

What is really going on in Venezuela?

Frequently asked questions

26th February 2014

In recent weeks, a wave of violence has left 13 dead and 150 injured in Venezuela. Many misleading reports and images have been recycled in the international media, without verification, giving the impression of state-organised violence against peaceful protesters. Here we answer some frequently asked questions with facts, revealing a very different picture.

■ What started the current wave of violence?

On 22 January, a number of opposition leaders demanded “the ousting” (*La Salida*) of the elected Government of President Nicolas Maduro. Leopoldo Lopez, a right-wing politician, leads this faction of the Venezuelan opposition coalition and has said the aim is regime change:

“there should be a complete ... change in those who are in power... It’s clear now that the problem isn’t just Maduro, it’s all the heads of the public powers who have kidnapped the state”.

He added that this was only possible by “*getting the people into the streets*”.¹

In Venezuela there is a democratic route to ousting the president during the term of office - through a recall referendum, not street violence. Nonetheless, this has been rejected and the first violent incidents occurred soon after these remarks.

In early February, in Tachira (a state bordering Colombia) the state Governor’s house was attacked with Molotov cocktails, stones and bottles by opposition supporters when a group of up to seventy attacked his official residence. 12 people were injured and they allegedly destroyed a police sentry post, broke down the main gates and threatened his wife, who was protected by police. A bus of Cuban baseball players was also attacked by opposition activists. Targeting Cubans is symbolic as Cuba provides Venezuela with doctors in exchange for oil - one of the social policies closely identified with the Government.

■ So this is political and not really about students?

Yes. The next wave of major incidents occurred on 12 February when thousands marched to celebrate National Youth Day. However the majority of students out that day were on different demonstrations to express support for the Government, or just to celebrate youth day, an important national day in Venezuela; they were not marching against the Government.²

A small minority, as is their right, used the day to organise marches opposing the Government. No serious commentator has claimed that these were sizable demonstrations and they passed off peacefully. But later in the day a tiny minority sought to exploit the situation and unleash a wave of violence which resulted in the first three people killed, including supporters and opponents of the Government, after what was described as “the vicious street attack near the national headquarters of the prosecutor’s office in Caracas” by US think tank the *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*.³

As the *Center for Democracy in the Americas* states, there is little doubt that the violence has mostly been provoked by some sectors of the opposition.⁴ The vast majority of Venezuelans agree, with opinion polls showing over 80% believe that opposition protests have been violent.⁵

■ Why would elements of the right-wing opposition use violence?

Because they’re not winning at the ballot box. The right-wing opposition’s electoral coalition, known as MUD, lost the regional and mayoral elections in December by a wide margin. President Nicolas Maduro’s coalition won 55% of the

vote, with a 10% lead of 1.2m votes⁶. The opposition coalition has lost four elections in the past 16 months including two since the death of Hugo Chavez, a development that they had believed would create their best opportunity to come to power.

Opposition leader (and candidate in the last two presidential elections) Henrique Capriles had held up December's elections as a referendum on the Government - and the opposition lost this 'referendum'. As a result, those politicians advocating a strategy of defeating the Government at the ballot box have been weakened. With the earliest date for a constitutional recall referendum to vote out the President being 2016, those advocating alternative paths to oust the Government, such as violence, are seeking to take the lead. While Henrique Capriles shook hands with President Maduro in January, signifying not only a more conciliatory stance but tacitly recognizing Maduro's legitimacy as President, Leopoldo López and Maria Corina Machado have both taken a harder line. Notably, whilst Capriles has said he supports opposition protests, he has also directly condemned the violence whilst the leaders of *La Salida* haven't.⁷

■ **Have right-wing extremists used violence and unconstitutional means before?**

Very much so. Right-wing opposition groupings in Venezuela have engaged in unconstitutional measures with the aim of overturning the results of democratic elections ever since a new republic was created in Venezuela in 1999. This includes the military coup against Hugo Chavez in 2002, which left dozens dead; a lock-out of oil workers in 2003 that collapsed the economy in a bid to oust the Government; a wave of serious street violence in 2004; opposition refusal to recognise many of the elections it lost (but accepting results when it wins local governorships for example); and the wave of violence that left 13 Government supporters dead following the 2013 Presidential election.⁸

■ **Is the Government cracking down on and killing peaceful protesters?**

No. Contrary to many media reports, there is no evidence of organised Government violence or arrests of peaceful protesters. Far from the impression given in much of the international media, the deaths have not all been of opposition protesters at the hands of state forces. The real picture is very different. Indeed the Government has repeatedly condemned all violence and called for peace and dialogue with all forces.

