

## Grisly day leaves four dead in Venezuela unrest

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Business owners shuttered shops, a burned police station stood charred black and a state officer in western Venezuela was under arrest Tuesday following a spasm of violence that resulted in at least four deaths in anti-government protests.

An especially grisly 24 hours of turmoil coming after nearly two months of political unrest had nervous residents staying indoors in restive cities like San Cristobal near the border with Colombia.

Authorities announced Tuesday that four men ranging in age from 17 to 33 had died from gunshot wounds at separate protests over the preceding day. Diego Hernandez, 33, and Luis Alvarez, 18, were killed in Tachira, while Yeison Mora Castillo, 17, died near a protest farther east in the state of Barinas on Monday. Diego Arellano, 31, died during surgery Tuesday after being shot at a demonstration south of Caracas.

Friends and relatives of Arellano gathered outside the clinic where he died and sang the national anthem as his body was removed from the facility.

The nation's chief prosecutor said it was charging a 27-year-old state police officer in Hernandez's death, whose final moments were purportedly captured in a video circulating on social media. The footage shows a bystander ripping open Hernandez's blue T-shirt as he lay lifeless on the pavement, his eyes open and fixed, revealing a bloody wound underneath. "They killed him!" someone screams.

The weeks of protests



AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos

**A demonstrator holds a sign that doubles a shield that reads in Spanish "It's for you," during a national sit-in against President Nicolas Maduro, in Caracas, Venezuela on Monday. Opposition leaders are demanding immediate presidential elections.**

were set off by the socialist government's move to nullify the opposition-controlled congress in late March, but demonstrations have escalated into a vehicle for airing grievances against the government for triple-digit inflation, food shortages and a rise in crime.

The flare-up of violence outside Venezuela's capital this week added to a grim and growing list of casualties from unrest. More than three dozen people have died, most of them young men shot at protests or killed during looting. Hundreds more have been injured in near-daily demonstrations by the opposition that frequently end with state security unleashing tear gas, water cannon and rubber bullets at protesters.

## Rash of murders show deadly threats in Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AP) -- A journalist is shot dead as she pulls out of her garage in the morning with her young son. Gunmen ambush another journalist while he lazes in a car wash hammock. An award-winning reporter is hauled out of his vehicle and gunned down a block from his office.

On Monday, Javier Valdez became the sixth journalist slain in Mexico since early March, a deadly spree unusual even in a country that ranks behind only Syria and Afghanistan for such murders. There's no evidence directly linking the killings to each other, but collectively they are a grim signal that lawlessness and impunity continue to threaten the lives and work of journalists across much of the country.

The killings come at a time when overall homicides rose 29 percent in the first three months of the year from the same period in 2016; high-stakes state elections and a presidential vote next year have been bitterly contested; corruption scandals are regular news; and a decade-old militarized offensive against brutal drug cartels shows no sign of being won.

Valdez wrote the "Mala Yerba" column for *Riidoce*, the publication he helped found, in which he told stories without using real names. His last entry was titled "El Licenciado," a possible allusion to a Sinaloa cartel boss who used that nickname. Valdez also reported on organized crime, incidents involving state security forces and alleged corruption during the term of the previous governor.

## WEEDS: County warned that it would spray if the farm didn't

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is a major distributor of organic products.

Sherman County gave the farm until May 22 to respond with a weed management plan. If not, the county will ask the Oregon Department of Agriculture to quarantine the farm.

The issue has blown up on social media.

The manager of Azure Farms, Nathan Stelzer, urged supporters to "Overwhelm the Sherman County representatives with your voice." A video posted on the farm website called for people to express their outrage reportedly has resulted in hundreds of phone calls and thousands of emails to county officials.

The issue may come to a head Wednesday when the county's Board of Commissioners takes up the issue. Meanwhile, the Oregon Wheat Commission and several growers are meeting with the state agriculture Director Alexis Taylor, hoping to enlist the department's support.

Oregon Tilth, which certifies organic operations, is calling for calm and urging the county to pause its enforcement timeline. Executive Director Chris Schreiner said Oregon Tilth hopes mediation can result in a weed management plan that allows Azure Farms to retain its certification while addressing concerns of neighboring farmers.

Wheat farmer Bryan Cranston, who grows certified seed next to Azure Farms, said its weed problems have gotten progressively worse over the years. Cranston said he spoke to Selzer and told him, "I don't drift chemicals on you, I'd appreciate it if weeds don't drift on me."

Cranston estimated weed control in his wheat is costing him \$12 per acre more than

in the past. He said some weeds, especially skeleton weed, produce airborne seeds and can rapidly infect fields.

Another area farmer, Ryan Thompson, said the county needs to stand its ground on the weed issue.

"These guys are operating by their own set of rules," he said. "They are not good stewards of the land. They are pretty much using religion and the fact that they're organic to say our county laws and statutes don't apply to them."

The problem has been building for some time. Azure Farms appears to consist of three entities: A parent company, Ecclesia of Sinai at Dufur, in neighboring Wasco County; Azure Standard, in Dufur, which distributes organic products; and Azure Farms, the farmland near Moro, in Sherman County.

