

Venezuela: Right Wing Accelerates Coup Plans

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Featured image: The stolen helicopter used to attack the Supreme Court and Justice Ministry. (Source: Green Left Weekly)

The right-wing opposition has put its foot down on the accelerator, it is moving all of its pieces at once, and aims to shatter the balance of forces through a coup. It has made it clear: the opposition has June and July to achieve its objective.

It has declared that, backed by article 350 of the constitution, it does not recognise the government. Nor does it recognise the call for a National Constituent Assembly and it is organising to impede the elections for the assembly going ahead on July 30.

Translating these words into actions has meant a rise in clashes between state powers through its use of the attorney-general and National Assembly, largely unsuccessful attacks from the Organisation of American States, media pressure, ramping up attacks on the economy and a deepening of the violence, street terror and attacks on state security forces, particularly the National Bolivarian Armed Forces (FANB)

New elements

Within this violent scenario, some new elements have emerged in the last few weeks. These include systematic attacks on the La Carlota military base in Caracas, with the aim of demoralising and fracturing the FANB; outbreaks of violence in areas surrounding the presidential palace Miraflores; and the return of scenes of destruction in cities, like those that occurred in Maracay and nearby localities on June 26, where more than 40 establishments, from private shops to public institutions, were destroyed.

A similar plan was unleashed in more than 10 localities across the country during the past few weeks.

A new turning point occurred on June 27: the use of a helicopter — stolen from the La Carlota airbase — to attack the Ministry of Interior Relations, Justice and Peace with gun fire. The Supreme Court of Justice was also hit with four grenades made in Israel that came from Colombia.

All this took place only four streets away from Miraflores presidential palace, in the political centre of Venezuela.

This action generated a symbolic impact within both the ranks of the right-wing opposition and the pro-government *Chavista* movement. Among the opposition, accompanied by waves of rumours on social media, it generated the sensation of being close to the final target, of power itself, that finally the FANB had come onboard the call for a coup.

Among Chavismo, the impact was due both to the brazenness of the act, and the fact it provided definitive certainty — if anyone still had doubts — that a coup attempt is underway and has entered its decisive hours.

The right wing has enough force to submit localities to a reign of terror for several days in a row, carry out assaults on military and police barracks, unleash political and class hatred that has converted the lynching of Chavistas into a recurring practice. It can maintain almost daily mobilisations with a relatively stable number of participants and generate situations that convert themselves into quasi-generalised destruction and looting.

It is also able to make incursions into poorer neighbourhoods with the use of criminal groups to set up barricades, assassinate people and attack state institutions with grenades from a helicopter. It can make some government cadres crack — like the attorney-general — and win them to its side, and make a part of the population believe they were killed by the government.

In the coming days, we will see what else they are capable of. However, they seem to lack two elements needed to complete a coup: poor neighbourhoods mobilising behind their cause and a fracture in the FANB. Their key wager, which they are working on intensely, is to achieve a fracture within the FANB and other government sectors.

They need this to break the violent deadlock that has now gone on for months. That is why they are ratcheting up the level of violence, targeting attacks on security forces, and using terror as a method of social control.

Support from the United States is already underway via international pressure, funding for the right — whether directly to opposition parties or indirectly via NGOs that funnel this money towards maintaining the street pressure — and the training of paramilitaries. Intervention already exists under the table. Could it soon take another form?

The right is accelerating the pace and, at the same time, is displaying clear signs of desperation. It destroys and kills, but does not achieve its final objective.

However, it obtains intermediary objectives, such as submitting entire localities to violence, breaking down social ties, legitimising persecution levels — which is part of its plan for government — against Chavismo.

As the months go by, the country changes. It assimilates in an invisible manner the blows, hate, fear and distrust — elements that the right needs for its plan to violently reset the country.

Lastly, it is important to turn to the other factor, omnipresent and invisible, that permeates the day-to-day debates and concerns, as well as the possibilities of resistance or rupture: the economy.

Regressing

In recent weeks, the situation has worsened with rising prices, the illegal exchange rate — which sets prices — and with ongoing shortages of vital products such as medicines. These attacks are not a coincidence, but part of the pressure that seeks to suffocate the population and not allow any point of escape.

The reality is popular Venezuela has regressed in terms of various advances it has achieved through the Bolivarian revolution. This generates conditions that are conducive to the plans for looting and depolitisation that the right is promoting.

Reversing this trend is a challenge that Chavista leaders have not been able to resolve. This is its most critical bottleneck, the unresolved debate

These are defining days and weeks. What happened this week are steps in the escalation of opposition violence, of armed actions carried out by paramilitaries, criminal gangs linked to right-wing leaders, and shadowy sectors within the security forces.

There will be more deaths, because this is the opposition's plan. Their now-or-never attitude is pushing the country to the brink. Their psychological and physical violence aims to increase the pressure to make the people cave in and open the doors of a historic revenge that the ruling classes of Venezuela, Latin America and US so desire.

Venezuela is facing its critical hour. Each day is key.

Translated by Federico Fuentes

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