The killings:

As of the 25 February, the Attorney General reported that 13 people have been killed in the violence. There is no uniform pattern to the deaths. This tragic figure includes killings of Government supporters, including the first person shot dead; some killed whilst on opposition demonstrations and others tragically caught up in the violence.

- **Shootings:** At the time of writing there is evidence that three of these 13 deaths have been of opposition supporters shot on protests. There are however conflicting reports on who shot them and from which side the fatal shots were fired. In addition another shooting fatality was the government supporter and brother of the socialist deputy Francisco Martínez who was shot dead in Lara state while trying to clear the burning remains of a road barricade.

Regarding two of the people killed on the first day of violence - an opponent and supporter of the Government - three military police officers have been arrested for these two deaths. These two factors underline how the situation is not one of a state policy of targeting opponents of the government. President Maduro has suggested that these victims were killed by the same gun, strengthening fears that rogue elements may be seeking to create instability to justify action. President Maduro has also sacked the head of SEBIN military police for having agents on the streets when he had told them not "*not go out onto the street*" and has said that he "*won't protect anyone who shoots anyone else at a demonstration.*"⁹

- **Killings at opposition barricades** At least three people, including a public attorney, have died as the direct result of violent opposition road barricades. Barricades that have killed and maimed were set up on the advice of a former military general supportive of the opposition, who advised that barbed wire should be placed across (and above) roads to deliberately injure government supporters.¹⁰ At least one person has had their throat slit by the wire¹¹. Another man was stabbed seeking to get through an opposition barricade whilst an opposition supporter was also run over by a car while trying to block a road as part of protests (the man accused of running him over has been arrested).

Other violence:

The violence is overwhelmingly directed against Government and public buildings and supporters of the Government. The generally anti-Government flavour of the attacks indicates that the main culprits are most likely extreme elements of the opposition. There has been no violence against opposition headquarters, opposition supporting TV channels or

newspapers or symbols associated with the opposition.

Weapons found on those arrested for violent acts have included grenades, machine guns, pistols and rifles. One weapons cache found last week alone contained 360 petrol bombs, 420 weapons with nails protruding and 16 kilograms of gunpowder.¹² The same ex-military general who advised on building fatal barricades also tweeted, “to render armoured vehicles of the dictatorship [meaning Government vehicles or vehicles of Government supporters] useless, Molotov cocktails should be thrown under the motor”.

Likewise, in addition to gun shots, firebombs, petrol bombs, slabs of concrete and other missiles from extreme elements of the opposition continue to be used in a range of violent actions, including:

- In the torching of - and attacks on - public transport. This has included buses, with 40 metrobuses attacked with passengers and staff inside, and 200 people having received medical treatment.
- In the targeting of public buildings including: power stations; the Ministry of Transport building (which faced gunfire); the headquarters of the Fiscalía General (Attorney General); the public television channel (Channel 8); the state-owned Banco de Venezuela; trucks of the state grocery store chain PDVAL carrying subsidised food; health centres and public universities.
- On media associated with the Government and its journalists. Most notably there is an ongoing violent siege of the headquarters of the public television station *Venezolana de Televisión*.

Furthermore, the academic expert on Venezuela Steve Ellner has written that “*Opposition mayors in Caracas and elsewhere have refrained from using their police force to contain the violence.*”¹³

In contrast, the Government has said very clearly that it will not accept any violence and has promised to fully support the Attorney General in the investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators of the violence and murder.¹⁴ Furthermore, speaking on 15 February, President Maduro said he would condemn any violence from people claiming to be his supporters, saying “*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.*”

Arrests: Extreme right-wing opposition activists are trying to depict those arrested for such violence as victims of political persecution, when in fact they are arrested for criminality. Venezuela expert Dr Julia Buxton offered some context on this explaining that 30 people were arrested on 12th February, following serious disorder, including barricade building, tire burning and Molotov cocktail attacks¹⁵, whereas 153 students were arrested in the UK during the 2010 protests against tuition fees.

■ Who stands to gain from a wave of violence?

