



| VENEZUELA

Socialist International protests against the sentencing of Leopoldo López

| 10 SEPTEMBER 2015

After a year and a half imprisoned in the Military Jail of Ramo Verde in the suburbs of Caracas, the Judicial Power of Venezuela passed sentence in the process against Leopoldo López, political leader in opposition to the government of Nicolás Maduro and Coordinator of Voluntad Popular (VP), a member party of the Socialist International. Today, the judge, Susana Barreiros, condemned López to a jail sentence of 13 years and nine months to be served in the same prison in which he has been detained since February 2014, under charges of being responsible for public incitement, unlawful association and setting fire to and damaging private property during the violent acts that took place in Caracas on 12 February 2014.

The Socialist International cannot but reject and deplore this arbitrary judicial decision. During the entire process we have kept very close to López, to his family, to his party and to the democratic forces in Venezuela. We have repeatedly condemned the constant violations of his rights throughout his trial, during which the guarantees of due process were permanently denied. From the beginning, we have denounced the political motivation behind the detention of Leopoldo López and his condition as a prisoner of conscience, and this sentence only reinforces our denunciations. Along with our firm voice, other voices have been raised from the United Nations, from governments, from serving and former heads of state or government, from parliaments and from different non-governmental organisations which defend human rights, as well as that of civil society organisations.

In the face of these developments, the Socialist International, along with strongly protesting against this sentence, decisively reaffirms today its commitment to remain mobilised in favour of the liberation of Leopoldo López and all the political prisoners in Venezuela and in favour of democracy in that country.

The election of representatives to the National Assembly that will take place on 6 December 2015 must be just and transparent and with the presence of international observers. Democracy is the only legitimate way to overcome the tensions, polarisation and serious economic and social crisis that today affects Venezuela.

We equally deeply regret the confrontations seen today outside the Palace of Justice in Caracas which left one person dead and numerous others injured, and express our hope for an immediate end to the violence.

We reiterate today our deep solidarity with the people of Venezuela in their efforts to achieve respect for the freedoms and rights of all its citizens and to overcome the difficult moments they are facing.

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SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, PO BOX 67973, LONDON SW4 4DU UNITED KINGDOM
T: (44 20) 7627 4449 | E: Socialist International