

Maduro Offers to Exchange Leopoldo Lopez for Puerto Rican Activist Oscar Lopez Rivera



Caracas, January 5 (RHC-teleSUR) -- Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said Sunday he would consider the release of the jailed far-right opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez if the United States agreed to release Oscar Lopez Rivera, a Puerto Rican nationalist currently held in a U.S. prison.

Leopoldo Lopez was arrested in February after he helped launch a three-month wave of violent opposition demonstrations seeking Maduro's ouster. Streets were blocked by violent masked protesters and dozens were killed, mostly at the hands of extreme right-wing terrorists.

Maduro suggested he could send Lopez to the United States if Washington secured the release of Oscar Lopez Rivera, who was convicted in 1981 of conspiracy along with other militants who sought to secure Puerto Rican independence.

"The only way I would use my (presidential) powers would be to put (Leopoldo Lopez) on a plane, so he can go to the United States and stay there, and they would give me Oscar Lopez Rivera — man for man," Maduro said during a televised broadcast.

A spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Caracas said he had no immediate comment on the issue. Negotiations between Uruguay and the U.S. are currently underway to release Lopez Rivera. Uruguayan President Jose Mujica requested the release of the Puerto Rican political prisoner in an open letter to President Barack Obama.

Puerto Rican Governor Alejandro Garcia Padilla has called on the White House to release the nationalist and the Puerto Rican singer Rene Perez, from the well-known group Calle 13, has also been vocal in his support of Oscar Lopez Rivera.

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