

MACHETERO PLEADS NOT GUILTY: GONZALEZ CLAUDIO AWAITS BAIL HEARING IN RHODE ISLAND

By José A. Delgado / Jdelgado@elnuevodia.com

May 22, 2011

WASHINGTON – Norberto González Claudio, linked to the clandestine independentista group The Macheteros and arrested a few days ago in Puerto Rico, will be held in a federal jail in Rhode Island awaiting a bail hearing, according to his family.



Norberto Gonzalez Claudio

On Friday in the federal court in Hartford (Connecticut), before magistrate Donna Martínez, González Claudio, 65 years old, pleaded not guilty to the charges he faces, related to the theft of \$7.2 million from the security firm Wells Fargo which took place on September 12, 1983.

“Now they will prepare his defense,” said his son Carlos González Santiago, who attended the hearing which lasted some 20 minutes, along with his mother Elba Santiago, his wife, and independentistas who went to court in solidarity with González Claudio.

Before the hearing, his attorney Richard Reeves met for the first time with Norberto González Claudio. “I saw him to be in good spirits and good health,” said González Santiago. No date has been set for the bail hearing. Federal authorities arrested Norberto González Claudio on May 10 in Cayey. One of his brothers, Avelino, is currently in prison for the same Wells Fargo theft, which at the time was one of the largest in the United States.

“It was strange to see him like that,” as a prisoner in a courtroom, said his son in a telephone interview shortly after the hearing. Federal authorities plan to hold Norberto González Claudio at Wyatt prison, in Central Falls, Rhode Island.

His brother Avelino, 68 years old, was arrested in February of 2008 and later plead guilty to conspiracy and to having transported the money to Mexico in March of 1984.

A year ago he was sentenced to seven years in prison, but because of time served before the plea, he now has about a year and a half left in prison.

His other brother Orlando also went to prison for the Wells Fargo theft, for which The Macheteros took responsibility.



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ARREST OF GONZALEZ CLAUDIO WAS AN FBI SHOW!

By Perla Franco

Published Tuesday May 17, 2011

“Norberto González Claudio has dedicated his life to the struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico. He is a patriot, not a terrorist. Keeping a nation under the colonial yoke is a crime against humanity, according to the United Nations. Thus, the struggle to end oppression and colonialism is patriotism, as has been proved in liberation struggles that all the free countries of the world have waged. We condemn the arrest of this patriot and are in solidarity with him and his family.”

With this convincing stipulation in a press release, more than a dozen independentista organizations convened a protest last Friday May 13 in front of the Federal Court on Chardón Avenue in Hato Rey, while inside the building Norberto González Claudio’s extradition hearing was taking place in magistrate Bruce McGiverin’s courtroom.

When family members entered McGiverin’s courtroom, González Claudio was already there, his hands and feet shackled, dressed in a beige jumpsuit and phosphorescent orange tennis shoes, the uniform of the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC). His wife, sister-in-law, children and grandchildren were seated on the opposite side of the courtroom. An agent entered and handed the family “an object of value the arrestee had when he was detained,” and went on to hand his wife a wedding ring. When his five year old grandson noticed that his grandfather was in the room, he said out loud, “look at Grandpa over there.” A little later, the hearing, which would last around two and a half hours, began.

The hearing began with the magistrate denying the request from one of the defense lawyers, Juan Matos, to postpone the hearing because he hadn’t had enough time to meet with González Claudio.

FBI agent gives his version of the arrest. Assistant U.S. Attorney Warren Vázquez’ first witness was an “FBI special agent” who identified himself as David González. He detailed that he was in San Juan when a task force located in Guavate, Cayey called him to say they had seen someone they thought was González Claudio. He assured that this group was involved in efforts unrelated to González Claudio’s arrest. Later, in response to cross-examination, he said it took him some 25 minutes to get to the place where González Claudio was exercising in a community park on Highway 184, and that he identified him by the one droopy eyelid González Claudio was known to have, and by his left leg being much shorter than his right leg.

The agent claimed to be familiar with the file of the accused, who he identified as a Machetero, an organization he said was founded in 1975, and which in 2005 the U.S. government labeled as terrorist. He added that the charges against him were for conspiracy to commit robbery. He stated that when he approached him to arrest him, he said, “hey mister, look at me, come with me.” He said González Claudio took a deep breath, looked behind, and the agent said, “don’t do this to me,” and that González Claudio moved his head and went toward the steps where the agent told him “sit down.” He said González Claudio smiled and said, “you caught me.” According to the agent, González Claudio had several false names, including Carmelo Vélez Moya, which he used to get a drivers license at the end of 1990.

the head of the FBI, Luis Fraticelli. The defense attorney asked why he was taken there, since that isn’t the procedure. The agent responded that he’d received orders from his supervisor to do that. He related that while there, Fraticelli asked him if he needed medication, and if he was in good health, and he commented that he looked like his brother Avelino, to which the arrestee allegedly responded, “we’re from the same blood.” He said Fraticelli asked if he wanted to speak with his family, and that González Claudio said he did. From right there, with the speakerphone on, he called his wife and told her he was in Fraticelli’s office, and that he was ok. From there they took him to booking, and when they asked him to sign, the arrestee signed his name as Norberto González.

