



VENEZUELAN NEWS

28 Mar. 2014 / N° 20

Rating of Maduro management rose to 57%

Caracas, 24 Mar. AVN.- Results of latest survey Monitor Pais, conducted by polling firm Hinterlaces, showed that 57% of Venezuelans rate as positive administration of President Nicolas Maduro.

These data are compared to those on February which placed Maduro's acceptance on 43%.

On his Sunday analysis TV show, journalist Jose Vicente Rangel released results of the survey carried out on March 6-11 nationwide, by means of 1,200 interviews.

On trend analysis, the survey notes that in the past two weeks there was a significant recovery of the positive assessment of President Maduro management.

"Likewise, Chavez support grows, becomes more radical and takes a stand against the threat perceived by the onslaught of extremist opposition. Meanwhile, there is a significant drop in approval for leaders of the coalition for Democratic Unity (MUD, Spanish abbreviation)," Rangel said.

He explained that this strengthening of Chavez political ideology has to do with the rejection of violence, fear of chaos and absence of alternatives, as well as the initiative of the national government to call for dialog and peace.

At this point, the study reveals that 86% of respondents believed that any decision on the national government should be electoral.

Since past month right-wing groups have tried to destabilize the country through violent actions which have caused the death of 28 Venezuelans so far and extensive damage to state institutions, public spaces and transport units.

Given this situation, President Nicolas Maduro has repeated his call for dialog with the Venezuelan opposition, even with violent groups that have taken to the streets to protest and destroy, and has also promoted the development of peace conferences in different states to address weaknesses and provide solutions for all Venezuelans.

Maria Machado disqualified as legislator for violating article 149 of Venezuelan Constitution

Caracas, 24 Mar. AVN.- Right-wing deputy Maria Corina Machado has forfeited her parliamentary privileges for violating article 149 of the Venezuelan Constitution, informed National Assembly chairperson Diosdado Cabello on Monday.

Article 149 of the Bolivarian Constitution reads that "Public officials shall not be permitted to accept employment, honors or rewards from foreign government without authorization from the National Assembly."

Ms Machado was made Panama's Alternate Representative to the Organization of American States to have access to the organization "as long as necessary," informed in time Panama's ambassador to the OAS Arturo Vallarino.

In this connection, Cabello informed that the right-wing representative forfeited her privileges abiding by article 191 of the Constitution: "Deputies of the National Assembly shall not be permitted to accept or hold public employment positions without giving up their investiture, except in teaching, academic, temporary and care-giving positions, and provided the employment is not intended to be full-time."



Venezuela to denounce right-wing's attacks before international agencies

Caracas, 24 Mar. AVN.- Venezuela is going to denounce before international organizations the aggressions carried out by right-wing groups against universities, libraries and cultural centers across the country, informed president Nicolas Maduro.

Foreign minister Elias Jaua has been entrusted to prepare and file the complaint "before international organizations and to submit evidence of the burning-off of colleges, libraries, cultural centers and squares. The attack of intolerance, hatred, for the world to know the reality of actions carried out by the extreme right, which has even assumed symbols of Nazism," Maduro said the closing of the tenth international book fair FILVEN 2014.

In addition, president Maduro denounced a campaign carried out by the media to make the right-wing violent actions invisible.

"None of the agencies, television and 82 newspapers in America have not said a word about that a public university in Venezuela was burnt and that 15 universities have been attacked. That is not said, that is silenced," said the President.

Likewise, the Venezuelan President wonders why opposition supporters attack institutions and sources of knowledge.

"If they seize power through a coup d'état, which would be their measures for culture? How would they treat human beings, the youth? If counterrevolution reaches its goals, what would happen to our youth?," Maduro wondered.

About the matter, he requested intellectuals, writers and journalists to inform the world about fascist targets of right-wing groups in Venezuela.

Maduro sends condolences to family of those murdered by the fascist violence

Caracas, 24 Mar. AVN.- Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro sent Monday his condolences to the families of Adriana Urquiola, 28, and Sergeant of the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB) Miguel Parra, 42, who were killed by fascists this weekend.

