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After Maduro's capture, Venezuelans in Caracas reckon with a weekend 'for the history books'

1 HR 52 MIN AGO

By Mary Triny Mena, Max Saltman



A man is seen at his damaged apartment in Catia La Mar, La Guaira State, Venezuela, on Sunday, ...



Caracas, Venezuela — The morning after US forces bombed Caracas, dragged **President Nicolás Maduro** out of bed, carted him over the Caribbean and installed him in a **Brooklyn jail**, many Venezuelans hurried to the grocery store.

“Why did I have to go out?” said Judith Ledezma. “I have a pet that needs exercise and I was really stressed out staying indoors.”

Her orange dog sat beside her on a park bench in Caracas, along with numerous shopping bags. Ledezma, who lives near one of the airbases hit by US airstrikes, told CNN the noise from the attack woke her up.

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“I thought it was an earthquake,” Ledezma said. “I got scared and came running out with my daughter and the dog.”

“We have no idea what our fate will be now with this new situation,” Ledezma continued. “I am completely in the dark. I have no idea what is going to happen to the country, to us.”



Judith Ledezma took her dog for a walk Sunday and did some shopping, telling CNN she was "really stressed staying indoors" after the US attacked Caracas and captured President Nicolás Maduro. (CNN)

The government in Caracas wants Venezuelans out and about, though the streets are quiet, apart from a few militia members mustering with their motorcycles. Defense Minister Vladímir Padrino Lopez told people Sunday to "resume their economic activities, work, and all other types of activities, including educational activities, in the coming days."

Olga Jimenez told CNN she finally left her house on Sunday after staying in all of Saturday. Maduro or no Maduro, Jimenez said, she doesn't expect much to change in Venezuela – except maybe the lines at the shops.

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“I’ve been glued to the TV, watching to see what’s going on, and what there is is uncertainty,” Jimenez said. “You don’t feel a change of government because everything is the same. The only thing is that we don’t know.”

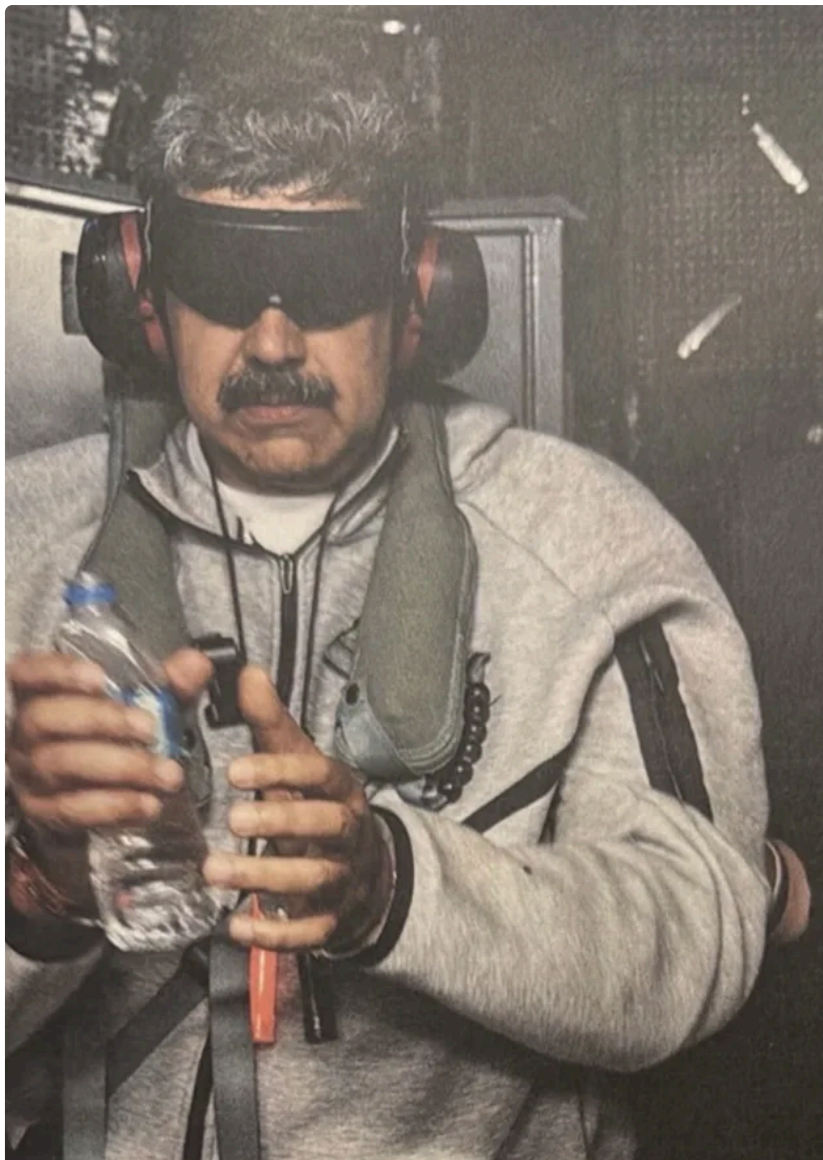
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“What’s happening to us is that places aren’t open, and you have to line up for everything, as if we were going backwards to the Chávez era, when you had to line up everywhere just to buy things,” Jimenez added. “I don’t know how to put it – it was Maduro’s government, and they should have taken them all, not just Maduro.”