David Smilde, a Senior Fellow with the *Washington Office on Latin America*, argues:

“While Capriles shook hands with Maduro in January, signifying not only a more conciliatory stance but tacitly recognizing Maduro’s legitimacy, Leopoldo López and Maria Corina Machado have both taken a harder line and are working outside of the Mesa de Unidad Democrática (MUD)... Without a doubt, in immediate political terms the biggest beneficiary of yesterday’s [Feb.12] violence was López...”

‘Put differently, at least viewed from the outside, the Maduro Government is not in a particularly vulnerable political position and it would make no sense in such a context for the Government to organize violence against a modest student march. Violence that could be blamed on the Government is perhaps the only thing that could unify the opposition at this point, and could provide an impetus for large-scale anti-Government mobilization. Furthermore violence is bound to draw negative international attention, strengthening the “rogue state” narrative that critics have used to portray Venezuela during the past fifteen years.’

Smilde added separately that “*Before this happened, Lopez was playing second fiddle to Capriles... I think his goal is to try and leapfrog over Capriles. The student protests have put him in the spotlight.*”

With Government supporters clearly winning December’s elections, and Maduro gaining good approval ratings in recent months, it would seem elements of the right-wing opposition committed to ‘*La Salida*’ have much more to gain from violence than the Government or its supporters.

■ Do current events have echoes of the 2002 military coup?

The most concerning interpretation of current events is that it is an attempt by extreme elements in the opposition to try to replicate the conditions that led to the military coup d’état in Venezuela of 2002. In 2002, opposition leaders orchestrated a wave of killings including sniper fire on protesters from all sides, blamed the Government for this and

manipulated and falsified media images as justification for a section of the military to carry out a coup, but also to disorient the international community as to what was going on.

There are some worrying parallels with current events.

The *Centre for Democracy in the Americas* has noted how in many respects, the attacks on Government buildings, the fires and the street blockades resemble the “*guarimba*” street protests that led up to the 48-hour coup of 2002.¹⁶

There has also been the release of a recorded conversation, from the eve of the latest violence, between a pre-Chavez Foreign Minister and a former military vice-admiral discussing plans for violence¹⁷ and “something similar to April [2002]”. Likewise concerns have been raised that agent provocateurs/rogue military officers have been shooting at opposition protesters to stoke further waves of violence. In response to this, speaking on Saturday February 22, President Maduro said he would ensure that any elements of the security services that did engage in rogue fire towards opposition protesters were brought to justice.

It should be noted too that the current leaders of “the ousting” strategy were deeply involved in the 2002 coup. As the Washington based *Centre for Economic and Policy Research* think-tank explained, Leopoldo López and Maria Corina Machado supported the 2002 coup; in López’s case he participated in it (when he was mayor of the Chacao area) by supervising the arrest of then-Minister of Justice Ramón Rodríguez Chacín. Police dragged Rodríguez Chacín out of the building where he had sought refuge into an angry mob, who physically attacked him. Corina Machado notably was present when the coup Government of Pedro Carmona was sworn in, and signed an infamous coup decree dissolving the democratically elected Congress, the constitution and the Supreme Court.¹⁸

Sumate, an organisation that Machado established, has received substantial funding from the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington and she was feted by President George Bush whom she met at the White House.

Another parallel is the manipulation of media images. Disinformation occurred in April 2002 and in other past incidents in Venezuela, most notably when manipulated video footage was used to provide political justification for the coup d’état.¹⁹

The current demonstrations have been accompanied by a social media campaign that has spread misinformation in an attempt to depict the Maduro administration as a violent dictatorship instead of a popularly elected Government. Dozens of the images circulating on social media sites purporting to come from Venezuela have been exposed as either being fake, from the past or from other countries. Photographs and video clips of Chilean, Argentinian and Bulgarian police suppressing demonstrators and carrying out arrests (in their home countries) have been circulated and published as if they were assaults in Venezuela, and one widely reproduced image shows Venezuela’s Policia Metropolitana corraling student protestors. The Policia Metropolitana was disbanded in 2011.²⁰

■ Is the wave of political violence on the scale of Ukraine?