Urquiola was killed amid a guarimba taking place in Los Teques, capital of Miranda state, while Parra shared the same misfortune in Merida.

"Both crimes occurred as a direct effect of right-wing guarimbas that attack the people and the Armed Force. Enough of violence!" president posted on his Twitter account @NicolasMaduro.

In a second message he said that those responsible for these murders will pay for these crimes and will be taken to jail.

"The whole country demands justice and justice will be done, criminals will go to jail and coup leaders will pay for the damage they inflicted on the country," Maduro wrote.

Since February 12 assault groups, in order to destabilize the national government, have killed more than 30 people injuring hundreds and causing extensive damage to public and private institutions, public spaces and transport units.



Three Venezuelan Air Force Generals Arrested for Alleged Coup Plotting

Venezuelanalysis.com.- 25th March 2014 - Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro announced today that three generals of the Venezuelan Air Force have been arrested, after they were denounced by lower-ranking officials for their involvement in alleged coup plans.

“Last night we captured three Air Force generals that we had been investigating thanks to the powerful moral force of our National Bolivarian Armed Forces: three generals that aimed to rise the Air Force against the legitimately constituted government,” he said during a live broadcast on state TV.

Maduro argued that those arrested “have direct links with the opposition, and said that this week was decisive”. According to the president, the alleged coup plot involves creating “psychological” chaos through attacking electricity and other services, and then striking against the government. The three generals are now under custody and will face an investigation.

The announcement was made on the same day that foreign ministers of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) arrive in the country to support dialogue efforts between the government and opposition.

Venezuela has been subject to a wave of opposition protests, riots and roadblocks since early February. The violence has left 35 dead, including National Guard officers, opposition activists and government supporters. Several hard-line opposition leaders openly call for the government’s resignation.

In his speech Maduro asked the country and UNASUR to support the Truth Commission established by the National Assembly last week to investigate the recent acts of violence. Opposition parliamentarians have not yet decided if they will participate in the commission, which would have five pro-government and four opposition legislators as members.

Venezuelans' contempt for violent demonstrations increases

Caracas, 25 Mar. AVN.- Venezuelans' contempt for violent demonstrations and riots fostered by far right groups and vandals in the country has increased over the last weeks, showed a recent poll conducted by Hinterlaces.

Hinterlaces president Oscar Schemel told private television channel Venevision that 83 per cent of Venezuelans rejected these actions of chaos of the last week of February; meanwhile, the latest survey conducted up to March 11th showed that 87 per cent of those polled condemn violence.

Likewise, Schemel added that 79 per cent of those polled think that far from reaching positive changes for the country, protests are making the situation worse.

The poll also showed that 86 per cent of the population think that any decision about the country's future must be taken through electoral means.

On the other hand, people's positive perception of the Nicolas Maduro administration increased to 57 per cent when it rated 43 per cent between January and February, Schemel detailed.

Furthermore, the number of Venezuelans who demanded the ousting of the President dropped to 11 per cent; about half of the 23 per cent who asked for it in February.



UNASUR commission to strengthen Peace Conference

Caracas, 25 Mar. AVN.- Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro underscored on Tuesday that the visit of the commission of foreign ministers of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) is going to strengthen the National Peace Conference.

"We want the path of truth and instruments have been created for it. One of the most important elements of this visit must be to strengthening the Peace Conference and peace talks," said President Maduro at Miraflores Presidential Palace, in Caracas, where he welcomed the foreign ministers.

UNASUR foreign ministers arrived in Miraflores since early morning on Tuesday for the initiative fostered by President Nicolas Maduro.

The creation of this commission was passed last March 12th in Santiago, Chile, to accompany, support and advise the peace talks between the National Government and opposition groups.

UNASUR commission met Venezuelan opposition in first day of agenda



Caracas, 26 Mar. AVN.- Meetings with different sectors of the country, including opposition groups, completed the first of a two-days agenda of the commission of foreign ministers of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) that came in Venezuela to support the National Peace Conference.

In a meeting of about three hours, the UNASUR commission heard the proposals raised by opposition coalition MUD in order to accept peace talks with the government, reported Telesur.

