

Venezuela Coup? Gunfire, Clashes as 3 Dead in Violent Caracas Protest

By [RT](#)

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Region: [Latin America & Caribbean](#)

At least three people have died in violent protests in the Venezuelan capital, officials have confirmed. President Nicolas Maduro has condemned the unrest as an attempt at a coup d'état orchestrated by extremist members of the political opposition.

Thousands of protesters flooded the streets of the Venezuelan capital on Wednesday in the worst unrest since Nicolas Maduro assumed the presidency last year. Demonstrators from several different political factions clashed in Caracas, leaving at least three people dead and over 20 injured.

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Venezuela's top prosecutor confirmed the death of 24-year-old student Bassil Dacosta Frías, who was shot in the head and died later in hospital. Officials said that a government supporter was also assassinated in what they decried as an act of "fascism." A third person was killed in the Chacao neighborhood in the East of the Venezuelan capital.

[#Caracas](#) Difunden foto de unidades policiales incendiadas en el centro de la ciudad
pic.twitter.com/tO2bUXUOsh
— Angel VillarroelLara (@avillarroellara) [February 12, 2014](#)

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As night fell in Chacao, police clashed with protesters, firing tear gas into a crowd of young protesters who burned tires and blocked a main road. RT Actualidad's correspondent in Caracas, Karen Mendez, said that gunfire broke out in Chacao later during the night and her team had been caught in the crossfire.

The government and the opposition have already traded blows over the violence in the capital. Leader of the opposition movement 'Popular Will' Leopoldo Lopez - who participated in the 2002 coup d'état against former President Hugo Chavez - claimed the government had orchestrated the bloodshed to discredit the Venezuelan opposition.

Plaza Venezuela 11:10am [@EINacionalWeb](#)
[#12Fpic.twitter.com/LoNpAyQZFz](#)
— Andrea (@andreesarabia) [February 12, 2014](#)

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“Maduro, you know full well that what happened today was your plan. The dead and the injured are your responsibility,” Lopez tweeted.

Nicolas Maduro responded to the violence in a public statement, denouncing the unrest as an attempt to carry out a coup d’état. He laid the blame at the feet of extremist fascist groups and said that those responsible for the violence would be prosecuted by the full weight of the law.



Demonstrators run away from tear gas during a protest in Caracas February 12, 2014.(Reuters / Jorge Silva)

“We are facing a coup d’état against democracy and the government that I preside over,” said Maduro. He claimed that the fascists group was using civil liberties and democracy as a tool to overthrow the government.

Despliegue policial en La Av. Universidad, Caracas (Foto VVperiodistas. Hace minutos)

pic.twitter.com/DLGNxHK2JQ

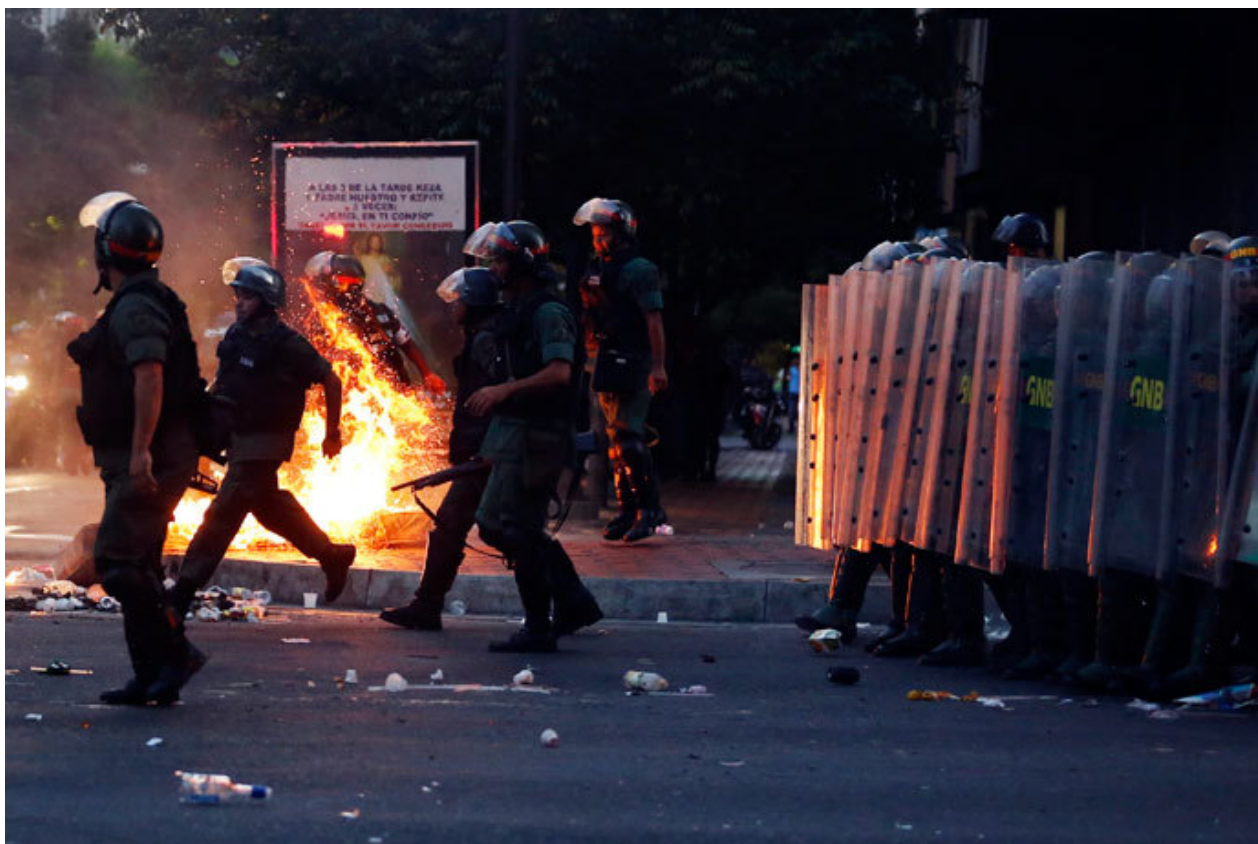
— VVSincensura (@VVperiodistas) [February 12, 2014](#)

Maduro called for peace on the streets of the capital and said that the bloodshed had to end. His political rival during last year’s elections, Henrique Capriles also appealed for calm on the streets.

“Violence will never be the way! We are confident that a large majority refuses and condemns it,” Capriles tweeted.

Protests have become relatively commonplace in Venezuela with the population disgruntled over shortages of basic goods such as sugar and toilet paper.

The latest bout of demonstrations focuses on the country's economic woes and the high level of inflation Venezuela has experienced recently.



Riot police walk past a barricade of burning garbage during a protest against Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro's government in Caracas February 12, 2014. (Reuters / Carlos Garcia Rawlins)

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