



Social Conflict in Venezuela during the First Semester of 2015

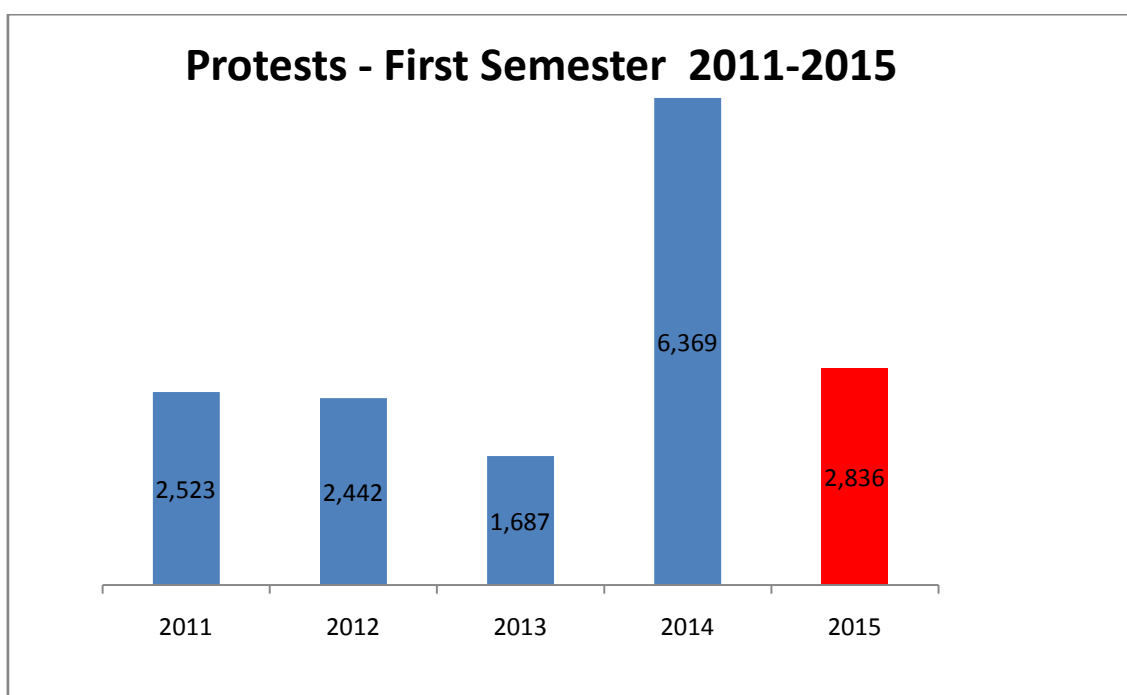
Protests for shortage and deficient supply of products all over the country

132 cases of looting and looting attempts during the first semester of 2015

50% increase in labor protests

The Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict (OVCS for its initials in Spanish) registered, at least, 2836 protests during the first semester of 2015; an average of 16 protests per day in all the national territory.

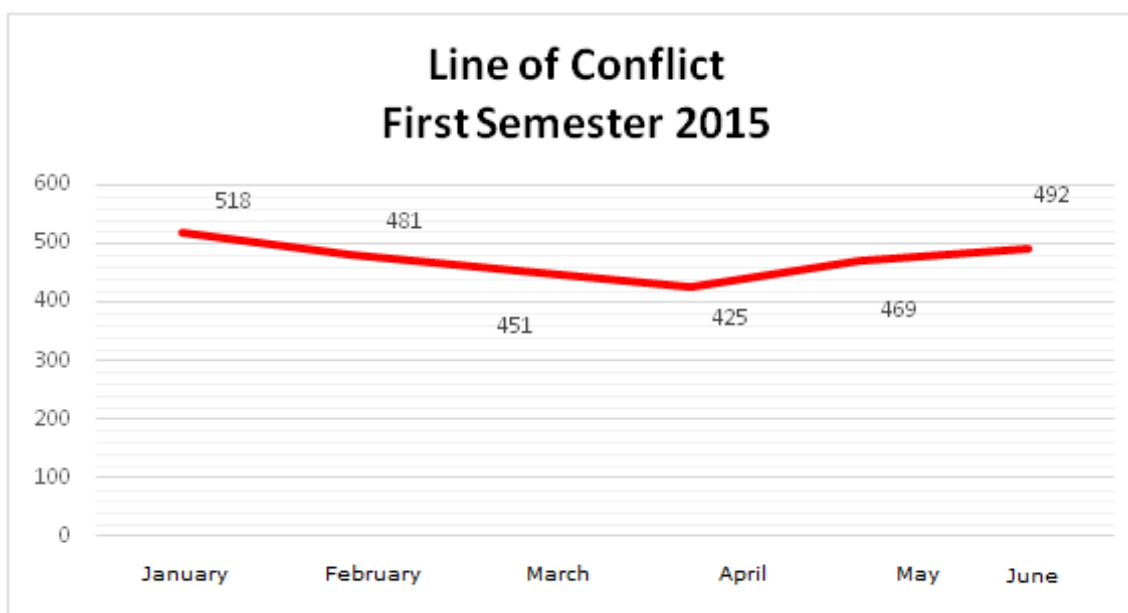
The number of protests in the first half of 2015 is higher than that registered during the same period in years 2011, 2012, and 2013.



