

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION LEADER SENTENCED UNJUSTLY

Opposition leader Leopoldo López has been sentenced to 13 years and 9 months in prison. He is a prisoner of conscience and must be released immediately and unconditionally.

On 10 September **Leopoldo López** was found guilty of inciting violence during an anti-government protest on 12 February 2014. He was sentenced to 13 years and 9 months in prison for the charges of conspiracy, incitement to commit a crime, arson, and damage to public property.

Leopoldo López, leader of opposition party Popular Will (Voluntad Popular), has been in detention since 18 February 2014 at CENAPROMIL (Centro Nacional de Procesados Militares), a military prison in Los Teques, on the outskirts of the capital, Caracas. The charges against Leopoldo López were never adequately substantiated and the prison sentence against him is politically motivated.

In August 2014, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said that Leopoldo López's detention was arbitrary and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged the authorities to release him immediately.

Christian Holdack, Demian Martín and Ángel González, who were tried alongside Leopoldo López, were also found guilty but will spend their sentences outside of prison.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Leopoldo López, as he is a prisoner of conscience who was arbitrarily detained and sentenced without any credible evidence against him;
- Urging them to ensure that those still detained since the 2014 protests do not remain in detention arbitrarily.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 OCTOBER 2015 TO:

President

Sr. Nicolás Maduro Moros
 Presidente de la Republica
 Final Avenida Urdaneta, Esquina de
 Bolero, Palacio de Miraflores
 Caracas, Venezuela
 Twitter: @NicolasMaduro

Salutation: Señor Presidente/

Dear President

Minister of Justice and Interior

M/G Gustavo Enrique González López
 Ministerio del Poder Popular para
 Relaciones Interiores, Justicia y Paz
 Av. Urdaneta, Edificio Interior y Justicia
 Caracas, Venezuela
 Fax: +58 212 5061558
 Email: mijcudecon@gmail.com
 Twitter: @GonzalezMPPRIJP

Salutation: Señora Ministro/

Dear Minister

And copies to:

Ombudsman

Tarek William Saab
 Defensor del Pueblo
 Av. Urdaneta - Frente a El Universal
 Centro Financiero Latino, Piso 27
 Caracas, Venezuela
 Fax: +58 212 5077025
 Email: contacto@defensoria.gob.ve

Please also send copies to Leopoldo López's family:

familialeopoldolopez@gmail.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the sixth update of UA 33/14. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AMR53/1859/2015/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Venezuelan authorities are showing a lack of respect for dissenting views as opposition politicians are the target of politically-motivated charges and human rights defenders are under continuous attacks and smear and intimidation campaigns from the authorities at the highest level. This is an attempt to discourage them from voicing their opposition to government laws and policies and has an effect beyond the immediate individuals targeted. The cumulative chilling effect can deter others from expressing critical views to government policies and actions.

Daniel Ceballos, former Mayor of San Cristóbal (Táchira State) and a member of the opposition party Popular Will (Voluntad Popular) party, was detained on 19 March 2014 on charges related to his alleged involvement in the anti-government protests. In August 2014 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention stated that his detention was arbitrary. Based on the opinion of the Working Group, the High Commissioner for Human Rights has urged the authorities to release him immediately. Daniel Ceballos is on trial, charged with civil rebellion and conspiracy to commit a crime but there is no evidence to substantiate the charges he faces and his detention appears to be politically motivated. Daniel Ceballos is currently under house arrest which was granted on health grounds to recover from the consequences of a 20-day hunger strike.

Antonio Ledezma, Mayor of Caracas, was detained on 19 February 2015 in circumstances suggesting that his arrest might be politically motivated. According to the Venezuelan Mayors' Association, at the end of February 2015, 33 of the 73 mayors belonging to opposition parties were facing legal proceedings. Antonio Ledezma was put under house arrest on 1 May to recover from a medical intervention.

On 21 August, the Venezuelan President criticized the NGO Venezuelan Program for Education and Action on Human Rights (Provea) and its former director on live television. Previously on 13 May the President of the National Assembly publicly shared the details of travel arrangements of Provea's director. The information was shared in Diosdado Cabello's weekly television program "Con el Mazo Dando", where the work of human rights defenders is regularly questioned and details of their whereabouts are shared.

During the pro and anti-government protests that took place in Venezuela between February and July 2014, at least 43 people died, including six members of the security forces, and 878 were injured, of which approximately 300 were members of the security forces, as a result of excessive use of force and violence perpetrated by law enforcement officials, anti-government protestors and armed pro-government groups. Some victims were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

In addition, 3,351 people were detained. The vast majority have been released, although according to official statistics, 507 are facing prosecution for their alleged involvement in violence during the protests. At least 20 civilians remain in detention. After reviewing information presented by the Public Prosecution Services on a number of those who remain in detention, Amnesty International was able to confirm that some detainees had been arbitrarily detained. In five cases examined by Amnesty International, detainees are facing trial despite the absence of credible evidence to support the charges against them. Such is the case of Rosmit Mantilla, a lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and intersex (LGBTI) rights activist and member of the opposition party Popular Will (Voluntad Popular), who has been in pre-trial detention since 2 May 2014. Amnesty International is concerned that others held on charges linked to the protests may also have been arbitrarily detained.

Name: Leopoldo López

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 33/14 Index: AMR 53/2449/2015 Issue Date: 17 September 2015