



Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C.

Re: Puerto Rico

Dear Mr. President:

In the name of the oldest and largest public interest/human rights bar organization in the United States, we write on the occasion of your historic visit to Puerto Rico to urge you to do two acts: recognize the Puerto Rican people's right to self-determination and encourage the U.S. Congress to expedite a process that would allow the people of Puerto Rico to fully exercise their right to self-determination and independence, including the Constitutional Assembly as the suitable mechanism for decolonization. We also urge you to exercise your constitutional power of pardon to immediately commute the sentences of Oscar López Rivera, Avelino González Claudio and Norberto González Claudio, currently in U.S. prisons for their commitment to the self-determination and independence of Puerto Rico.

Our organization has long supported the application of international law to the case of Puerto Rico's colonial status, consonant with the close to 30 annual resolutions of the United Nations Decolonization Committee, which call upon the Government of the United States to expedite a process that will allow the Puerto Rican people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, in accordance and full compliance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and the resolutions and decisions of the Special Committee concerning Puerto Rico.

In the past decade or so, these annual resolutions have also called on the President of the United States to release all Puerto Rican political prisoners serving sentences relating to the struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico. The resolutions have specifically named Oscar López Rivera, who has the unenviable distinction of having served 30 years in prison, despite the fact that he was not convicted of harming anyone or taking a life; and whose application for parole was just spurned, with a politically punitive order that he serve at least an additional 12 years behind bars.

The irony is not lost on us that the United States, born of an anti-colonial struggle, would itself maintain another nation's sovereignty in its control, and would imprison those who sought the same ideal of freedom as did this nation's own freedom fighters such as George Washington. The colonial regime is a contemptible situation which offends the integrity and peace of both nations: the colonizer and the colonized. It also

contradicts the democratic standards the United States government purveys throughout the world and to which it holds other governments.

With the stroke of a pen, Mr. President, you can order the release of the political prisoners. You can also set the tone for the U.S. Congress to right the 113 year wrong, sending a strong message that Congress expedite a process that would allow the people of Puerto Rican to fully exercise their right to self-determination and independence. Doing so will only improve the image of the United States at home and throughout the world.

With high expectations,

Jeanne Mirer, Susan Scott, Azadeh Shahshahani
Co-Chairs, International Committee, National Lawyers Guild

Judith Berkan, Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan, Jan Susler
Co-Chairs, Puerto Rico Subcommittee, National Lawyers Guild