



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## Venezuelans defend against coup attempt, 2002

*Time period notes: Although the actions of the pro-government demonstrators didn't really form or coalesce until the 13th of April, the coup took place on the 11th and events quickly unfolded from there on.*

11 April

2002

to: 14 April

2002

**Country:** Venezuela

**Location City/State/Province:** Caracas

### Goals:

To delegitimize the opposition groups that ousted democratically elected president Hugo Chávez and return him power.

## Methods

### Methods in 1st segment:

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › Demonstration of roughly 5,000 pro-government supporters.

### Methods in 2nd segment:

### Methods in 3rd segment:

### Methods in 4th segment:

- 011. Records, radio, and television › Occupation of state television stations to report on actual transpiring political events, pro-government protest action and to call on the community to join them.

### Methods in 5th segment:

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance › General of Parachute Brigade, Raul Baduel declared his rebellion to the interim government and asked fellow military officers to join him.
- 147. Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents

### Methods in 6th segment:

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
- 147. Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents

### Notes on Methods:

The conflict was largely settled by the involvement of General Raul Baduel who used his military connections and prowess to rescue the ousted president.

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Defense

**Cluster:**

Democracy

**Group characterization:**

- Members of the lower and middle classes and eventually the general population

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**

General Raul Baduel, others unknown

**Partners:**

Journalists, Pro-government members of the Venezuelan military, members of previous regime, Chávez supporters

**External allies:**

Not known

**Involvement of social elites:**

Members of the former Chávez regime made appearances on the occupied television station. General Baduel and other members of the military elite played a major role in restoring Chávez to power.

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

- General pro-government supporters

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

- Journalists
- ministers from previous regime
- pro-Chávez politicians

**Groups in 5th Segment:**

- Military officers
- former service men

**Groups in 6th Segment:**

**Segment Length:** *Approximately 12 hours*

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

**Opponents:**

City police, mainstream union of Venezuelan Workers (Central de Trabajadores de Venezuela – CTV), business confederation (Fedecamaras), private media.

**Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

Not known

**Campaigner violence:**

During a demonstration on April 11th, pro-government supporters were confronted by anti-government general strikers in front of the presidential palace. Shots were fired at the supporters from unknown origins and the supporters returned fire.

**Repressive Violence:**

Shots were fired at a pro-government rally, but their origins are unclear.

## Success Outcome

**Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**

6 points out of 6 points

**Survival:**

1 point out of 1 points

**Growth:**

3 points out of 3 points

**Notes on outcomes:**

Pro-government demonstrators and their partners achieved their goal quickly and effectively. In a matter of hours, thousands of people were out demonstrating their discontent with the coup. It cannot be truly said that the campaign's infrastructure survived because its organization was only needed to reinstate Chávez as president. The events of April 11th did allow for the return of State television creation of real public media stations that exist for the same principles today.

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Before becoming the democratically elected president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez was, himself, a prominent leader of a failed coup attempt in 1992. Since his election in 1998, however, his popularity among many sectors of society, especially the private, rapidly decreased. Discontent among this sector finally culminated on 11 April 2002 when a chain of events led to the swift removal of president Chávez from office in a coup d'état led largely by mainstream union members (of the CTV) and business people (Fedecamaras) and facilitated by the private media.

On 9 April 2002, Venezuela's chamber of commerce joined the country's largest union federation in a two-day strike against Chávez's leftist government. On the 11th, Venezuelan television network Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV) ran ads encouraging their viewers to join the strikers in demonstrating in front of the presidential palace to remove Chávez. RCTV's information did not go unnoticed by those who supported Chávez. The strike climaxed before the presidential palace where strikers met with pro-government demonstrators. During this clash, 100,000 to 200,000 opposition protesters faced roughly 5,000 Chávez supporters. Though initially nonviolent, shots were fired at the pro-government supporters, who did return fire. At least 10 people were killed and almost 100 wounded.

Due to the amount of casualties in the April 11th demonstration, General Lucas Rincon announced that the army would no longer support or obey Chávez and the National Guard did the same. At 3:15AM, Rincon announced that Chávez had agreed to resign and on April 12th, Pedro Carmona, a leader of the CTV, was appointed to the office of the presidency. In lieu of all this, the pro-government supporters' demonstration on April 11th was highly unsuccessful.

Nearly all forms of media, largely owned by the business elite, conspired with the CTV and Fedecamaras to ensure the public's confusion in regards to the rapidly unfolding events of the state. In the hours of and following the removal of Chávez, private media outlets continued to present the pro-government supporters as violent agitators (when they made any mention of them at all) and broadcasted the president's alleged resignation every 20 minutes for the next 36 hours.

On the sidelines, however, journalists and members of the Chávez regime organized to take back public media outlets and call on the masses to mobilize. The pro-government movement did not solely consist of pro-Chávez supporters, but also members of society who felt that the coup disrespected their constitutional system. On the night of April 12th, one television channel's normal programming was disrupted by scenes of mobilized demonstrators and later a multitude of channels were broadcasting similar images until the state television station came on the air with members of the Chávez regime, previously in hiding, and journalists informing the public about recent events.

On the morning of April 13th, General of the Parachute Brigade, Raul Baduel, announced his position against the interim government. He gathered active and retired officers in Maracay to rally around the military base there. In Maracay, they organized the sabotage of the country's fleet of helicopter gunships by removing the batteries and placing them in a safe and a team undertook the job of disabling the undercarriage of the presidential plane.

Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of pro-government supporters rallied and occupied public squares and roads across the country. Following Baduel's example, members of the Chávez regime still loyal to the constitution retook control of the presidential palace and the garrisons. By the early hours of April 14th, Chávez, who was being held in captivity by opposition forces, had been rescued by Baduel's group and returned to his office of the presidency.

In the months following Chávez's return, the CTV and Fedecamaras continued to demonstrate their discontent through strikes, but a second coup was not attempted.

The campaign to reinstate Chávez as president of Venezuela was successful in that it achieved its goal and was able to do so in a manner of hours through swift and organized mobilization. The campaign remained largely nonviolent, except for instances like those of the 11 April demonstrations outside of the presidential palace. It remains questionable whether or not the occupation of television stations remained completely nonviolent because there were occasional images of people breaking glass and throwing stones. However, there is no record of injuries or casualties from that process as there was little coverage of it as it happened.

## Research Notes

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