



National Boricua Human Rights Network 2739 W. Division Street • Chicago, IL PASEO BORICUA • 60622

Boston•Detroit•Chicago•Cleveland•Hartford•New York•Philadelphia•San Francisco•Washington DC

info@boricuahumanrights.org
www.boricuahumanrights.org

May 25, 2011

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

Re: Puerto Rican Political Prisoner Oscar López Rivera
87651-024, FCI Terre Haute, Indiana

Dear President Obama,

We write to ask you to commute the 70 year sentence of Oscar López Rivera, #87651-024, who has now served 30 years in prison, and to whom the U.S. Parole Commission recently unjustifiably denied parole.

Convicted of seditious conspiracy, for his commitment to the independence of Puerto Rico, he was not accused or convicted of causing harm or taking a life. This 68 year old decorated Vietnam veteran is among the longest held political prisoners in the history of Puerto Rico and in the world.

In 1999, President Clinton commuted the sentences of eleven of his co-defendants after they served from 16 to 20 years, as he determined their sentences were disproportionately lengthy. President Clinton offered to commute Oscar’s sentence, on the condition that he serve an additional ten years of clear conduct in prison before being eligible for release. Oscar did not accept the president’s offer, as the offer did not include all of his co-defendants, and since he knew, from his extensive experience at the hands of his jailers, that if he accepted, they would never have allowed him to successfully complete the conditions. Under the president’s offer, he would have been released in September of 2009. Since 1999, Oscar has served not 10, but 11, additional years of clear conduct in prison.

In July of 2010, the only other imprisoned co-defendant was paroled from his 70 year sentence after serving 30 years. Some of those released in the 1999 commutations had sentences longer than Oscar’s. All those released are living successful, productive lives, fully integrated into civil society. Oscar is now the only one of his generation still in prison.

This case presents you with the opportunity to use your constitutional power to do justice, something that three previous U.S. presidents have done with Puerto Rican independentistas in U.S. prisons: President Truman in 1952, President Carter in 1979, and President Clinton in 1999. It also presents you with an opportunity to demonstrate that the U.S. does not simply insist that other countries release their political prisoners and improve their human rights records, but that the U.S. will actually practice those same human rights at home.

Your President’s Task Force on Puerto Rico’s Status recently issued a report offering recommendations which proposed methods for resolving the status question, acknowledging that “status remains of overwhelming importance to the people of Puerto Rico.” Oscar is the embodiment of a movement also seeking resolution of this issue of overwhelming importance, a resolution which must include his release.

Oscar continues to enjoy wide support, including Puerto Rican civil society: the Senate and the House of Representatives, the Bar Association, former governors, virtually every religious denomination, labor unions, environmentalists, academics, mayors, community activists, human rights activists, and celebrities. Similarly, in the United States he enjoys the support of Latino and Puerto Rican communities, including elected officials, religious leaders, community and civic leaders, as well as people in general.

Along with his daughter Clarisa and granddaughter Karina, as well as his brothers and sisters and extended family, we are anxious to welcome him home and to facilitate his integration into civil society. We urge you to commute his sentence and release him immediately.

Very truly yours,

SIGNATURE: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____

NAME: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

EMAIL: _____