MUD secretary general Ramon Guillermo Aveledo celebrated that the meeting was held without prior conditions, but he insisted though in conditioning an agenda to begin talks with the Nicolas Maduro administration.

Over the last days, the National Government has held meetings with different sectors of the country amid a National Peace Conference convened to overcome differences peacefully. So far, right-wing groups have refused to take part in it.

The UNASUR commission also held a meeting with members of Evangelical, Muslim and Jewish communities in Venezuela. Previously, they had met with President Nicolas Maduro and the National Peace Conference's political commission.



Unasur delegation meets with economic commission of peace conference

Caracas, 26 Mar. AVN.- A delegation of foreign ministers of the Union of South American Nations (Unasur) holds Wednesday in Caracas a meeting with the economic commission of the peace conference, promoted by Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro, in response to the violent actions carry out by far right groups that stage a coup d'etat.

Vice President Jorge Arreaza led Tuesday Unasur meetings with the political committee of peace conference and religious sectors that have joined the dialog initiative that seeks to strengthen unity in diversity for the defense and respect of democracy.

"Unasur foreign ministers meet now with the economic commission of the national peace conference," said Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela on its Twitter account @vencancilleria.

Ecuador's Foreign Minister Ricardo Patiño and Bolivia's David Choquehuanca are part of the South American delegation.

In his Twitter account Patiño stressed the plurality of the meeting: "Our first meeting is with the economic commission of the peace conference of Venezuela. All business sectors are represented."

The Venezuelan government decided to include economic issues at the national conference for peace because the Venezuelan people is currently facing an economic war staged by conservative sectors opposed to the Bolivarian Government. This war features price speculation and hoarding of goods.

The president said that just as there was a need for a truth commission for peace to investigate the violent incidents fostered by the right-wing of the country, so there is a need for a truth commission in the economic area to seek meeting points in the productive sector with the aim of strengthening economic sovereignty.

Venezuelan students met with foreign ministers of UNASUR

Caracas, 27 Mar. RNV.- Representatives of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) met with opposition and revolutionary students from different Venezuelan universities in the Casa de las Americas, located in the city of Caracas.

The President of the Student Center at the Los Andes University (ULA), Inder Romero, said that 70 percent of the national student community were represented in the meeting with the foreign ministers because they all have a common goal: the call for peace.

He emphasized that students are seeking a healthy debate, full of ideas and arguments, to build a better country. "Nobody can say that burning trash and hindering the transit we can advance to consolidate a prosperous nation."

Referring to the violence facts, the student leader declared: "we cannot say that is a student hiding his face under a hood, who can cut off a tree to lock over the neighbors who have a right to transit through public spaces".

The university representative of the Mission Sucre, Daniela Urbano, said the main proposal brought by Bolivarian students for Venezuela to continue its course of progress is to contribute to the call for peace convened by President Nicolas Maduro, in which sectors of the far right wing have refused to participate.

"We the revolutionary students came to this call for peace without violence and we join the 83 percent of Venezuelans who, without distinction of any political position, wants peace. We do believe in our government and in the results we have seen so far", she added.

Since last Tuesday, March 25, the foreign ministers of the multilateral organization are holding meetings with various sectors that make up the National Commission for Peace, promoted by the government of President Nicolas Maduro, in order to resolve by peaceful means the political differences there are in the country.

Among the ministers taking part of the Unasur mission are the Ecuadorian, Ricardo Patiño; the Argentinean, Hector Timerman; the Bolivian, David Choquehuanca; the Uruguayan: Luis Almagro; the Brazilian: Luiz Alberto Figueiredo, the Colombian: María Ángela Holguín; and Unasur's Secretary General, Ali Rodriguez Araque.



UNASUR Urges Peace in Venezuela, US “Prepared” to Use Sanctions

By RYAN MALLETT-OUTTRIM

Venezuelanalysis.com.- Mérida, 27th March 2014 (Venezuelanalysis.com) – The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) called for an end to violence in Venezuela, after a delegation from the regional organization held a two-day visit to the country.

