

**GOVERNMENT OF VENEZUELA DELAYS ISSUING VISA TO  
INTERNATIONAL LAWYER OF VENEZUELA OPPOSITION LEADER  
LEOPOLDO LÓPEZ IN THE RUN-UP TO THE APPEAL**

*López's appeal is scheduled for Monday June 20<sup>th</sup> and failure to grant the visa would constitute a flagrant violation of his right to access to counsel of his choosing*

Washington – With a week before Venezuelan opposition leader Leopoldo López appears before the Court of Appeals of Caracas, the Government of Venezuela has yet to issue a visa to his international lawyer Jared Genser so he can assist in the preparation of the appeal and attend the hearing. Prior to the appeal being schedule, Genser's application to travel to Venezuela had been languishing in its Embassy in Washington for more than three weeks.

López's domestic counsel Juan Carlos Gutierrez commented: "My client has a right under the Venezuelan Constitution and international law to access his counsel. He has asked Genser to join me in meeting him in Ramo Verde prison to prepare for the appeal and then to be present in court to monitor the Government's compliance with Venezuela's obligations under international law."

Genser is a renowned international human rights lawyer who has served as counsel to such clients as former Czech Republic President Václav Havel and Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Aung San Suu Kyi, Liu Xiaobo, Desmond Tutu, and Elie Wiesel. Under Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a person has a right to defend himself "through legal assistance of his own choosing." Further, under Article 8(2)(d) of the American Convention on Human Rights, a person has the right to be "assisted by legal counsel of his own choosing, and to communicate freely and privately with his counsel." And Article 49(1) Constitution of Venezuela describes "legal assistance and defense are inviolable rights at all stages and levels . . ."

Gutierrez concluded "I urge the Government of Venezuela to grant my co-counsel a visa to travel to the country. He is an invaluable member of our client's legal team and his advice is essential to the appeals process. It would be a *prima facie* violation of our client's rights to fail to issue the visa in a timely manner."

The visa would need to be issued by Friday June 17th by 1 pm, when the Consular Section in the Venezuela Embassy in Washington closes for the week.

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