Maria Azocar, meanwhile, told CNN that “having lived through so much, nothing really worries me anymore.”



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This photo, posted by US President Donald Trump to the social platform Truth Social, appears to show Nicolás Maduro on board the USS Iwo Jima after his capture Saturday. *(From President Donald Trump/Truth Social)*

“As I say, this is for the history books,” Azocar said, before listing the names of past Venezuelan leaders: “(Marcos) Pérez Jiménez, (Isaías Medina) Angarita, Rómulo Gallegos, Juan Vicente Gómez – people who, in their time, were overthrown or displaced.”

“I’ll tell you something straight: It was really an abuse on the part of the Americans,” Azocar said of the attack, “because they intimidated the people with their missiles. That says it all.”

Acting President **Delcy Rodríguez** (whom Azocar said US President Donald Trump “appointed” to lead the country) is “a woman of real strength,” she added.

“I think with her, it eases people’s hearts a little, on one side and the other,” Azocar said.

The United States is apparently tolerating having Rodríguez in charge, for now. Saturday, Trump told reporters he thought opposition leader **María Corina Machado** didn’t have the “respect” or “support” to lead the country.



Venezuelan Vice President and Oil Minister Delcy Rodriguez gives a news conference at the Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela, on March 10, 2025. *(Ariana Cubillos/AP)*

Resident Mario Valdez told CNN he thought an immediate, forceful transition to opposition rule “could lead us into violence.”

“It would mean the reds leave only for the blues to take over,” Valdez said, referring to the left and right respectively, “in a country which, at this moment, after 26 years of a Chavista government, can’t handle, because it would lead to another bloodbath, like we’ve had in the past.”

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Still, Valdez said he is hopeful for a democratic transition, eventually.

“I believe this democratic transition must take place, and we will all take part in it,” Valdez said. “The first thing the president of the Republic must do is release the political prisoners – all of them. There is no reason whatsoever for them to remain imprisoned.”

Valdez said he also hopes international oil companies will return to Venezuela. His country has been plundered for years by Russia, China and Iran, he said, which provided nothing in return for Venezuela’s vast oil wealth.

“They stole all the money from this country to build major projects and did absolutely nothing,” Valdez said. “The motorways are unfinished.”

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All told, Valdez said, he was unsurprised by Maduro’s abduction. “President Maduro should have been prudent and accepted one of the offers that were made to him; he was made multiple offers.”

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“He should have called new elections,” Valdez said, referring to the **2024 election** that most observers say Maduro lost, despite clinging to power. “That is what I would have done: called new elections with a new National Electoral Council, changed things and summoned in the country a spirit of concord, where all organizations could take part.”

“But that didn’t happen, and so there are consequences – without making value judgments about whether all that was right or wrong.”

CNN’s Mary Triny Mena reported from Caracas and Max Saltman wrote from Atlanta. CNN’s Harry Ungoed contributed to this report.



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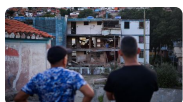
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