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## Venezuela's Symbol of Hope

*Opposition leader Leopoldo López is freed to house arrest.*

The Editorial Board

The mayhem in Venezuela is rising and dictator Nicolás Maduro knows he's in trouble because on Saturday his security services moved opposition leader Leopoldo López to house arrest from Ramo Verde military prison.

Mr. López's release is a victory for a weary opposition that has been protesting in the streets since April, demanding new elections and freedom for political prisoners. The National Guard and police have responded with violent crackdowns, and last week Mr. Maduro's goons stormed the national assembly and beat two opposition congressmen bloody. The death toll now exceeds 90 and there are still more than 400 political prisoners.

Mr. Maduro called Mr. López's release a humanitarian gesture, and at least the 46-year-old opposition leader is reunited with his wife and two young children. But he was fitted with an electronic bracelet and continues to serve what remains of his nearly 14-year sentence on trumped up charges of inciting violence during protests in 2014.

Mr. Maduro fears that if Mr. López were free to campaign he would galvanize the opposition and force an election Mr. Maduro would lose.

Mr. Maduro has instead decided to throw out the constitution written under Hugo Chávez and have his followers draft a new one that will make the dictatorship official by shutting down the opposition-controlled legislature. The election for the assembly that will rewrite the constitution is scheduled for July 30. The opposition is vowing to abstain from what is certain to be a rigged vote.

Venezuelans will have to liberate themselves, but international attention on Mr. López may have played a role in his release. The Obama Administration did nothing to highlight Venezuela's slide to authoritarian chaos, and the U.S. and Latin American countries can do more to call out

Mr. Maduro's constitution gambit. Meanwhile, even under house arrest the courageous Mr. López remains a symbol of Venezuelan hope.