

# *Venezuelans Hold Peace Conference with Key Opposition Leaders Refusing to Participate*

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Caracas, February 27 (RHC) -- Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro opened a national peace conference on Wednesday aimed at ending three weeks of violent protests in the country.

The four-hour long conference held at the presidential palace was attended by religious and business groups, intellectuals and state governors.

As he opened the meeting, Maduro urged the country's right-wing extremists to assume responsibility for the recent violent protests which have left 14 people dead and 149 others injured since they broke out on February 12th in Caracas and several other cities.

Some opposition figures did attend the peace meeting. But the main umbrella opposition grouping known as MUD stayed away, calling the dialogue initiative a "photo op."

The conference held under the premise of Peace and Coexistence listed four key issues to consider in order to consolidate peace in the country: respect for the Constitution and the principle of non-violence as well as the defense of national sovereignty.

The Venezuelan government has accused the United States of backing the opposition groups and fomenting violence in the streets to pave the way for a coup d'état in the South American country.

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