In a March 2 letter to Ecclesia of Sinai at Dufur, weed district Supervisor Rod Asher said the noxious weeds "have been found to be growing rampant and unchecked on your properties in Sherman County" and had to be destroyed.

Asher said Sherman County takes weed problems seriously. "The potential damage and economic loss caused by noxious weeds to an agricultural based community can be substantial," he wrote.

The county warned that it would spray if the farm didn't, and the cost for multiple surveys throughout the growing season would be billed to the farm as a lien on its property taxes.

Asher said the county could help identify weeds, recommend control methods and herbicide products, and had a spray crew for hire if necessary.

In the business's first

response, a letter signed by Alfred Stelzer said Ecclesia of Sinai "is not subject to your direction." In a three-page letter dated March 27, Stelzer said the farm will not allow any federal, state or county employees to trespass and "spray any toxic or poisonous substances at any time."

Stelzer said the farm "made a covenant" to keep the "Common Law" of the Bible. He cited Numbers 35:34, "which states that the land must not be defiled or polluted." Stelzer, then released the video and social media plea to supporters, saying the county's plan was "possibly to spray the whole farm with poisonous herbicides."

Blake Rowe, CEO of the Oregon Wheat Commission, called the social media campaign "pretty inflammatory."

The farm has since adopted a more conciliatory position. In a video posted May 12, Azure Standard CEO David Stelzer, the brother of Nathan, acknowledged the farm has "room for improvement." He said one of the problems is that for the past five years, the family has been farming the Moro property "long distance" from Dufur, which is 48 miles away by vehicle.

David Stelzer said Azure is attempting to improve its ground through crop rotation and "companion planting" of various crops.

Responding to comments he said have been made about the farm, he said it is not affiliated with a religion although they are a "family a faith." He said Azure properly pays its taxes and provides a \$6 million payroll. He said the farm's wheat yields nearly meet the county average and is of high quality. Eventually, organic farming methods will be "dominant," he said.

## Trump's agenda slows to a crawl in Congress

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's agenda has slowed to a crawl in Congress.

Daily distractions and a pair of major controversies in the past week are diverting lawmakers from their day jobs. While the Trump administration delegates many decisions on legislation to more experienced GOP leaders in Congress, Trump's low poll ratings and the turmoil at the White House are additional complications.

The slowing pace was evident even before Tuesday's explosive story in *The New York Times* that ousted FBI Director James Comey wrote in a memo that Trump asked him to end an investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn. That came 24 hours after *The Washington Post* revealed that Trump disclosed classified information to Russian officials in a meeting in the Oval Office last week.

"I think it would be helpful to have less drama emanating from the White House," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

What GOP senators and House members aren't doing right now is passing major legislation, and it's not just the marquee items like health care and a tax overhaul that are dragging.

The Senate has no legislation on its agenda this week — business is instead limited to three low-profile nominations. The House — fresh off an 11-day recess — is devoting the week to mostly symbolic, feel-good legislation designed to show support for law enforcement. Another 11-day recess, for Memorial Day this time, is just around the corner.

Separately, a small group of Senate Republicans is meeting in hopes of finding a way forward on keeping Trump's promise to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. But that effort appears likely to take several weeks — with no guarantee of success.

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**Stuart Roberts** joined the Pendleton Police Department in 1994 and became chief in 2003. He graduated from Pendleton High School, Western Oregon University and the FBI National Academy. He is a past president of the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police and is on the policy board for the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards & Training. In November 2016 he was awarded the Public Service Award from the Oregon Peace Officers Association for his work on a regional school security initiative, which included evaluations of facilities, training of staff and development of threat assessments and collaborations with law enforcement.



**Paul Kemp** is a founding board member of Gun Owners for Responsible Ownership. He has worked in the consulting engineering industry in Portland for 30 years and has volunteered for a variety of nonprofits including Camp Namanu, Habitat for Humanity, Big Brother and the Trauma Intervention Program. Paul enjoys the outdoors skiing, climbing, sea kayaking, rafting, canoeing, fishing, hiking, backpacking and hunting. He grew up hunting with his dad, uncles and grandfather in Michigan and enjoys hunting and target shooting with his son. His first trip to Pendleton was in 1979 while working for the U.S. Forest Service as a firefighter in the Blue Mountains.



**John Turner** retired as the president of Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton, Oregon on June 30th, 2013 after serving as president for the previous nine years. He retired from the U.S. Marine Corps as a colonel with 28 years of active service on June 4, 2003. He has been married to his wife, Gail, for 36 years. John holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Oklahoma and a master's degree in international affairs from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He was a Federal Executive Fellow in the strategic studies program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and taught at the University of Nebraska in the naval science and history departments. John is now serving as the Pendleton City Mayor.

For more information about the EO Forum, please contact: Karen Parker at 541-966-3177.

The EO Forum is a collaborative effort among leaders from Blue Mountain Community College, InterMountain Education Service District; the East Oregonian; American Association of University Women; and Harriet Isom; a former United States ambassador who also serves on the committee. This EO Forum program is offered as part of Blue Mountain Community College's annual Arts and Culture Festival. For more information on the festival go to [www.bluecc.edu](http://www.bluecc.edu).