



International Democrat Union

Venezuela: Release detainees and end government violence!

The IDU is deeply concerned over the negative developments in Venezuela, where the government is using lethal force to suppress peaceful protests. We demand that the Venezuelan government immediately stops its violent and repressive actions against peaceful demonstrations, release all those that have now been arrested on trumped up charges and engage in meaningful dialogue with the opposition, says IDU Secretary General Eirik Moen.

Background:

On February 12, Venezuela's Youth Day, students initiated huge and peaceful demonstrations, demanding solutions to the serious economic and social problems that increasingly affect ordinary Venezuelans. The response by the Maduro regime has been violent; so far leaving at least three people dead, nearly a hundred wounded and over 200 arrested. Detainees report being tortured and beaten.

Freedom of the press has been restricted. Access for national and international media to demonstrations has been limited. Those trying to report on site meet increasing difficulties. Most Venezuelan TV and radio stations are not reporting the protests and those who do are censored. NTN24, a news channel based in Colombia was removed from cable and satellite services as punishment for its coverage of the demonstrations. So far 20 journalists have been injured and 11 arrested.

The opposition leader, Leopoldo López, was arrested by the Venezuelan authorities on Tuesday, charged with allegedly inciting violence; a ludicrous allegation by a regime deploying riot police and national guard armed with live ammunition, firing directly into crowds of young and mostly peaceful protesters.

Since President Maduro took office the Venezuelan economy has deteriorated even further than under his predecessor Hugo Chavez. Inflation is now sky high and ordinary people find it increasingly difficult to buy basic goods. People are starving and their ability to survive the day is getting tougher.

Frustration mounts as the government uses the country's oil income to buy weapons and provide financial assistance to countries such as Cuba and Nicaragua. Today Venezuela, the country with the world's largest reserves of crude oil, is forced to import oil to meet its own energy demand.

Statement by IDU Secretary General Eirik Moen, 20 February 2014