

**VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT ESCALATES INTIMIDATION CAMPAIGN
AGAINST LILIAN TINTORI; ISSUES FALSE ACCUSATIONS OF COUP PLOT**

*Four opposition leaders arrested as part of worsening intimidation campaign against
members of the Venezuelan opposition*

CARACAS – Over the weekend, Venezuelan Interior Minister Nestor Reverol falsely accused Lilian Tintori, wife of prisoner of conscience and opposition leader Leopoldo López, of planning a coup against President Nicolás Maduro. The Minister also announced the arrest for their participation in the alleged coup plot of four opposition leaders: Retired General Raul Baduel, Opposition Lawmaker Gilber Caro, City Councilman Jorge Luis Gonzalez, and City Councilman Rosmer Rubio.

These false claims continue the campaign of the Venezuelan government to discredit, intimidate, and silence members of the political opposition, who have been critical of the authoritarian governance style of President Maduro and the country's worsening economic crisis that has caused food shortages and riots. Under a new initiative, called the "anti-coup commando squad" and led by the newly appointed and controversial vice president, Tareck El Aissami, the Government is increasing its persecution of opposition leaders by falsely accusing them of planning violent, subversive acts and arresting them. Currently, there are about 100 political prisoners in Venezuela.

Tintori stated in response: "These claims are completely false and designed to silence opposition voices. We reject violence – but we will continue to speak out against injustice. We believe that the only way out of our country's disaster is through constitutional, peaceful, and electoral means."

These claims are not the first time the Venezuelan government has sought to discredit and intimidate Tintori, who in the wake of her husband's unjust imprisonment has become one of the country's leading human rights activists. Tintori, along with the other members of the Venezuelan opposition, has called for peaceful street protests throughout the country on January 23.

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