

VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT CUTS OFF ACCESS TO IMPRISONED OPPOSITION LEADER LEOPOLDO LÓPEZ FOR THE PAST NINE DAYS

Denial of access to lawyers and family retaliation for political stances

RAMO VERDE – For the past nine days, Venezuelan prisoner of conscience Leopoldo López has been completely isolated by prison officials. His mother, Antonieta Mendoza, was the last family member to see him on Sunday, February 19th and his lawyers were last able to see him on Tuesday, February 21st. Normally, López is allowed to see his lawyers from Monday to Thursday and his family members from Friday to Sunday.

The prison officials of Ramo Verde Military Prison often limit López's access to his lawyers and family members as retaliation for the actions of López or his wife, Lilian Tintori. This most recent retaliation comes right after Tintori's trip to Washington, where she met with US President Donald J. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence. Additionally, members of López's legal team and family believe that the government has cut off López because he has refused to support a failed dialogue between the government and opposition that occurred concurrently with an uptick in oppression by the government. López has stated unequivocally that there can be no meaningful dialogue process until the country's political prisoners are immediately and unconditionally released.

On Saturday, February 18th, prison officials invoked another common form of "punishment" on López and ransacked his prison cell, ripping a photo of his maternal grandfather into pieces. Days later, starting on February 22nd, López was not allowed visitors because his ransacked room "wasn't clean." Then, starting on February 26th, visitors have been denied because of alleged military practice exercises.

"We are incredibly concerned that access to Leopoldo has been cut off without any justification," said López's international counsel Jared Genser. "We demand that the Government of Venezuela immediately restore Leopoldo's access to his family and local counsel."

Previously, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the UN Committee Against Torture, along with a range of international leaders, have denounced López's imprisonment and conditions. His extended solitary confinement, with rare and brief contact with other prisoners, constitutes torture under international law.

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