

**FURTHER EVIDENCE SURFACES THAT MADURO REGIME MANIPULATED THE JUDICIAL MACHINERY TO IMPRISON LEOPOLDO LÓPEZ**

*Sunday Marks Four Years of López's Detention*

Bogotá – In a radio interview given earlier today, former Venezuelan Attorney General Luisa Ortega Díaz, who oversaw Leopoldo López's prosecution, stated that she was pressured by the Maduro regime to fabricate false murder charges against López.

López was arrested four years ago, on February 18, 2014, on the orders of President Maduro, who falsely accused López of inciting violence and murdering three protestors who had been shot – presumably by Government forces – during a protest held six days earlier, on February 12.

Ortega Díaz explained that Diosdado Cabello, who was the President of the Venezuelan National Assembly at the time of López's arrest, "pressured me so that I would say that the author of the death[s] of [the protestors] was Leopoldo." She also claimed that she had received calls from Maduro and Cabello "on many occasions" pressuring her to do their bidding. However, she clarified that she did not give in to their demands. In López's case, she stated that she had "objected" to Cabello's request to charge López with homicide and terrorism and "forced" Cabello to modify his request.

In a similarly devastating blow to the regime, Ralenys Tovar, the judge who signed the arrest warrant for López, admitted several months ago that the regime had threatened to imprison her if she did not sign the arrest warrant. The prosecutor in Lopez's case, Franklin Nieves, has also stated that he was under pressure "from the executive branch and my superiors to continue to defend the false evidence that was used to convict Leopoldo López."

The admissions from these individuals confirm what has long been known: that the entire case against López was fabricated and a total sham, and anyone with the power to uncover the regime's lies was threatened into silence. This is consistent with the repressive practices and human rights violations to which the regime has resorted in order to maintain its grip on power.

Unfortunately, López continues to bear the brunt of this repression. He was arbitrarily convicted and sentenced to almost 14 years in prison. Today he remains under house arrest, is strictly prohibited from communicating with anyone outside his home, and must present himself four times a day to the armed guards who monitor his home. Furthermore, he has been wrongly disqualified running for political office on the basis of his arbitrary conviction.

As López marks four years of detention, the world must stand with him and the other 372 political prisoners in the country to demand their immediate and unconditional release, and to act urgently to restore democracy in Venezuela.

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