No. Whilst there have been some very violent incidents these are mainly focused in a small number of areas. Consistent reports suggest that these are focused in just 18 of the 335 municipalities. President Maduro has pointed out that each of these 18 municipalities are under the administration of a democratically elected opposition mayor or governor, once more suggesting the political objective to the violence. Home Secretary Miguel Rodríguez Torres has said that fewer than 2,000 people are involved in the violence out of 30m Venezuelans.²¹

For example in Caracas, the country’s largest city, the violence has focused on areas such as Altamira and Chacao which are the equivalent of South Kensington and Chelsea. In other areas of Caracas where the poor majority live the situation is very different. As *BBC Mundo* has reported:

“.....There are various avenues in the capital where it is practically impossible to not run into [burn] marks every five metres. But as you approach the poorer zones of the capital, the so-called barrios (or favelas), the ash begins to disappear. And the normality of everyday life in the barrio appears.

‘Uh?’ was the perplexed response of a man near Mamera, in the south-east of the city, when I asked about the protests that had been occurring for more than a week in Caracas and many other zones of the country. His one-syllable response made clear his disinterest and marked the end of the interview. That is, there is a portion of the country that is convulsed. But there is also another that ignores or wants nothing to do with what is happening and many of those that make up this sector live in the poor areas....The same scenes were repeated in the trip that BBC Mundo did through the zones of Catia, 23 de Enero, La Quebradita and others, where there tends to be more political support for the Government.”²²

The violence is most intense in San Cristobal, bordering Colombia, where the opposition is strong and in the Andean town of Merida, another opposition stronghold.

■ **Is the Government trying to silence opposition by arresting protest leader, Leopoldo Lopez?**

No, Leopoldo Lopez was arrested on charges of incitement to violence and arson, not because he has political disagreements with the Government. This followed the issuing of an arrest warrant by the Attorney General - not the President. If a protest movement in Britain declared a wave of actions that led to violence that left many dead, those responsible for the actions would face criminal charges. Likewise in Venezuela, where it will be for the Venezuela legal system to see if Lopez is guilty or not of the charges.

It should also be noted that Lopez represents a tiny fraction of the opposition in Venezuela. The opposition commands electoral support of around 45% but Lopez's party received only around 6% of the vote at December's Mayoral elections. There are literally hundreds of elected state governors, MPs, Mayors and councillors aligned to the opposition in Venezuela actively opposing the Government with total freedom for their political activities, and the support of the majority of the media which remains overwhelmingly in private hands and hostile to the Government.

Additionally there have been numerous small opposition protests in Venezuela over recent weeks, as well as some larger ones, plus much opposition activity on social media. Thus a clear distinction between the right to protest, to assemble, and for free speech, and the use of violence, is being drawn in Venezuela, as it is in other democracies.

■ **Has the Government silenced all negative media coverage?**

No. Contrary to many misleading claims, the protests are not being ignored by the Venezuelan media and opposition views are vigorously expressed on national TV, in the newspapers and across social media.

Taking television as an example, the most influential media, the Carter Centre, headed by former US President Jimmy Carter, found that private TV in Venezuela has around 75% of the viewing audience for "key newsworthy events" with the state share at just 25% based on survey from October 2012 -March 2013.²³ It also reported a 2013 AGB Nielsen survey of all hours of coverage from January-June 2013 that found state TV has just an 8.4% audience of all viewership figures.

Private coverage is overwhelmingly favourable to the opposition and critical of the Government. For example, the biggest broadcast television station is Venevisión, owned by the billionaire media mogul Gustavo Cisneros and this one station alone has about 35% of the news-watching audience during "key newsworthy events".²⁴ The Washington based CEPR think tank has listed various long interviews with opposition leaders on this channel during current events, including one with hard-line opposition leader María Corina Machado arguing that people have a right to overthrow the democratically elected government.²⁵

All but one of these TV stations has continued to broadcast throughout recent events including the US station CNN. The only station stopped from broadcasting was the Colombian cable station NTN24 for serious violations of the media fairness laws - the equivalent of the Broadcasting Standards in Britain. It has also been widely reported that Twitter has been taken down in Venezuela to silence the opposition. This simply is not true, as is evident from the huge amount of material coming out from Venezuela's social media and reported in western media.

■ **Why does the Government accuse the US of being involved?**

Three US diplomats were expelled on February 16 for allegedly meeting with the protesters. Whether or not they have been directly involved in orchestrating these current events - and a history of US involvement across Latin America shows this is certainly a possibility - the US continues to pump money into the opposition to the elected government in Venezuela.