Source: Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict (OVCS)

Conflict is incessant in Venezuela

Considering the number of protests monitored during the first six months of 2015, it can be noticed that Venezuela is trapped in a spiral of social and political conflicts that grows over the months, and which could become more acute due to the forthcoming parliamentary elections.



Source: Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict (OVCS)

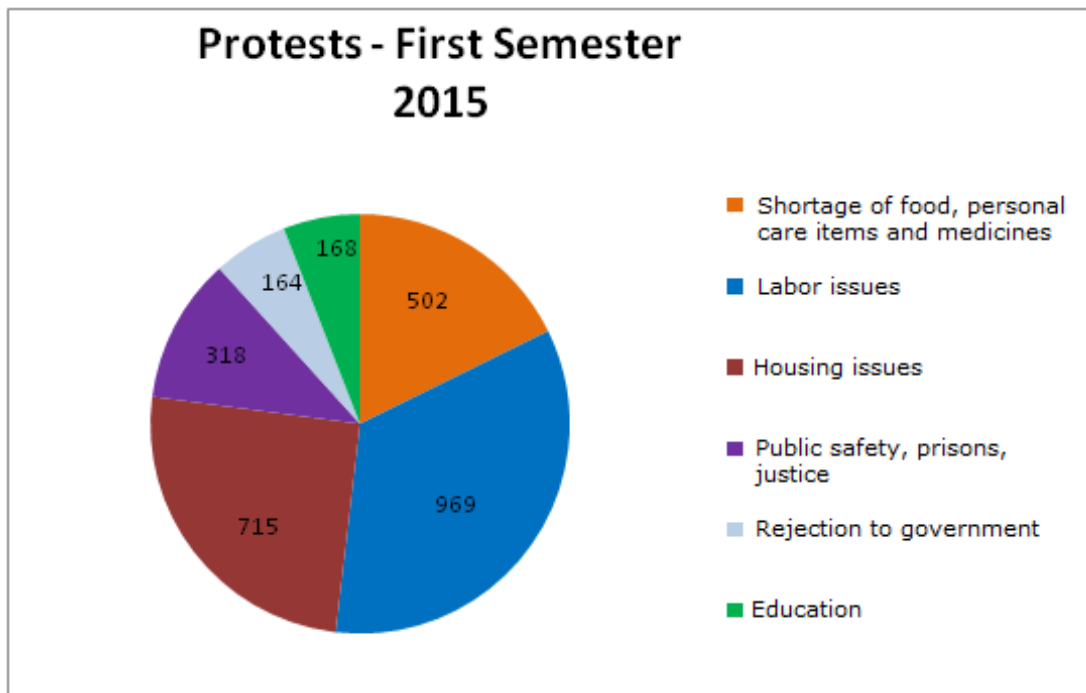
The frequency of protests during this first semester was high, with an average of 470 protests per month. Unlike the first semester of 2014, when most of the protests were for claims of a political nature, this time people took the streets to mainly demand social rights.

Social Claims during the First Semester

83% of street actions and conflicts documented for this period was related to **social claims**.

The reasons for the protests were:

1. Labor rights - 969 (34%)
2. Housing and basic services issues - 715 (25%)
3. Shortages of food, medicine and personal care items - 502 (18%)
4. Demands for public safety, rights of detainees, right to justice - 318 (11%)
5. Education related claims - 168 (6%)
6. Rejection to government administration - 164 (6%)



Source: Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict (OVCS)

Street blocking still remains the main form of protest, followed by concentrations and marches.

