MEDIA RELEASE OCTOBER 9, 2014

UNITED NATIONS RULES VENEZUELAN OPPOSITION LEADER LEOPOLDO LÓPEZ HELD ILLEGALLY, CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Caracas – Today, the family of Venezuelan opposition leader Leopoldo López released Opinion No. 26/2014 of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, finding that he is being held illegally and in violation of international law:

> The Working Group is of the opinion that the detention of Mr. Leopoldo López is an arbitrary detention . . . Accordingly, it recommends to the Government of . . . Venezuela that [it] immediately frees [him], and grants comprehensive reparation, including the compensation of his moral and compensatory character, as well as measures of satisfaction, which could be a public statement of apology in his favor.

"I am so incredibly grateful that the United Nations has called for Leopoldo's release," said Lilian Tintori, Leopoldo's wife. "Its strong stand in solidarity with my husband and the Venezuelan people sends a clear and unequivocal message to President Maduro," she added.

The Working Group is a five-member independent and impartial body appointed by the UN Human Rights Council, which is currently comprised of experts from Benin, Norway, Mexico, South Korea, and Ukraine. It is mandated to consider and render opinions about alleged cases of arbitrary detention. The Government of Venezuela voluntarily appeared before the Working Group, vigorously disputed López's claims, and lost. The Working Group's detailed deliberations and conclusions are presented in a 10-page written opinion. When the Government of Venezuela withdrew from the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights on September 6, 2012, it said it "remains committed to increasing its cooperation with the Human Rights Council." That cooperation must include the immediate release López.

López is a 43-year-old Venezuelan opposition leader being held in Ramo Verde military prison facing charges of inciting violence, arson, damage to property, and conspiracy. He is the founder and National Coordinator of the political party *Voluntad Popular* ("Popular Will") and former mayor of the Chacao District of Caracas. López has been imprisoned on the basis of four speeches he gave in January February 2014, where he advocated changing the Government of Venezuela through democratic, constitutional, and non-violent means. Nevertheless, the Government claimed in its indictment that he persuaded his supporters to engage in violence through "subliminal messaging." He is facing 12-years imprisonment. So far in his trial, the judge has approved the Government to introduce more than 100 witnesses, a dozen reports, and numerous videos against him but has rejected 58 of 60 proposed witnesses and all documentary evidence proposed by López.

In recent weeks, OAS Secretary-General José Miguel Insulza, U.S. President Barack Obama, and the editorial boards of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, among others, have all called for López's immediate release from prison.

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