



DR. OSCAR ELIAS BISCET GONZALEZ

Oscar Elias Biscet Gonzalez was born in Havana, Cuba, on July 20th of 1961, to a family of modest means. He is the founder and president of the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights, an organization outlawed by Cuban authorities, which peacefully promotes the defense of all human rights through nonviolent civil disobedience. He is married to Elsa Morejón Hernández, a nurse. He has two children, daughter, Winnie, and son, Yan.

In 1985, Dr. Biscet obtained his degree as a specialist in internal medicine. A year later, he publicly opposed the long hours without pay that Cuban physicians were expected to work. As a result, he was suspended from the Hospital Nacional and the practice of medicine for a year. In 1987, he returned to the practice and teaching of medicine at the Obstetric Pediatric Hospital, Hijas de Galicia, in Havana. By the late 1980's, Dr. Biscet began to openly coordinate activities to oppose the human rights violations of the communist Cuban regime. In 1994, he was officially charged by the Cuban authorities with "dangerousness" defined in Article 72 of the Penal Code of Cuba as the "special proclivity of a person to commit crimes demonstrated by his conduct in manifest contradiction of socialist norms."

In 1997, Dr. Biscet founded the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights in collaboration with fellow members of the peaceful opposition movement and conducted a clandestine ten month research study at the Hijas de Galicia Hospital documenting unofficial statistical data on abortion techniques. During this study, many Cuban mothers testified that their newborn

babies were killed right after birth, a common practice in hospitals throughout the island. The research study "Rivanol: A Method to Destroy Life," was made public on April, 1998. It was not until June 9, 1998, that the study was officially delivered to the Cuban government along with a letter addressed to Fidel Castro accusing the Cuban National Health System of genocide. This study was translated from Spanish to English and sent to The Convention of the Rights of the Child in Geneva, Switzerland. This document was dedicated to the memory of the 23 children who drowned when the tugboat "13 de Marzo," which was full of would-be-refugees, was deliberately sunk by Cuban gunboats.

Dr. Biscet was officially expelled from the Cuban National Health System in February of 1998, and has never been allowed to practice medicine again. Elsa Morejón, Dr. Biscet's wife, a nurse, is not allowed to practice her profession due to her husband's human rights activities. Therefore, the family was evicted from their home in March of 1998, and have since had to depend on the charity of friends to survive.

In January of 1998, the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights publicly demanded freedom for all Cuban political prisoners by holding up banners and posters during the historic mass that Pope John Paul II celebrated in Havana. Dr. Biscet staged public demonstrations in favor of justice in front of the courthouses where arbitrary trials were scheduled to take place and demanded freedom of religion and freedom of speech. Also, the Lawton Foundation presided by Dr. Biscet, along with other human rights groups tried to establish a school to teach nonviolent civil disobedience.

The Lawton Foundation for Human Rights has also been involved in several other pro-life and human rights activities. It has requested solidarity with Cuba by addressing letters to doctors, religious leaders, government officials, health organizations, human rights groups, and dignitaries throughout the world. The Foundation has also coordinated peaceful demonstrations in parks to observe the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights. In addition, they have organized monthly distributions of the aforementioned document to passersby on the streets. Besides, the Foundation has held press conferences in Havana to inform the international press about human rights abuses in Cuba. A press conference was held on March 26, 1999, during which The Lawton Foundation for Human Rights, along with other pro human rights activists, established that the Cuban nation was one, comprised of individuals living on the Island and in exile, and that the following three objectives should be achieved through nonviolent means:

1. Freedom for all political prisoners.
2. The abolition of all articles that violate human rights.
3. The reestablishment of democracy in Cuba.

From June 7 to July 16, 1999, one of the most significant events carried out by the peaceful Cuban opposition movement took place under the leadership of the Lawton Foundation. A group of human rights activists in Havana began a forty day liquid fast to demand the release of all political prisoners and draw attention to the violation of Human Rights in Cuba. This activity spread throughout the island and thousands of Cubans joined in 54 fasting sites. In addition, some of their compatriots in exile around the world joined the fast to show solidarity. Members of the international press who covered the story and foreign diplomats visited the small apartment at Tamarindo 34 in Havana.

Dr. Biscet was arrested on November 3, 1999, and was held at the prison of the Technical Department of Investigation located at Cien and Aldabó streets in Havana. According to Sergio Hernández, the state appointed defense attorney, the case files disclosed that Dr. Biscet had been officially accused of such crimes as "dishonoring national symbols," "public disorder," and "inciting delinquent behavior" for which the State Prosecutor of the Republic of Cuba was asking for a ten year prison sentence.