The government also called probation officer Patricia Encarnación Miranda, who said that when she interviewed the arrestee and told him to sign his name, he wrote Norberto González. The defense argued, and it was corroborated by the agent who conducted the arrest, that González Claudio was never read his rights, not when they arrested him, and not when Fraticelli tried to talk with him, questioning him, which the defense said violated his right not to incriminate himself.

In closing arguments, the defense attorney urged that until extradition, González Claudio be placed under 24 hour a day house arrest. But the magistrate said the accused was a “dangerous” person due to “his philosophical vision and that of the political organization he belongs to.”

At the end of the hearing, his family, guarded by an agent, was instructed not to leave the courtroom until the accused had left. González Claudio walked by them, leaning his body and throwing a kiss to his five year old grandson, who at the time was two or three steps away. The child responded, shouting, “I love you, Grandpa,” and immediately asked the attorney who came after, “Why didn’t they let my grandpa go?” The attorney answered, “I tried, but I couldn’t. They decided not to let him go.” And the child said, as if it were a child’s game, “well, you had to hide.”

Agent claims they found weapons. Agent González added, in response to the U.S. Attorney’s questions, that in the search of González Claudio’s alleged residence in Guavate, at his bedside they found two revolvers and a loaded automatic rifle with additional ammunition, in addition to two bulletproof vests. The agent didn’t answer defense questions about the number of agents who participated in the operation, as the government objected that it was “irrelevant,” and the magistrate sustained the objection. During cross-examination, the defense managed to obtain information that the agent had been working for two years for the U.S. Attorney in San Juan, and that prior to this arrest he hadn’t done any other work in that place. Sometimes the agent, who responded to the government’s questions with aplomb and firmness, responded to cross-examination looking more disjointed, confused, and nervous, and asked that questions be repeated. At those times, he looked at the Assistant U.S. Attorney as if he were looking for approval. It seemed as though he hadn’t read the charges against González Claudio.

Family embraces the arrestee. A second government witness was

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Samuel Santana, who identified himself as a National Security special agent in San Juan, and who claimed to have been investigating the

Macheteros since 1995. He said that since then he had references about González Claudio, whose 1985 photo he carried with him.

He said he was the one who received González Claudio's wife when she came to the federal building after his arrest. And he said he recognized Norberto's brother Orlando, who he approached and asked if he wanted to see his brother, to which Orlando said he did, because he hadn't seen him in years. He stated that he allowed them both, along with Norberto's brother-in-law, to be present during Norberto's booking. He stated that Orlando hugged Norberto, and that Norberto smiled but didn't otherwise move, as he was handcuffed.

The federal charges against Norberto González Claudio at the time of his arrest on May 10 don't directly tie him to the theft of \$7.2 million from Wells Fargo in Connecticut. Essentially he is charged with the FBI identifying him as a member of the clandestine independentista organization The Macheteros. Many consider that his arrest was an FBI show to improve the agency's image.

**Comments to
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OSCAR LOPEZ RIVER DENIED PAROLE!

May 10, 2011

Today, on the eve of the 30th anniversary of the arrest of Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera, the U.S. Parole Commission issued a decision denying his petition to reconsider the February 18 ruling denying parole. The Commission justified its decision by assigning him responsibility for conduct he was never accused or convicted of. The decision, erroneously asserting that his release would promote disrespect for the law, ignores the express will of the Puerto Rican people and those who believe in justice and human rights, counting tens of thousands of voices across the political spectrum supporting his immediate release. The Commission ignored the evidence establishing that Oscar met all the criteria for parole, and also ignored its own rules in the process.

Among these many ignored voices are members of legislatures including the United States Congress; the state legislatures of New York, Illinois, Ohio and Pennsylvania; the city councils and county boards of many locales in the U.S. and Puerto Rico; the mayors of many towns in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, including the Association of Mayors of Puerto Rico; bar associations including the Puerto Rico Bar Association, the National Lawyers Guild and the American Association of Jurists; clergy and religious organizations, including the Ecumenical Coalition representing every religious denomination in Puerto Rico; the National Latino Congreso, human rights advocates, academics, students, artists, community organizations, and workers.

The Commission did not ignore President Clinton's determination in 1999 that Oscar's sentence was disproportionately lengthy and that Oscar should be released in September of 2009. Instead, it held "the Commission is not required to share that assessment." However, the Commission did ignore that Oscar's co-defendants released as a result of the 1999 Clinton clemency are productive, law-abiding citizens, fully integrated into civil society. The Commission also ignored its own July 2010 order to release Oscar's last remaining imprisoned co-defendant Carlos Alberto Torres. The White House has recently proposed to initiate a process of to resolve the status of Puerto Rico. A true process of self-determination under international law would be accompanied by the release of political prisoners. The Commission's adverse decision is at odds with such an undertaking. The United States government consistently demands that other governments, in order to establish their democratic credentials, release political prisoners in their custody. The Commission's adverse decision today demonstrates conduct inconsistent with what the U.S. demands of other governments.

