

**LEOPOLDO LÓPEZ ISSUES OPEN LETTER ON EVE OF OAS
MEETING ON VENEZUELA**

Calls for Release of Political Prisoners and Recall Referendum in 2016

Caracas – Jailed Venezuelan opposition leader, Leopoldo López, released an open letter on the eve of an extraordinary session by the Organization of American States to discuss the application of the Democratic Charter and the acute social, political, and economic crisis in Venezuela. Excerpts from the letter are contained below, and the full letter is available at <http://bit.ly/2bbFElc>.

A Letter to the Democrats of the World

"In this crisis, it is clear who is responsible: a dictatorial regime that is stubbornly and irresponsibly clinging to power, and that has decided to deny, by any means necessary, the right of the Venezuelan people to protest and to bring about, through a universal, direct, and secret vote, the change that is desired by all."

...

"Given this scenario, the unification of all democratic forces is necessary, both inside and outside of Venezuela, around a common goal: the establishment, maintenance, and defense of regimes that sustain civil liberties and, above all things, respect human beings.

Brothers and sisters around the world, but especially on the American continent, we need your solidarity tomorrow, June 23rd. Solidarity with Venezuela, solidarity with the defense of democracy. We celebrate the holding of sessions to discuss the Venezuelan case and to discuss the application of the Democratic Charter, because the mere fact that these discussions have taken place belies the Venezuelan government's shameful argument - one which they've repeated in various international bodies - that "democratic normality" exists in Venezuela.

In the same way, the Venezuelan government now claims that the Democratic Charter is not necessary, that it would impede the process of dialogue that is so necessary in our country. The Democratic Unity Roundtable argues the exact opposite. The Democratic Charter would facilitate a process for dialogue - which today does not exist in Venezuela - to take place, and would allow for that dialogue to be effective and based on an agenda and clear deadlines.

All members of Venezuela's Democratic Unity Roundtable have expressed their desire to rebuild and reconcile Venezuela and they have expressed their desire for a dialogue that would give real and concrete solutions to Venezuelans. And our demands in order for this dialogue to be fruitful are merely the respect of human rights and the Constitution through the opening of humanitarian channels to allow food and medicine to reach

Venezuelans, the release of political prisoners, and the realization of a recall referendum. We can discuss and reach agreements on such fundamental issues as democratic coexistence, economic reconstruction, and the security of our country, but I believe that everyone can understand that human rights and compliance with the Constitution are not subject to negotiation. No dialogue can supersede the constitutional right of our people to carry out a recall referendum against Nicolás Maduro in 2016. I respectfully invite anyone to read Articles 72 and 233 of our Constitution, which confirm the legitimacy of our demands."

Leopoldo López
Ramo Verde Military Prison

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