

EL PAÍS

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Freedom for Leopoldo López

Before the impending sentence, the international community has to redouble efforts to ensure respect for human rights

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On August 18th, my husband, Leopoldo López, finished a year-and-a-half in prison for having made a non-violent, constitutional, and democratic call to change the corrupt, inefficient, and repressive government that systematically violates the rights of its citizens. The government alleges that Leopoldo made “subliminal calls to violence,” yet he has not been allowed to respond to the charges of which they accuse him with either evidence or witnesses. To appreciate the size of the injustice, the reality is that Leopoldo is imprisoned for his words.

The case has reached the final stages and the judge in charge of the case, Susana Barreiros, abruptly suspended the trial period disregarding remaining witnesses and evidence from the public prosecutor and from the defense, including the speeches from 1/23/14, 2/2/14, and 2/12/14, (four speeches in total), that were the basis of the accusation made by the public prosecutor. The judge has announced that she will give her verdict in the coming days.

The trial has been plagued by corruption from beginning to end. President Maduro said at least eleven times before Leopoldo handed himself over that he was “warming up the cell.”

The United Nations has said that Leopoldo should be released immediately. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Presidents Mariano Rajoy of Spain, Barack Obama of the United States, Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia, Ollanta Humala of Peru, Dilma Rousseff of Brazil, and various Parliaments, including the European Union, have joined the United Nations in its request for Leopoldo’s release.

These have been very difficult times, full of anguish. They harass our family and his party, they threaten us. To be a mother running a household alone is not easy. My children suffer the absence of their father each day. Leosan, my two-year-old son, learned to walk in his father’s prison cell. Manuela, my five-year-old daughter, has begun asking me if her father will die in prison.

The situation in Venezuela is worsening dramatically with each passing day. We are at the threshold of a humanitarian crisis. The violence is excessive, the scarcity of basic goods results in the rationing of food, long lines, and the transformation of supermarkets into military zones. The health services have collapsed and are without supplies to attend to basic illnesses.

This battle is not Leopoldo's battle, it is the battle for Venezuela and for the Venezuelans, until we achieve a profound political change in Venezuela where, as Leopoldo says, "all rights exist for all people."

The UN and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights have demanded the immediate release of Leopoldo López. By refusing to do this, the State violates its constitutional obligations as established in Article 23, that say that treaties, pacts, and conventions related to human rights are completely obligatory.

Before an impending sentence, the international community has the obligation to redouble efforts to respect and demand respect for human rights treaties. As a wife, mother, and Venezuelan citizen, I call you together to do this. To stay silent in the face of abuse and injustice would constitute being accomplices to a situation wherein the rights of all Venezuelans have been systematically violated.

The only decision that we await and that can rightly come out of the trial is complete liberty, for Leopoldo Lopez and for all Venezuelans.