

President Maduro Holds Mass Rally to Reject Efforts to Start Violence in Venezuela

By [Global Research News](#)

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Thousands of government supporters gathered yesterday in Caracas to call for “peace” after violent clashes left three dead on Wednesday. Opposition leader Henrique Capriles today called supporters to gather for a national march “against paramilitaries and violence”.

Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro held the mass rally to reject the violent incidents at some opposition protests in recent weeks. The worst of the violence occurred in Caracas on Wednesday, when [clashes](#) left three dead and several dozen wounded. There are [conflicting accounts](#) as to exactly what happened.

Maduro used yesterday’s gathering to attack what he called a “coup plot” by the far right opposition, and to promote his “national pacification plan” to reduce crime and tackle political violence. He told supporters that to construct peace in Venezuela, political differences should be settled through a battle of ideas, not arms.

“We call on all Venezuela to combat in the streets with ideas, with values, in high quality debate, with respect for people’s rights, without violence,” Maduro declared.

The Venezuelan president also warned extremist groups within Chavismo that violent acts would not be tolerated. The opposition has accused such groups of involvement in Wednesday’s deadly clashes.

“I want to say clearly: someone puts on a red t-shirt with Chavez’s face and takes out a pistol to attack, isn’t a Chavista or a revolutionary. I don’t accept violent groups within the camp of Chavismo and the Bolivarian revolution,” Maduro stated.

“If you want to have arms to fight...get out of Chavismo,” the president warned, stating that security forces are the only organisations that should possess guns in Venezuela.

Maduro also said that violent opposition members had perpetrated attacks on the Attorney General’s office on Wednesday, and said those responsible for the day’s violent acts would be brought to justice.

“The people want justice, justice against fascism and violence. There’s going to be justice...fascism is fought with the law, justice and severe punishment,” he said.

Venezuela’s Attorney General, Luisa Ortega Diaz, has said that investigations into Wednesday’s violence and murders are underway, and that “no one can be accused until the results of the investigation are obtained”.

Authorities are still searching for opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez, who they want to charge for his alleged involvement in Wednesday's violence. Lopez had been leading a campaign called "the exit" to force President Maduro's resignation, and is reportedly still in the country.

Protests continue

Student-led opposition protests continue in Venezuela, although with reduced numbers and intensity compared to Wednesday. Opposition supporters complain about issues such as crime, inflation and shortages, and many have demanded the president's resignation.

Violent sectors of the opposition have also committed a variety of violent acts at some protests in recent weeks. In the city of Mérida, a focal point of recent protests, Venezuelanalysis.com [observed](#) them setting up burning barricades, throwing stones, and threatening civilians at gunpoint.

Peaceful opposition protests took place in several Venezuelan cities yesterday, including Mérida, San Cristobal, Maturin and Puerto Ordaz. However, a protest in the Chacao area of Caracas last night turned violent, with some 500 stone-throwing rioters causing damages to a state-owned bank, a government bus and a Supreme Court office. The opposition leader of the municipality, Ramon Muchacho, condemned the "violence and vandalism" of those involved.

According to local press reports the National Guard used tear gas and pellets to contain the rioters, leaving a toll of 17 wounded and 2 arrested.

Venezuela's internal affairs minister, Miguel Rodriguez, said in a statement today that of 120 people arrested during recent protests, only 14 remain in custody, to be charged with specific acts of vandalism and violence.

"We have always acted in respect of human rights...when protests have been peaceful and within the law, the PNB (National Bolivarian Police) have protected the safety of these youths," the minister's statement read.

Rodriguez also accused Henrique Capriles, the opposition governor of Miranda state, of "passing the buck" and not acting to control violent street actions in his jurisdiction, leaving the task to the national government instead.

Capriles calls national march

In a press conference today, Henrique Capriles distanced himself from the actions of violent opposition groups, referring to them as "infiltrators". "Let's isolate the infiltrators...we reject violence wherever it comes from," he said.

"Legitimate peaceful protest must be orientated. It must be given a focus," the former presidential candidate added. Capriles then called for a national opposition march "against paramilitaries and violence", saying he would announce the time and location soon. He added that he was in "solidarity" with Leopoldo Lopez, despite the differences they had about opposition strategy.

Finally, Capriles attacked what he called government "censorship" of recent protests,

referring to the blocking of Colombian channel NTN24 from transmitting on Venezuelan cable services. Maduro said NTN24 was trying to promote “anxiety” in the population to promote a state coup “like April 2002”.

The Venezuelan opposition has also accused the government of blocking twitter users from seeing online images following Wednesday’s violence. Bloomberg reported yesterday that a twitter spokesperson had confirmed the claim.

However the government’s telecommunications company CANTV “emphatically and categorically” denied the accusation. It said the servers responsible for twitter are located outside of Venezuela, and a similar problem with loading online images on Wednesday had occurred in several countries.

A check by Venezuelanalysis.com of twitter within Venezuela encountered a problem loading accounts on Thursday evening, however it was not clear if this was an isolated incident or not. Checks on Friday, Saturday and Sunday have found twitter working as normal, with the accounts of far-right opposition figures active and images posted to those accounts loading without a problem.

Today information minister Delcy Rodriguez hit out at opposition social media activists for misusing and manipulating images which are then picked up by foreign media to mislead the public on events within Venezuela.

Examples given in her presentation included ABC’s use of a photo showing police attacking a protestor in Egypt, and claiming it was example of a protest in Venezuela. In another case, opposition social media activists used a photo of police dragging a student away during a protest in Chile, and claimed it was from Venezuela’s current protests.

Rodriguez also presented footage which showed attacks against the headquarters of state channel VTV by radical opposition activists for the previous four nights. The video showed people setting up burning barricades outside the station and throwing Molotov cocktails at the building.

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