

Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet

President, The Lawton Foundation for Human Rights

February 16, 2012

House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights

I am Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet

Internal Medicine Specialist

President of the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights

Recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2007

All the testimony given by me before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights and in the presence of the Biblical God, is the sole truth about the events that have taken place.

I wish to express my gratitude to my compatriot and defender of freedom for the Cuban people, Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, for extending this invitation and my admiration of the Cuban-American members of Congress, Mario Diaz-Balart, David Rivera, Albio Sires, Robert Menéndez and Marco Rubio for their altruistic efforts on behalf of the Cuban cause.

Warmest greetings to all the prominent individuals gathered here today.

Cuba, where I reside, is a society of fear. Since 1959, it has been run by a communist totalitarian regime in the style of Stalin.

This regime is essentially characterized as being anti-American, anti-Semitic, and anti-Black. Its permanence is due to its use of State terrorism and extreme police control over its citizens.

The dictatorship of the Castros commits flagrant and systematic violations of the human rights of the Cuban people.

The lack of basic liberties in our society motivated me to become an activist for human rights and to regain them for the Cuban people through non-violent resistance.

These humanitarian goals led to my suffering great vicissitudes at the hands of the Castro government's political police.

The following are some of the most horrific events endured:

Once, during a conference at the Materno Infantil de Diez de Octubre hospital, in 1998, while making a presentation to my colleagues about the right to life, a mob of members of the Communist Party violently expelled me from the hospital's classroom.

Ever since that day, Cuba's communist regime has not allowed me to practice the noble profession of medicine.

At the same time, my wife and son were threatened and blackmailed to get them to abandon me. Their firm decision to stand by me caused my wife to be fired from her employment and my son's inability to begin his university studies. We were all evicted from the house, which also served as a medical office, where my wife worked as an exemplary registered nurse.

During that period, I was arrested dozens of times. I was placed in walled cells along with murderers and others with personality disorders who had just committed bloody criminal acts.

The political police is beaten me, disfigured me, and caused me dental fractures. On one occasion they fractured my right foot.

These agents, while following the orders of the dictatorship, tried to coerce and intimidate me through torture and cruel and inhumane treatment, with the objective of having me give up my humanitarian activism. Unable to meet their objective, they imprisoned me for about a dozen years.

However, if these actions had been taken only against my person, they would lack historical importance. The big problem is that these aberrations and violations of human dignity are committed against the general population and that imprisoned in the country's jails.

The Cuban socialist penitentiary system does not comply with the minimum requirements for the care of prisoners established by the United Nations. Due to this, they tortured not only me but also my family members.

Most disturbing is the fact that three prisoners tried to assassinate me on different occasions; two of them had been hired by military officers of the inland cities.

Some of the torture and cruel and inhumane treatment that I observed or suffered while in socialist prisons were:

Individuals were kept prone with their hands, toward their back, handcuffed to their feet for more than twelve hours, sometimes over twenty four hours.

Individuals were handcuffed with hands extended over their head while the tips of their toes slightly touched the floor. The duration of these events was similar to the ones described previously.

Taser guns were used for psychological and physical torture.

During searches, prisoners would have to strip while in groups without any regard for human modesty.

As a form of retaliation, inmates are denied medical attention. Many of these types of cases exist. I will limit myself to exposing two which impressed me as a human being and also due to my knowledge of medical science:

I was in the punishment cells at the prison Cuba Sí in the Holguín Province in 2002.

An inmate, in protest of the prison authorities, inserted a sharp object into his abdomen. He was kept in that condition for two days until I found out about it and protested strongly. He was taken to the hospital; he underwent surgery due to acute peritonitis.

There was a young inmate who had two non-communicable chronic conditions, asthma and cardiac problems related to valve pathologies. He was stable but had an appointment with the doctor. He complained because he was not taken to see the doctor and was given such a beating that he died. This occurred on the second floor of the first building at Combinado del Este prison in 2010.

Prisoners are held in cells under subhuman conditions. There is no natural light, sometimes not even artificial light; no potable water; no ventilation; overcrowding; prisoners coexisting with vectors and more.

Scores of prisoners suffer these same human miseries and, even worse, are being housed with common offenders who are utilized by the penal authorities to try to stop political prisoners from maintaining a posture of challenge.

I would like to take this opportunity to greet two compatriots who are supporters of liberty for humanity who will be testifying before this Committee, a former political prisoner who is one of the 75 prisoners of the Black Spring of 2003, Normando Hernández and Indiana's Representative Dan Burton, who along with Senator Jesse Helms, was a promoter of the Helms Burton Act of 1996.

If all the articles and chapters of this magnificent legal-political document were enforced, it would persuade and motivate all free nations towards solidarity and to seek changes leading to freedom and democracy for the Cuban people.

The dictatorship of the Castro brothers has played a role in all embarrassing and condemnable world events. I will make reference to a few of them:

It offered unconditional support to the imperialistic Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and of Afghanistan in 1979.

It also supported, during the first decade of the Twenty-first Century, Russia's expansionist invasion of Georgia.

It offered unlimited defense to the despotic regimes of S. Milosevic, S. Husein and M. Ghadafi.

Has given military training and logistic support to the Colombian drug guerrillas; and extremist Muslims from Hezbollah and Hamaz have operational bases in Cuba.

If this cold policy of indifference towards the Cuban communist hierarchy persists, I fear that shortly we will have a new missile crisis, such as the one in October of 1962. But this time the players would be Cuba, Venezuela, Iran and the United States.

Tomorrow, we will proudly celebrate the fourth anniversary of Kosovo's independence. Five years ago, you Americans promised the Kosovan-Albanians unwavering support of their independence. You did it with such firmness, honor and love that you had many other nations join you in this just cause, and you triumphed.

This is the kind of support that I would ask of you so that my people would be free and sovereign.

Thank you.