

**VENEZUELAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE OCCUPIES HOME OF LEOPOLDO LÓPEZ AND LILIAN TINTORI**

*Voluntad Popular Will Not Participate in Upcoming Presidential Elections*

Caracas – Officers of the Venezuelan Intelligence Service (SEBIN) abruptly entered the residence of Venezuelan opposition leader and political prisoner Leopoldo López late last night without a search warrant, announced López’s wife, Lilian Tintori, via Twitter this morning.

The SEBIN, who have monitored López’s residence since his first transfer to house arrest in July 2017, remained stationed inside the residence throughout the day and were heavily-armed. According to Tintori, they refused to leave until late evening today, claiming that they had “orders from above” to stay.

In a subsequent statement published this afternoon, Tintori denounced this “capricious” and “illegal” action of the Venezuelan dictatorship, which she argued “violat[ed] the right to property and privacy...” as well as the rights of her three children, who were present in the residence and very frightened. Tintori implored the international community to denounce the SEBIN’s “arbitrary” action.

The occupation of López’s residence by SEBIN agents appears to be retaliation by the Government in response to the consequential decision recently taken by Voluntad Popular – López’s political party – to reject the electoral fraud that the Venezuelan government is orchestrating for the upcoming presidential elections. In early February, the Venezuelan government announced an accelerated timeline for the presidential elections, declaring that these would take place before the end of April of this year. Voluntad Popular quickly rejected the timeline and lack of electoral guarantees in the presidential elections and, taking initiative, declared it would not participate in this electoral fraud. The coalition of opposition parties in Venezuela (the MUD) also took the same decision.

The SEBIN’s intrusion into López’s home today sheds light on how the Government intends to negotiate with its adversary: by exerting pressure with a gun pointed at his head.

It is critical that the international community remain on high alert in the face of further possible retaliation against López by the regime.

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