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Beaten & torched: Protester describes violence at Venezuela riots

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A government supporter set on fire during opposition riots in Venezuela's capital, Caracas, is in a coma suffering from severe burns and stab wounds, his doctor told RT. Another man was also injured by rioters who were apparently trying to kill him.

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Gruesome footage of a man named Orlando Figuera, 21, was broadcast on state television this weekend. It shows dozens of people at an anti-government demonstration in Caracas surrounding the man, dousing him with gasoline, and setting him on fire in Plaza Altamira in the east of city.

*“He received six wounds in the torso with burns over 54 percent of his body surface, both*

*second and third degree,” Alexis Parra Soler, a doctor treating Figuera, told RT.*

Horrific images from the scene show Figuera running while nearly naked with flames on his back. *“A person was set on fire, beaten up, stabbed... They nearly lynched him, just because he shouted out that he was a ‘Chavista,’”* said Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, referring to supporters of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela established by late leader Hugo Chavez.

Speaking on state TV, Maduro described the torching as *“a hate crime and a crime against humanity.”* The 21-year-old victim, who sustained heavy injuries, severe burns, and stab wounds, was taken to intense care.

Another victim named Carlos Ramirez was also hunted down by rioters who were apparently trying to kill him. *“I told them I’m not a Chavista, but they said of course I am, so I had to die”* Ramirez told RT at a hospital.

*“They started to hit me, and after I collapsed to the ground, they threw a Molotov cocktail at me,”* the man said.

Opositores al gobierno de [#Venezuela](#) prendieron fuego a un hombre, este sábado en Caracas, durante protesta "pacífica" (vía [#SoyReportero](#)) [pic.twitter.com/0w5zbv0FJt](http://pic.twitter.com/0w5zbv0FJt) — teleSUR Venezuela (@teleSURvzla) [May 21, 2017](#)

Venezuelan Information Minister Ernesto Villegas reacted by tweeting: *“Growing insanity. A human being is set on fire at a ‘peaceful demonstration’ by the opposition in Caracas.”*

[#VENEZUELA](#) The parents of Orlando Figuera, the young man who was burned alive speak out <https://t.co/ZTcQJIMNUz#VenezuelaPazyVidapic.twitter.com/lqbiZewew3> — Ernesto Villegas P. (@VillegasPoljak) [May 23, 2017](#)

At least 50 people have been killed, including bystanders and members of the security forces, during several weeks of anti-government rallies, according to Reuters.

Lynchings have also become common, as opposition rallies quickly turn violent. Venezuelan Interior Minister Nestor Reverol described the rioters’ actions as *“acts of terrorism,”* while suggesting that the provocateurs have links to organized crime.

*“[The riots] show how the terrorist right maintains close relationships with criminals to commit these acts,”* he said on Twitter.

Las manifestaciones "no violentas" de la derecha generan linchamientos, heridos y muertos, por parte de sus propios participantes ¿raro? [pic.twitter.com/vdrfENUnDs](http://pic.twitter.com/vdrfENUnDs) — Carlos Morles (@cmorlesVEN) [May 21, 2017](#)

In turn, the opposition accuses Maduro of being a “dictator” and wrecking the nation’s economy. They are demanding that he step down as president. Riots have been breaking out as Venezuela’s economy has slid into a deep crisis. Recently, the International Monetary Fund warned that the country’s currency was rapidly losing value, with monetary inflation at 720 percent, the worst in the world, according to the [Financial Times](#).

In response, Maduro has lashed out at the US and its Venezuelan sympathizers, who he says are exploiting economic hardship to bring unrest and violence into the country. *“Enough meddling ... Go home, Donald Trump. Get out of Venezuela,”* Maduro said in a speech broadcasted on TV, as cited by Reuters. *“Get your dirty hands out of here,”* he urged.

*“The extreme positions of a government just starting off only confirmed the discriminatory, racist, xenophobic, and genocidal nature of US elites against humanity and its own people, which has now been heightened by this new administration, which asserts white Anglo-Saxon supremacy,”* the statement read, as cited by Reuters.

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