“The delegation has identified ... a firm rejection of the recent unfortunate violence from all sectors [of Venezuelan society engaged in meetings with UNASUR], condemning any attempt to disrupt the democratic order and a commitment to respect all human rights,” the UNASUR delegation stated in a report released this afternoon.

The visiting group urged all parties to respect the constitution, “moderate” their language and refrain from violence. It also commended President Nicolas Maduro for “openness and willingness” to accept recommendations from the regional body.

However, the delegation warned that paramilitary groups could be backing anti-government violence in the western state of Tachira. The state has been one of the worst hit areas in the country by a wave of political violence.

On Tuesday night, the UNASUR delegation met with Venezuela's largest opposition coalition, the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD). Ending around midnight, the delegation's meeting with MUD leaders lasted more than three hours. Following the meeting, MUD head Ramon Guillermo Avelo told private media the talks had been productive. So far, the MUD has boycotted government sponsored peace conferences, claiming the initiative lacks transparency. Although the conferences have been supported by the Organisation of American States (OAS), the MUD has set preconditions for negotiations including the release of all detained opposition supporters, the use of a presidential broadcast called a *cadena*, reductions in crime and the elimination food scarcity.

This week, Avelo also reiterated previous calls for a “bona fide third party” arbiter, and a “thorough report on the issue of human rights”.

Maduro recently declared an official human rights commission will be formed to handle allegations of human rights violations, including claims of abuse by government security forces, which have been accused of involvement in at least five deaths.

The UNASUR delegation also met with student groups along with the pro-government coalition, the Grand Patriotic Pole (GPP).

After the UNASUR delegation concluded its visit to Venezuela, today the United States issued new threats against the Maduro government. Assistant Secretary of State Roberta Jacobson stated that sanctions against Venezuela could become an “important tool”, according to the Associated Press.

“If there is no movement, no possibility of dialogue, if there's no democratic space for the opposition, obviously we have to think about this, and we are thinking about this,” Jacobson stated.

The US official stated Washington would work with regional allies to enforce sanctions, if they are used. Secretary of State John Kerry made similar threats in Washington on 12 March, warning that Obama administration is “prepared” to invoke the charter of the Organisation of American States (OAS) and impose sanctions.

However, just days before Kerry threatened to invoke the OAS charter, the OAS itself issued a statement ruling out intervention or any sanctions on Venezuela, and expressing solidarity with the Maduro government. 29 OAS member states voted in favour of the decision, while the US, Canada and Panama were the only dissenting votes.



Venezuela, Mexico strengthen diplomatic, commercial bonds



Caracas, 27 Mar. AVN.- Venezuelan foreign minister Elias Jaua and his Mexican counterpart Jose Antonio Meade met in Caracas on Thursday with a view to strengthen bilateral relations.

The two foreign ministers discussed issues in matters of regional integration and dealt with economic, commercial, financial, scientific, educational and cultural affairs.

A press release by the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry reported that the two officials worked on strengthening diplomatic ties with a view to boost political dialog and cooperation within organizations of integration.

The foreign ministers were also expected to devise guidelines aimed at preparing the second meeting of the permanent bi-national commission on cooperation and joint work, agreed during Jaua's visit to Mexico last November 4th.

In that opportunity, both representatives reviewed existing commitments between the two governments seeking to modernize and strengthen political dialog and cooperation.

Venezuela rejects interventionist statements of U.S. government spokesmen

Caracas, 27 Mar. RNV.- The Foreign Ministry of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela issued a statement on Thursday to reject the interfering statements that some spokesmen of the United States government have made regarding the situation in Venezuela .

The Under Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta Jacobson is one of the U.S. spokeswomen who has disowned the Venezuelan institutions, promoting violence from right-wing sectors in the country.

Following, the communique:

The government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, once again categorically rejects attempts by spokesmen for the government of the United States of meddling in the internal affairs of our country and disowning our democratic process.

The latest statements of the Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Roberta Jacobson, constitute a challenge to the Committee of Foreign Ministers of UNASUR that in recent days participated in numerous roundtables with broad sectors of Venezuelan society, of all political tendencies, and which has resulted in a resounding rejection of violence which for weeks has been taking place in the country, precisely by the hands of those sectors that reject dialogue and who are supported by the U.S. government.

