

A. Toledo

Rovian

George A. Pastrana
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JOINT DECLARATION

In the spirit of this urgent and critical call to action for the future of a stronger democracy and the firm and constant defense of human rights as one of its intrinsic and thus inseparable values, we, Oscar Arias Sánchez, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Ricardo Lagos, Alejandro Toledo, Luis Alberto Lacalle, Jorge Quiroga, Andres Pastrana y Osvaldo Hurtado subscribe the following joint declaration:

We have been witnessing with deep concern the ongoing weakening of the rule of law, the lack of Independence of public institutions and the criminalization of freedom of expression in Venezuela, all of which entail and represent serious human rights violations. This is why our declaration of March 4, 2013, condemned the "criminalization of peaceful protests and of Venezuelan opposition as well as the prosecution of democratic leaders for political reasons".

On this occasion, we have decided to adhere to the opinion of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention of the UN dated August 26, 2014 which recommends the immediate release of Mr Leopoldo Lopez, leader of the Venezuelan opposition party Voluntad Popular, by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention's opinion confirms our prior statements on the lack of compliance with democratic principles and the respect for human rights in Venezuela.

In its deliberations, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention reported that Lopez's participation in the march of February 12, 2014 is no ground for the deprivation of freedom of a speaker or a participant. Furthermore, the Working Group stated that the deprivation of freedom of Mr Leopoldo Lopez with the objective of limiting his political rights as well as the exercise of his rights to freedom of opinion, expression, assembly and political association, is arbitrary and contradicts the presumption of innocence, and the right to a fair and impartial trial and judgement. As a consequence, the Working Group concludes that the detention of Mr Leopoldo Lopez violates norms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Pact of Civil and Political Rights.

In addition, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, in a declaration dated October 20, 2014 "urged Venezuelan authorities to abide by the Working Group opinions and to immediately free Mr Lopez and Mr Zaballos, as well as all those arrested due to the exercise of their legitimate right to expression and peaceful protest".

Luis Alberto Lacalle
Osvaldo Hurtado

Ricardo Lagos
Osvaldo Hurtado

We firmly and strongly urge the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to abide by the recommendations of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and immediately free Mr Leopoldo López. The Working Group Resolution, issued by a body created by the Human Rights Council and inspired by the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international tools embodying the fundamental goals such as the promotion and protection of human rights, must be implemented by the Venezuelan State. This opinion clearly notes that the Venezuelan State violated norms established in the International Pact for Political and Civil Rights subscribed and ratified by Venezuela, and thus of mandatory compliance.

We also call on the international community to join this initiative in support of Democracy and Human Rights and urge the Government of Venezuela, who has so far declined to comply with the opinion of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, to honor its commitment to democratic values and free Mr Leopoldo López and other political prisoners.

~~Caracas~~ Philip Dierker
John H. Guel
Theodore H. ...
Vainca ...
Jorge ...
Kjell ...
Tanya Halonen
... Botswana