Increase of Labor Protests

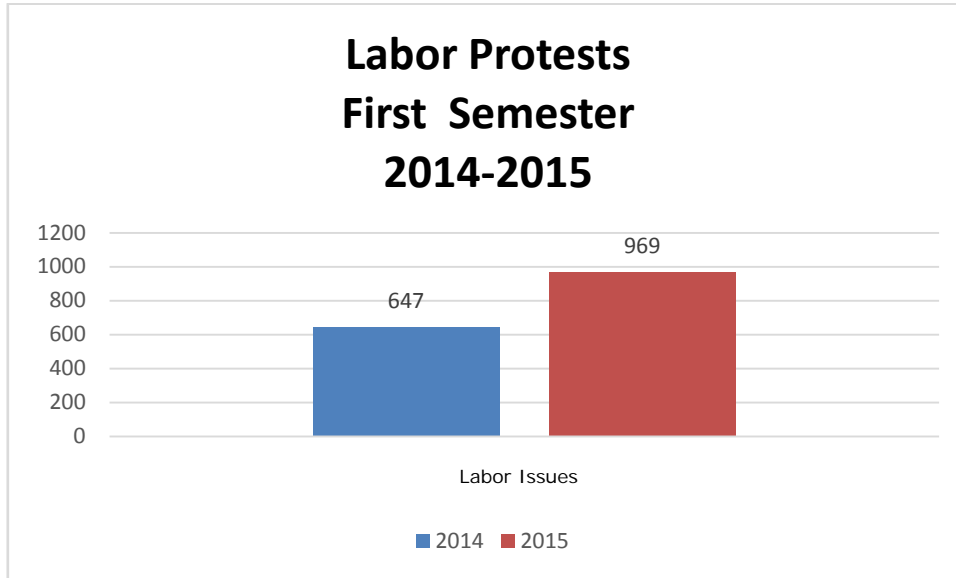
There was a considerable increase of labor protests. Approximately 162 protests per month, 50% over those registered during the first semester of 2014.

The nation's harsh economic situation directly affects the Venezuelan labor sector.

Debt payment is the main cause for labor protests. In addition, there are three key issues that create conflict within this sector:

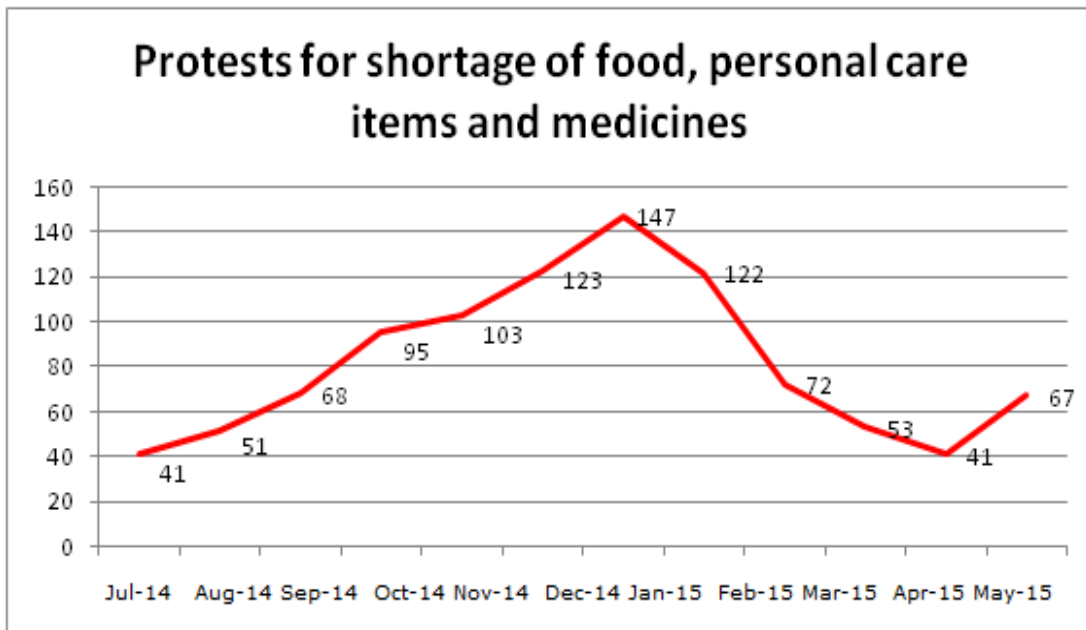
- Discussion of collective labor agreements. There are several public sector collective labor agreements that are pending. The execution of the Public Sector Framework Agreement, and the Collective Agreements for the Electric, Oil and University Sectors, is scheduled for this year.
- Weakened salaries. In the Official Gazette, Special Issue 6181, published on May 8, 2015 the salary increase announced by the Executive on the Labor Day was made official. It was a fractioned increase to be implemented as follows: 20% on May and 10% on July. This increase took the minimum salary to Bs 6,746.98 on May and Bs 7,421.68 in July. However, the rapid rise in inflation weakens the purchasing power of the Venezuelan workers.

