

ENGLISH TRANSLATION & TRANSCRIPT OF DECLARATION BY MISEAL LOPEZ SOTO

My name is Misael Lopez Soto. I am an official for the CICPC [Venezuela's largest national police agency, responsible for criminal investigations and forensic services]. In May of 2013, I was assigned as counselor to the Embassy of Venezuela in the Republic of Iraq. Since beginning my assignment, I warned as to how local [Iraqi] employees, under the complacent oversight of Venezuelan diplomats, were selling visas, passports, birth certificates, and other Venezuelan documents.

Individuals paying for these services were normally from Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and in some cases Pakistan. They usually paid between \$5,000 and \$15,000 dollars for this service, depending on the particular case. In many cases these individuals were linked to terrorist groups, the majority had a tendency to be Shiite's.

As a result, I opened an investigation which culminated in March 2014. The result is a comprehensive report which was sent to the [Venezuelan] Ambassador [in Iraq]. However, due to threats against my person I was forced to leave Iraq with another plan. The official who helped me in the investigation was murdered the same afternoon [he/she] helped me get a flight out of Baghdad.

The [Venezuelan] Ambassador [in Iraq] did not report anything to Caracas nor did he inform the [Venezuelan] government of the situation. The local employees, who were removed from the [Venezuelan] Embassy [in Iraq], are back in the [Venezuelan] mission. Behind the back of the Venezuelan state. Due to this incident at the embassy, all operations were moved from Baghdad to Amman [Jordan]. I was the only [diplomatic] officer who between June 2014 and February 2015 attended the [Venezuelan] mission [in Jordan] on a regular basis. After this timeframe, a very important incident occurred.

In early February 2015, a young Venezuelan woman sent a message via email to the [Venezuelan] embassy to request assistance to leave Iraq because she, along with her son, were detained against their will in the city of Basra. My investigation established that the man who held the Venezuelan woman against her will, was an Iraqi citizen, with several Venezuelan identities, fleeing from justice of several countries and previously convicted of drug trafficking in Venezuela. The [Venezuelan] Ambassador [in Iraq] was briefed on this situation in order to inform Caracas, of which he never did.

On March 12, 2015 I traveled with the [Venezuelan] ambassador to the city of Basra. Through our efforts, we were able to set the young woman free. However, once we arrived at the airport to leave the city [of Basra] we were stopped once again. This time the [Venezuelan] ambassador received a phone call from the man who [originally] detained the woman. After this call, of which I do not know what was discussed, [the ambassador] proceeded to the plane and left me in Basra, saying "this is not my problem, it's a consular

matter." I, however, fulfilled my duty as a Venezuelan and stayed [in Basra] until I could get the young woman out, which occurred on March 17, 2015. I was left without a bodyguard, without an assistant, and without government protection, but I fulfilled my duty as a Venezuelan.

With the aforementioned, I want to appeal to the international community to denounce how Venezuelan embassies throughout the Middle East are used to document individuals who have nothing to do with Venezuela, and in many cases are linked to terrorist organizations. Through documentation I can demonstrate that at least one of the cases I found involved a member of the organization Hezbollah.

This is why I want to appeal to the world and ask that you echo my concern [of a threat] that is risking the security [and safety] of many countries. I also want to inform the public opinion of Venezuela that thousands of Arab citizens from Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon have been documented as Venezuelans and are now active voters in the electoral system in Venezuela. Voters who are handled by the current [Venezuelan] government for its use and convenience.

My life has been threatened, my family's as well. Nevertheless, I raise my voice and call upon the world to report what is happening in Venezuela.