Oscar, his family, his attorney, National Boricua Human Rights Network in the U.S. and the Comité Pro Derechos Humanos in Puerto Rico want to express our deepest gratitude for the vast support for his release. We will count on ongoing support as we continue to press for Oscar's release.

OSCAR LOPEZ RIVERA

by **JOSÉ ENRIQUE AYOROA SANTALIZ ATTORNEY,**
Friday May 20, 2011 /EL NUEVO DÍA

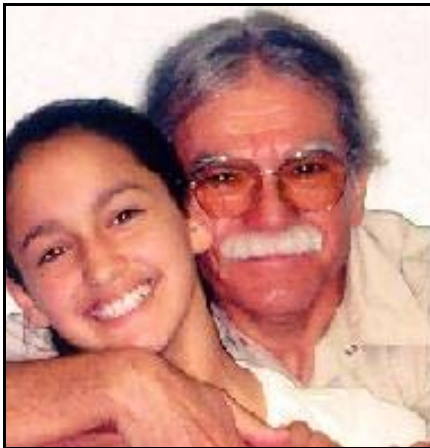
The whole Puerto Rican people, the political right, the center and the left, are prisoners in the same cell with our compatriot from San Sebastián Oscar López Rivera, for more than one reason.

In the first place, because we are all dissatisfied with the current political situation, and all of us, in our way, like Oscar, want to change it. In the second place, because, representatively speaking, the entire Puerto Rican society believes, and has thus expressed, that serving thirty years in prison, one of the longest sentences in the history of humanity, is enough punishment. That intending that "he has to wait fifteen years more to once again apply for release, or in the alternative, serve the rest of his seventy year sentence," is an abuse, a cruel and intolerable punishment, when it comes to a human being who is already 68 years old. His immediate release has been sought by the entire spectrum of Puerto Rican society, including members of Congress Nydia Velázquez, José Serrano, Luis Gutiérrez and the resident commissioner in Washington, Pedro Pierluisi.

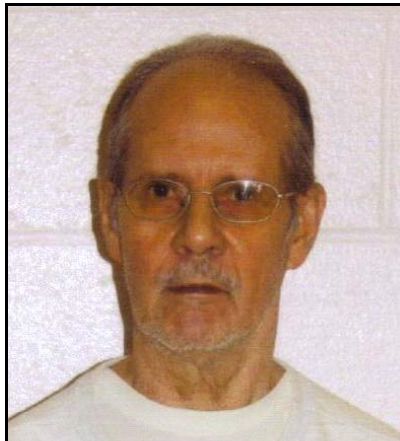
What is left as a sensible step for us to take? That we all, in one voice, resort to the president of the United States, Barack Obama, and ask him to pardon our compatriot Oscar López Rivera. As president, he has to power to do so. Oscar's case is so meritorious at the moment that if Obama were shown its details in a truthful film that showed the general framework of this political prisoner, he surely wouldn't be able to believe it. Fortunately, Oscar is a man of character and discernment, in the manner of Nelson Mandela. All of us compassionate Puerto Ricans are in a way prisoners of our own consciousness in the face of this inhumane situation. Let's not be accomplices with our silence in the face of this excessive abuse.



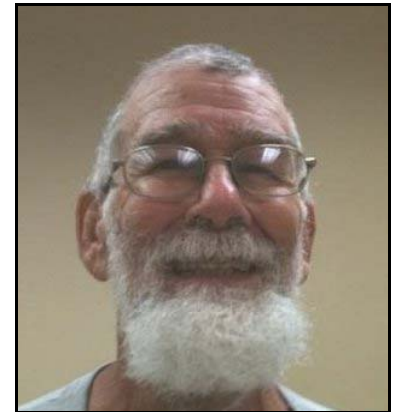
WRITE TO THE PUERTO RICAN POLITICAL PRISONERS!!



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The Prisoner's Name AND Prison Number
PO Box 474701
Des Moines, IA, 50947-0001

Print the Prisoner's name and Prison number on the money order as well.



ProLibertad Freedom Campaign

The ProLibertad Freedom Campaign has been working for the release of the Puerto Rican Political Prisoners for over 10 years. With the release of 11 of the Political Prisoners in September 1999, we have re-dedicated our efforts to securing the freedom of the remaining Puerto Rican political prisoners. Through educational events, lobbying and public pressure work and activities it is our goal to secure the freedom of these patriots whose only "crime" has been the love of their home land, Puerto Rico. We support the release of All U.S. held Political Prisoners, oppose the U.S. colonial control of Puerto Rico, U.S. imperialism throughout the world, and the U.S. military presence in Vieques. **Contact us at ProLibertad@Hotmail.com, at 718-601-4751, or our website www.ProLibertadweb.com**