Last year *Wikileaks* revealed a 2006 cable, from then-Ambassador from the US to Venezuela William Brownfield, outlining a five-point US strategy for regime change in Venezuela. Those goals are to be obtained by strengthening "democratic institutions" and would be carried out via funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and its Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI).²⁶

Eva Gollinger, a US-Venezuelan lawyer and author who exposed the CIA cables outlining US involvement in the 2002 coup against Hugo Chavez, has written how the opposition has been pumped with huge amounts of money under the guise of the 'strengthening of democratic institutions'. She writes:

"Over the ten year period, from 2000-2010, US agencies, including the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and its Office for Transition Initiatives (OTI), set up in Caracas in 2002, channelled more than \$100 million dollars to opposition groups in Venezuela. The overall objective was regime change."

Scaled up to the population and economic size of Britain, this would be the equivalent of UK opposition groups receiving

\$800m from the US Embassy to affect UK politics. The scale is breath-taking and such foreign funding would simply not be allowed in most countries.

Such funding is ongoing. For example the US' 2014 Foreign Operations Budget alone outlines \$5m for Venezuelan opposition groups.²⁷ The importance of this money to the opposition parties is clear. Gollinger explains how current opposition leaders *"have been major recipients of US funding and political support for their endeavours to overthrow Chavez, and now Maduro."* including *"start-up funds for Machado's NGO Sumate, and Capriles' and Lopez's right-wing party Primero Justicia. When Lopez split from Primero Justicia in 2010 to form his own party, Voluntad Popular, it was bankrolled by US dollars."*

Furthermore current US Government statements condemning Maduro for the current unrest are important as they are effectively sending signals to the Venezuelan opposition that Washington is once again backing regime change. This silence against opposition violence is seen as a *carte blanche* by many in Venezuela's opposition to carry on with *La Salida*. Kerry did the same thing in April of last year. When Maduro was elected president - and opposition presidential candidate Henrique Capriles falsely claimed that the election was stolen - Kerry refused to recognize the election results. A wave of opposition violence then left 13 dead.

■ What are the links between the right wing political leaders and students?

US funding accelerated following Hugo Chavez's landslide re-election in 2006. It also changed its focus onto new groups in order to build up a future opposition. Student groups were a key target. Gollinger explains that funding *"was directed towards youth and student groups, including training in the use of social networks to mobilize political activism. Student leaders were sent to the US for workshops and conferences on Internet activism and media networking. They were formed in tactics to promote regime change via street riots and strategic use of media to portray the Government as repressive."*

Likewise one of the UK's foremost Venezuelan experts Dr. Julia Buxton has explained that in the past five years *"Students in private sector universities became the new vanguard of 'democracy promotion'. In 2008, the US-based Cato Institute awarded the US \$500,000 Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty to student leader Yon Goicoechea ...At the same time, a sizeable amount of the US \$45 million in funding provided annually by US institutions to Venezuelan opposition groups was channelled to 'youth outreach' programmes. With financial support and media training, Venezuela's student and opposition-aligned Juventud Activa Venezuela Unida (JAVU) became vociferous and mobilised...and in 2013 [JAVU] demonstrations were organised outside the Cuban Embassy, first to demand the return of Chávez from chemotherapy in Havana and then to challenge the result of the April presidential election."*

She adds: *"The current protests ...mark a coming together of the student movement and radical elements of the MUD. López and Machado have been organizing with the student leadership, in particular in relation to the February 12th demonstrationsIn turn, the student movement has embraced the 'salida' demand of López and Machado, threatening to stay on the streets until Maduro leaves office."*

David Smilde from the Washington Office on Latin America explains that *"Leopoldo López's calls for peaceful mobilization are disingenuous when his acts seem to be intentionally creating the conditions for unintended violence. He is effectively putting student protesters in the line of fire to further what he sees as the interests of the country. With no actual governing proposals other than getting Maduro to resign, it seems like his efforts could well backfire as did the guarimbas [similar violent protests] of 2004."*

■ Has the Government tried to talk to the opposition?

Yes. The Government has repeatedly advocated national dialogue to resolve both the current violence and to address wider issues that some peaceful protesters are focused on such as crime and inflation. On 19 February President Maduro urged for more talks with student groups, stating he is open to *"constructive dialogue to define key issues"*. He also once again reiterated calls for peace and dialogue on 24 February at a meeting of the National Federal Council, attended by almost all governors, including opposition governors. President Maduro organised a 26 February national conference for peace and dialogue.

Additionally, President Maduro has established a movement for peace, led by artists, athletes and cultural figures, together with organized communities seeking to end not just the current chaotic situation, but also the high crime levels that have plagued the country over the past few years. The Government has also called on its supporters to demonstrate their support for peace, with a number of very large rallies being held.

