

Venezuelan Opposition Leader Charged with Inciting Violence



Caracas, April 7 (RHC-NNN) -- Venezuelan authorities over the weekend formally charged jailed right-wing opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez with inciting violence, vandalism and conspiracy for his involvement in violent protests that have left 39 people dead since early February.

"He has been formally charged and he will have his first preliminary hearing at a later date, before the trial takes place, but setting the date is now up to the corresponding judge," Attorney General Luisa Ortega told a press conference.

"As stipulated by law, Lopez was charged within a period of 45 days after he came out of hiding and turned himself in to authorities on February 18th," Ortega said.

In the past week, 67 people have been formally charged for various crimes relating to the violent protests, and five of those arrested have been discharged, said Ortega.

Among the fatal victims of the clashes are eight police or military personnel, while 608 people have been injured, she added.

"Our citizens' human rights have been violated all over the country, because millions of Venezuelans haven't

been able to get to work, take their kids to school or go to a hospital, because small groups have prevented their freedom of movement," said Ortega.

The Venezuelan attorney general explained that Lopez, along with former congresswoman Maria Machado and members of his extremist Popular Will Party, are the architects of a plan known in Venezuela as "The Exit", which calls for the overthrow of the democratically-elected government of Nicolas Maduro.

On February 12th, Lopez led an anti-government march that turned violent. Three people were killed and 50 others wounded in clashes between violent protesters and security officers.

The march triggered a wave of violent protests in the capital Caracas and other cities, claiming the lives of 39 people and causing some 10 billion dollars in damage to public buildings and other venues.

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