All dialogue initiatives that have emerged in recent months are the result of the will of the national government of talking with all sectors of society to find solutions to the various problems we currently face, always in full respect of our constitutional order. However, the statements of Ms. Jacobson constitute an incentive for small extremist sectors, which for weeks have been sowing violence and terror throughout the population, to continue their practices in a way completely outside the constitution and the respect for the rights of all Venezuelans.

The Bolivarian Government reiterates to the international community our dedication to defend peace and deepen our democratic process. As true Bolivarians, we are convinced that the comprehensive dialogue with the entire society and within the framework of the 1999 Constitution, passed with the support of the popular vote, is the way to solve any disputes and problems. We will not allow interference from any country to deviate us from the path of peace.



The truth about Venezuela: a revolt of the well-off, not a 'terror campaign'

by Mark Weisbrot

Caracas, 21 Mar. AVN.- US economist Mark Weisbrot described the reality he found in Venezuela during a recent trip to the country this month, contrasting it to the image of the country he had taken from news sites in English.

Following, the complete article written by the analyst for The Guardian last Thursday, March 20th, where he denounces that US Secretary of State John Kerry has forged false information about Venezuela.

As a matter of fact, Mr Weisbrot notes that the US official has denounced that the Venezuelan Government carries out a "terror campaign against its own people," but reality on the ground proves that a campaign has been launched by US-supported extreme right-wing groups to overthrow President Nicolas Maduro.

Following, the complete text published on The Guardian website on Thursday 20 March 2014:

Images forge reality, granting a power to television and video and even still photographs that can burrow deep into people's consciousness without them even knowing it. I thought that I, too, was immune to the repetitious portrayals of Venezuela as a failed state in the throes of a popular rebellion. But I wasn't prepared for what I saw in Caracas this month: how little of daily life appeared to be affected by the protests, the normality that prevailed in the vast majority of the city. I, too, had been taken in by media imagery.

Major media outlets have already reported that Venezuela's poor have not joined the right-wing opposition protests, but that is an understatement: it's not just the poor who are abstaining – in Caracas, it's almost everyone outside of a few rich areas like Altamira, where small groups of protesters engage in nightly battles with security forces, throwing rocks and firebombs and running from tear gas.

Walking from the working-class neighborhood of Sabana Grande to the city center, there was no sign that Venezuela is in the grip of a "crisis" that requires intervention from the Organization of American States (OAS), no matter what John Kerry tells you. The metro also ran very well, although I couldn't get off at Alta Mira station, where the rebels had set up their base of operations until their eviction this week.

I got my first glimpse of the barricades in Los Palos Grandes, an upper-income area where the protesters do have popular support, and neighbors will yell at anyone trying to remove the barricades – which is a risky thing to attempt (at least four people have apparently been shot dead for doing so). But even here at the barricades, life was pretty much normal, save for some snarled traffic. On the weekend, the Parque del Este was full of families and runners sweating in the 90-degree heat – before Chávez, you had to pay to get in, and the residents here, I was told, were disappointed when the less well-to-do were allowed to enter for free. The restaurants are still crowded at night.

Travel provides little more than a reality check, of course, and I visited Caracas mainly to gather data on the economy. But I came away skeptical of the narrative, reported daily in the media, that increasing shortages of basic foods and consumer goods are a serious motivation for the protests. The people who are most inconvenienced by those shortages are, of course, the poor and working classes. But the residents of Los Palos Grandes and Altamira, where I saw real protests happening – they have servants to stand in line for what they need, and they have the income and storage space to accumulate some inventory. These people are not hurting – they're doing very well. Their income has grown at a healthy pace since the Chávez government got control of the oil industry a decade ago. They even get an expensive handout from the government: anyone with a credit card (which excludes the poor and millions of working people) is entitled to \$3,000 per year at a subsidized exchange rate. They can then sell the dollars for 6 times what they paid in what amounts to a multi-billion dollar annual subsidy for the privileged – yet it is they who are supplying the base and the troops of the rebellion...