In fact, since the election results in December, President Maduro has organised talks with the opposition to find ways of

working together on pressing matters facing Venezuela. To this end he met with opposition governors and mayors at the Presidential Palace in late December. Another series of meetings in January led to a handshake with former Presidential candidate and leader of the opposition Henrique Capriles on 7 January. In fact it is widely believed by a range of commentators that the beginnings of this dialogue provoked the latest wave of violence by extremist elements of the opposition who want to prevent such talks being successful.

■ Conclusion

The VSC believes that violence launched with the proclaimed objective of “the ousting” of the elected, constitutional government in Venezuela is unacceptable. We further believe that external intervention in support of the anti-democratic forces, including financial support, can only make the problems worse. We join with the Latin American nations and organisations such as the United Nations of South America (UNASUR) in condemning the wave of violence unleashed and in supporting calls for peace and dialogue to end all further bloodshed.



www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk / info@venezuelasolidarity.co.uk / www.twitter.com/vensolidarity

1 <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/10329>

2 <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/10346>

3 <http://www.coha.org/venezuelan-Government-shows-restraint-and-resolve-in-the-face-of-anti-chavista-mayhem/>

4 <http://www.democracynamericas.org/around-the-region-blog/caracas-connect-february-report/>

5 <http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/nacionales/encuesta-ics-853-venezolanos-esta-desacuerdo-guarimbas/>

6 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/10229>

7 <http://www.coha.org/venezuelan-Government-shows-restraint-and-resolve-in-the-face-of-anti-chavista-mayhem/>

8 <http://www.cepr.net/index.php/blogs/the-americas-blog/violent-protests-in-venezuela-fit-a-pattern>

9 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/23/us-venezuela-protests-idUSBREA1L0TO2014022>

10 See the retired General's full quotes on Twitter at <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/10391>

11 Retired General Angel Vivas, publicly promoted the use of wire at blockades in order to “neutralise” people on motorbikes. On 20 February Vivas tweeted ‘In order to neutralise criminal hordes on motorbikes, one must place nylon string or galvanised wire across the street, at a height of 1.2 metres’. He also tweeted, ‘to render armoured vehicles of the dictatorship [meaning Government vehicles or vehicles of Government supporters] useless, Molotov cocktails should be thrown under the motor, to burn belts and hoses, they become inoperative’. Other tweeters responded to his tweet about decapitating motorbike riders with further advice for the violent blockades, including suggesting that ‘a lot of oil be used in the streets, it is good for two things, they fall off, and it can set [things] alight’.

12 See the extraordinary photos here:

<http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/politica/vea-360-bombas-molotovs-16-kilos-polvora-gasolina-y-cauchos-incautados-carabobo/>

13 <http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/10377>

14 <http://www.coha.org/venezuelan-Government-shows-restraint-and-resolve-in-the-face-of-anti-chavista-mayhem/>

15 <http://lab.org.uk/venezuela-%E2%80%93-student-protests>

16 <http://www.democracynamericas.org/around-the-region-blog/caracas-connect-february-report/>

17 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Et_bJkQHjw

18 <http://www.cepr.net/index.php/blogs/the-americas-blog/violent-protests-in-venezuela-fit-a-pattern>

19 <http://www.cepr.net/index.php/blogs/the-americas-blog/violent-protests-in-venezuela-fit-a-pattern>

20 <http://lab.org.uk/venezuela-%E2%80%93-student-protests>

21 Interview (in Spanish)

<http://www.noticias24.com/venezuela/noticia/224469/rodriguez-torres-quienes-mantienen-los-focos-de-violencia-en-el-pais-no-llegan-a-2-000-personas/>

22 Spanish original can be seen at http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/noticias/2014/02/140221_venezuela_crisis_bastiones_chavismo_az.shtml

23 http://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/venezuela-pre-election-rpt-2013.pdf

24 <http://www.cepr.net/index.php/blogs/the-americas-blog/does-venezuelan-television-provide-coverage-that-opposes-the-government#ftn2>

25 <http://www.cepr.net/index.php/blogs/the-americas-blog/does-venezuelan-television-provide-coverage-that-opposes-the-government>

26 <http://www.chavezcode.com/2014/02/venezuela-beyond-protests-revolution-is.html>

27 <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/208290.pdf>