- Outsourcing. On May 7, 2015 the 3-year term set for public and private companies to include their outsourcers in their payrolls expired. However, the reality is that this inclusion has not been complied with, in particular on the part of the State.



Source: Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict (OVCS)

The protests for the human right to food and in rejection to shortage and deficient supply of food, personal care items and medicines have continued since the second semester of 2014.



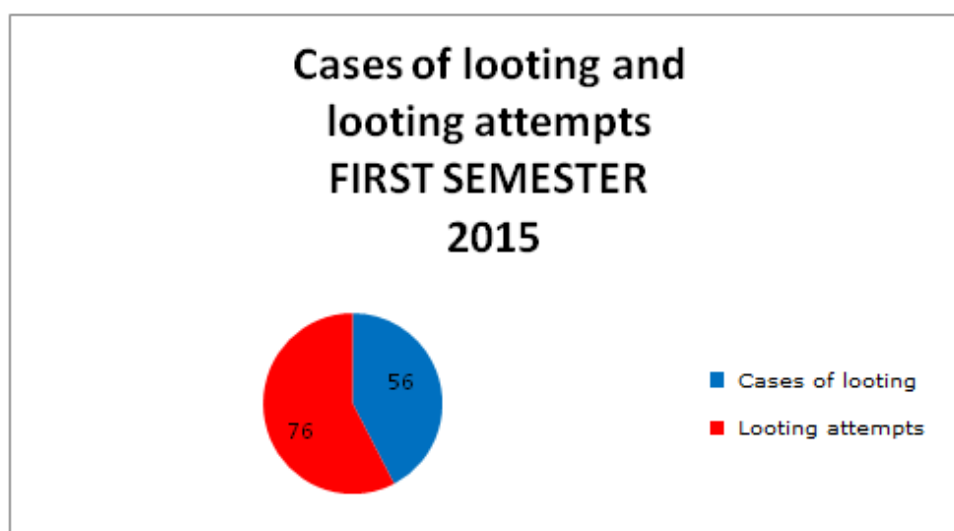
Source: Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict (OVCS)

The National Government has not been able to find a formula to solve the complex situation created by the shortage and deficient supply of goods resulting from the **economic model applied in Venezuela. This model has provoked a serious crisis** characterized by a strong dependence on imports, a steady weakening of the domestic production system and higher inflation rates, in addition to the impact the fall of oil prices, Venezuela's main source of foreign currency, has had on the nation's economy.

It is worth noting that protests for this situation have fluctuated during the first semester of 2015.

The number of street demonstrations has diminished while the black market on food, medicines and personal care items –known as “Bachaqueo”- grows and thrives.

OVCS is deeply concerned about the increase of acts of vandalism against grocery stores, supermarkets, drugstores, vehicles, warehouses and storage facilities **as a result of shortage, deficient supply and impunity.** During this period, a minimum of **56 cases of looting and 76 looting attempts** were registered.



Source: Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict (OVCS)

Hunger Strikes to Demand the Release of Political Prisoners and Fair Elections

During the first semester of 2015, numerous radical expressions of peaceful protests were documented. 117 hunger strikes were reported, a number slightly inferior to that registered for the same period in the previous year.

University students and leaders of the opposition political parties were the main protagonists. Most of these hunger strikes were held in solidarity with Venezuelan political prisoners, Leopoldo Lopez, Daniel Ceballos and others, who were imprisoned during the protests of 2014.

| Hunger Strikes | | |
|----------------|------|------|
| | 2014 | 2015 |
| January | 4 | 9 |
| February | 21 | 11 |
| March | 33 | 14 |
| April | 28 | 19 |
| May | 25 | 26 |
| June | 17 | 38 |
| Total | 128 | 117 |

Source: Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict (OVCS)

This trend research uses situation monitoring through domestic and regional means of information as its main data input. Sources such as government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also used. The non-participant observation method was employed on some of the phenomena studied.

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