... The class nature of this fight has always been stark and inescapable, now more than ever. Walking past the crowd that showed up for the March 5 ceremonies to mark the anniversary of Chávez's death, it was a sea of working-class Venezuelans, tens of thousands of them. There were no expensive clothing or \$300 shoes. What a contrast to the disgruntled masses of Los Palos Grandes, with \$40,000 Grand Cherokee Jeeps bearing the slogan of the moment: SOS VENEZUELA.

When it comes to Venezuela, John Kerry knows which side of the class war he is on. Last week, just as I was leaving town, the US Secretary of State doubled down in his fusillade of rhetoric against the government, accusing President Nicolás Maduro of waging a "terror campaign against his own people". Kerry also threatened to invoke the Inter-American Democratic Charter of the OAS against Venezuela, as well as implementing sanctions. Brandishing the Democratic Charter against Venezuela is a bit like threatening Vladimir Putin with a UN-sponsored vote on secession in Crimea. Perhaps Kerry didn't notice, but just a few days before his threats, the OAS took a resolution that Washington brought against Venezuela and turned it inside-out, declaring the regional body's "solidarity" with the Maduro government. Twenty-nine countries approved it, with only the right-wing governments of Panama and Canada siding with the US against it.

Article 21 of the OAS's Democratic Charter applies to the "unconstitutional interruption of the democratic order of a member state" (like the 2009 military coup in Honduras that Washington helped to legitimize, or the 2002 military coup in Venezuela, aided even more by the US government). Given its recent vote, the OAS would be more likely to invoke the Democratic Charter against the US government for its drone killings of US citizens without trial, than it would be to do so against Venezuela. Kerry's "terror campaign" rhetoric is equally divorced from reality, and predictably provoked an equivalent response from Venezuela's foreign minister, who called Kerry a "murderer". Here's the truth about those charges from Kerry: since the protests in Venezuela began, it appears that more people have died at the hands of protesters than security forces. According to deaths reported by CEPR in the last month, in addition to those killed for trying to remove protesters' barricades, about seven have apparently been killed by protesters' obstructions – including a motorcyclist beheaded by a wire stretched across the road – and five National Guard officers have been killed.

As for violence from law enforcement, at least three people appear to have been killed by the National Guard or other security forces – including two protesters and a pro-government activist. Some people blame the government for an additional three killings by armed civilians; in a country with an average of more than 65 homicides per day, it is entirely possible these people acted on their own. A full 21 members of the security forces are under arrest for alleged abuses, including some of the killings. This is no "terror campaign". At the same time, it is difficult to find any serious denunciation of opposition violence from major opposition leaders. Polling data finds the protests to be deeply unpopular in Venezuela, although they do much better abroad when they are promoted as "peaceful protests" by people like Kerry. The data also suggest that a majority of Venezuelans see these disturbances for what they are: an attempt to remove the elected government from power.

The domestic politics of Kerry's posturing are pretty simple. On the one hand, you have the right-wing Florida Cuban-American lobby and their neo-conservative allies screaming for overthrow. To the left of the far right there is, well, nothing. This White House cares very little about Latin America, and there are no electoral consequences for making most of the governments in the hemisphere more disgusted with Washington. Perhaps Kerry thinks the Venezuelan economy is going to collapse and that will bring some of the non-rich Venezuelans into the streets against the government. But the economic situation is actually stabilizing – monthly inflation fell in February, and the black-market dollar has fallen sharply on the news that the government is introducing a new, market-based exchange rate. Venezuela's sovereign bonds returned 11.5% from 11 February (the day before the protests began) to 13 March, the highest returns in the Bloomberg dollar emerging market bond index. Shortages will most likely ease in the coming weeks and months. Of course, that is exactly the opposition's main problem: the next election is a year-and-a-half away, and by that time, it's likely that the economic shortages and inflation that have so increased over the past 15 months will have abated. The opposition will then probably lose the parliamentary elections, as they have lost every election over the past 15 years. But their current insurrectionary strategy isn't helping their own cause: it seems to have divided the opposition and united the Chavistas. The only place where the opposition seems to be garnering broad support is Washington.