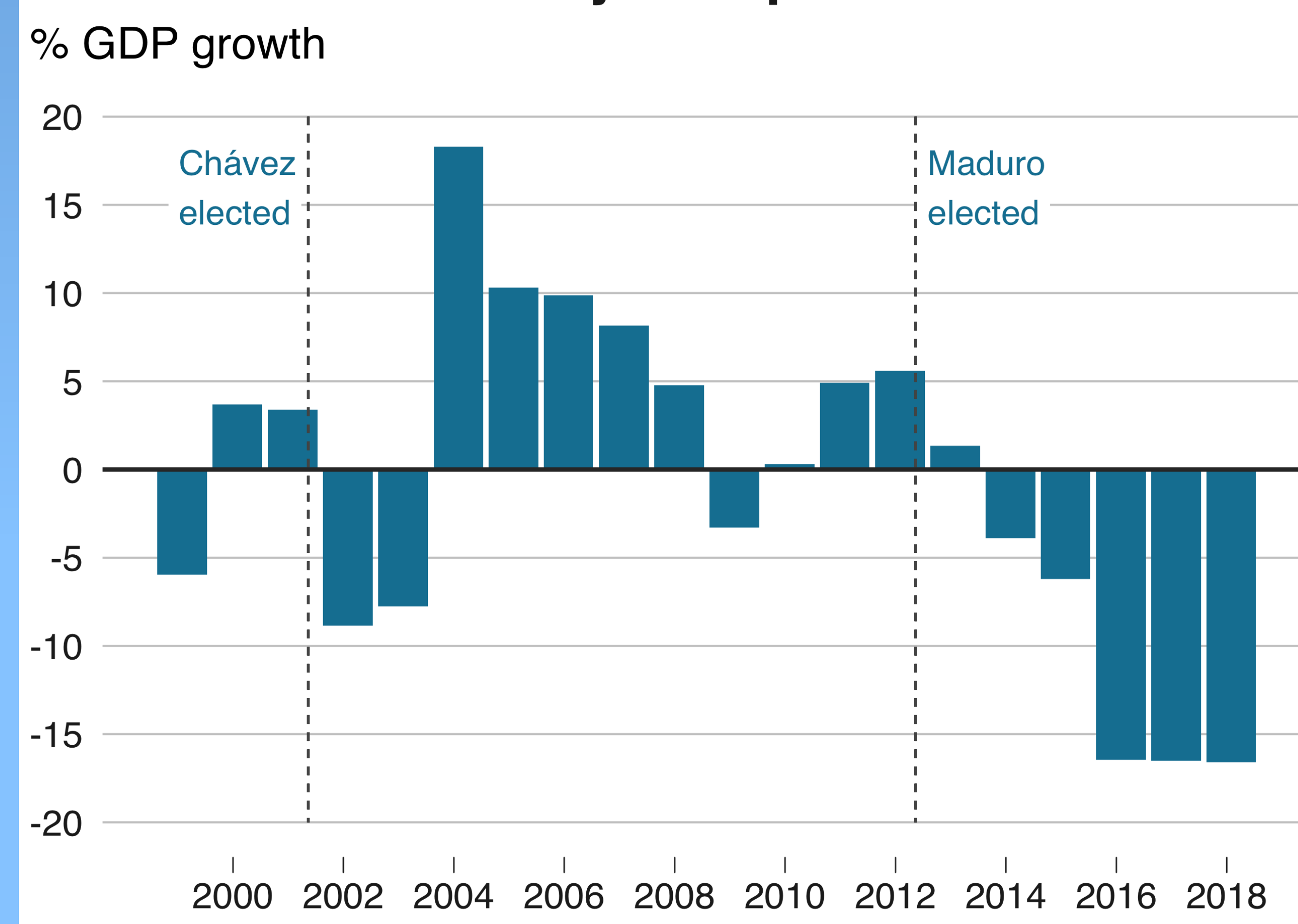


Figure 2: Venezuelan GDP Growth 2000-2018. Courtesy BBC

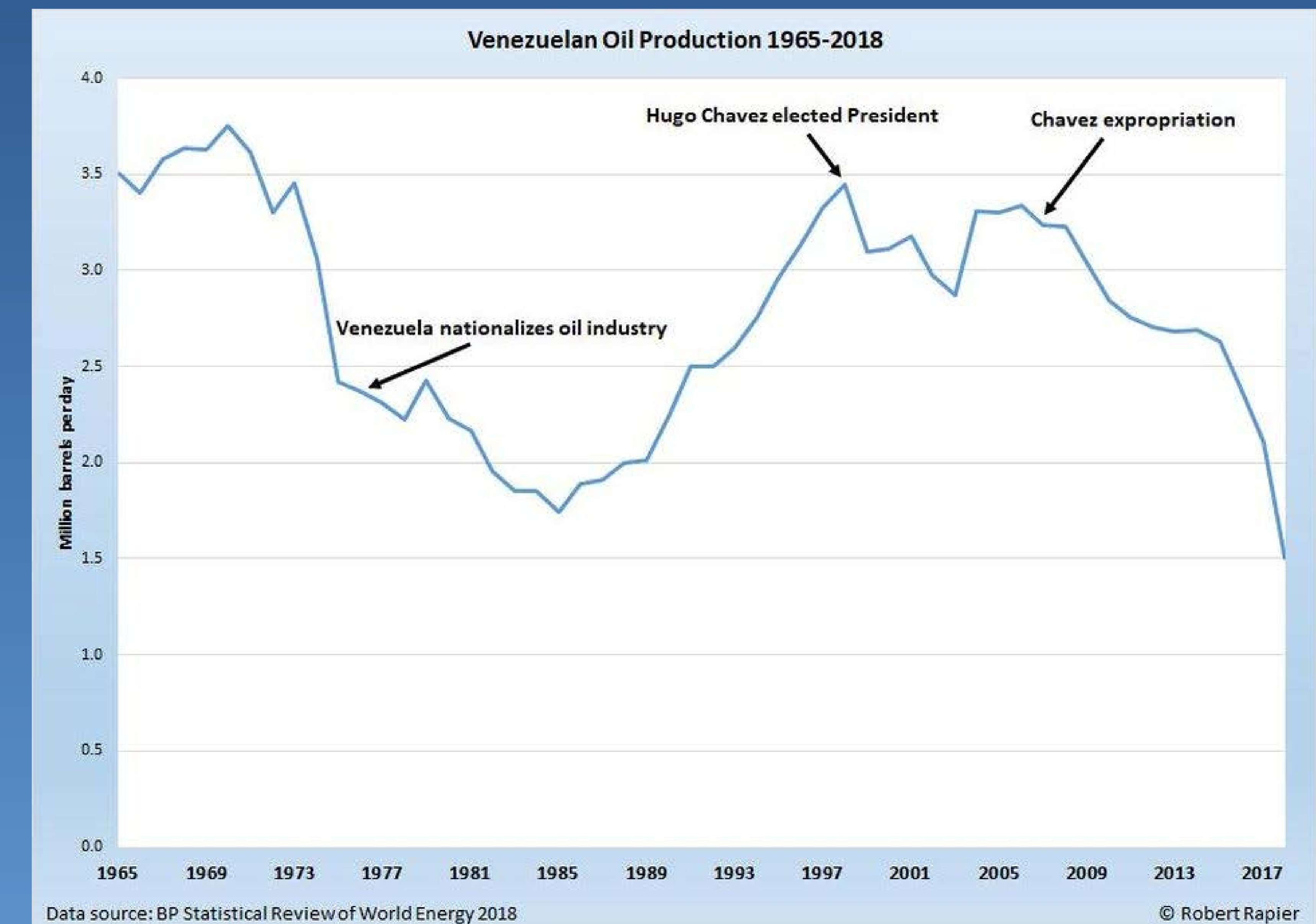


Figure 3: Venezuelan Oil Production, 1965-2018. Courtesy Forbes

## Conclusions

- Despite frequent use of workers' rights in propaganda, the Venezuelan government prefers a loyal workforce and is willing to use oppressive measure to attain this.
- Failure to reinvest in the oil industry is leading to breakdowns and dangerous conditions for workers.
- The ongoing crisis has greatly depressed oil workers' wages and forced them to do more work on less calories, while the government works to stop or punish resignations.

## References

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