Two incidents were connected to these accusations. The first incident occurred on February 22, 1999, when Dr. Biscet was accused of "disorderly conduct" for staging a peaceful pro-life demonstration outside the Hijas de Galicia Hospital in Havana. The hospital's director, Dr. Laura Fernandez, and Dr. Norma Silva, the leader of the Communist Party, led a physical attack on Dr. Biscet. The second incident took place a few days prior to the Ibero-American Summit in Havana, and resulted in Dr. Biscet being accused of all three of the aforementioned crimes. The Lawton Foundation and numerous members of the opposition movement held a press conference on October 28, 1999, to announce a peaceful march through the streets of Havana to demand freedom for all political prisoners and human rights for Cuba. At this conference, the Cuban flag was displayed in an inverted vertical position as a sign of distress and protest for the human rights violations in Cuba. The human rights activists who attempted to participate in the march were attacked by government sponsored mobs. The charges related to the above mentioned incidents resulted in Dr. Biscet serving a three year term at the Cuba Si Prison near Holguin, Oriente, 768 km. from Havana, making family visits extremely difficult during those years.

Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet González, a devout Christian, follower of the philosophies of Henry David Thoreau, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi and the Dalai Lama, was arbitrarily detained 26 times from June 1998 to November 1999. This Cuban physician, a prisoner of conscience, has been mistreated physically and psychologically and has suffered beatings, threats, humiliations, blackmail, intimidating interrogations, and incarcerations in underground

cells which he has had to share with insane individuals and common criminals. On several occasions, State Security has tried to subject Dr. Biscet to psychiatric examinations at Mazorra, the main psychiatric hospital in Havana. State security has also pressured him into leaving Cuba, to which he responded that he would never leave his country.

After he finished serving his three year sentence on October 31, 2002, Dr. Biscet was released and allowed to return to Havana. During his 36 days of freedom from October 31 to December 6 of 2002, Dr. Biscet completed his work on the Democratic Principles for Cuba. This work has achieved worldwide acceptance. He also promoted a civic project called "Club for Friends of Human Rights" whereby Cuban people could meet in small groups and educate themselves on human rights and learn ways to defend and demand them peacefully. On December 6, 2002, in Havana, when he was preparing to meet with human rights activists from Matanzas as part of the "Club for Friends of Human Rights," the Cuban Secret Police detained him along with many of the activists. The group staged an act of nonviolent civil disobedience by laying down in front of the home and saying: "Long live human rights" and "freedom for political prisoners." On this occasion, the peaceful protestors were arrested and taken to the Tenth Unit of the National Revolutionary Police (Décima Unidad de la PNR) on Acosta Avenue. During this prison period, he was placed for 19 days in a *calabozo* (punishment cell.)

After several months in prison and having been transferred from Villa Marista to Combinado del Este Prison, on April 2003, Dr. Biscet was charged in a summary judgment with violation of Article 91 of the Cuban Penal Code which refers to crimes against state security. This time he was sentenced to a 25 year prison term which he began to serve at the Pinar del Rio prison system in western Cuba, in Kilo 5 and Kilo 8 prisons, 162 km from his home. During his stay at these prisons, he was tortured on numerous occasions and denied communication with the outside world. Dr. Biscet was placed in a *tapiada* (a humid, dark cell with no sunlight) both in the main prison cells and in the underground cells. At one point he had to share a cell with a common criminal for up to 3 weeks. He remained in these *tapiadas*

for up to 8 months. In the year 2003, his wife was only permitted to visit him once. On November 30, 2004, he was transferred to Combinado del Este prison in Havana, Cuba. In the year 2004, he was allowed only one family visit every three months and a marital visit every 5 to 6 months. Currently, he is allowed to have one conjugal visit and one family visit every

sixty days, while other prisoners are allowed visitations every 45 days. The Cuban guards tell Dr. Biscet that his case, in particular, is handled by the State Security (Seguridad del Estado.)

In spite of Dr. Biscet's difficulties in prison, he is in good spirits and remains firm on his demands for justice and freedom. On a prison visit, Dr. Biscet gave a message to his wife Elsa, asking his Cuban brothers and sisters on the island and in exile to join in prayer with the international community for freedom for all political prisoners and freedom of expression in Cuba. In that same message, he expressed his gratitude to all those concerned for his well-being, particularly his colleagues in the medical profession.

On May 1, 2004, Dr. Biscet was the recipient of a Doctoral Degree in Honoris Causa. The honor was presented by Dr. Eduardo Padron, the president of Miami Dade College in Miami, Florida. On July 3, 2004, he was named the Honorary President of the Pan American Cuban Medical Convention in Miami Florida, a distinct honor awarded by his medical colleagues in exile. Both honors were awarded in recognition for his work on human rights for promoting nonviolent civil disobedience, and for his dedication to the struggle to bring democracy, justice, and liberty to Cuba. The Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States' highest civilian award, was given to Dr. Biscet, in absentia, by President George W. Bush, at a ceremony held at the White House on November 5, 2007. Dr. Biscet's children and directors of the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights attended the ceremony. Dr. Biscet requested that the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights hold the presidential medal until the time that Cuba is free. At a ceremony in Berlin, on December 12, 2007, Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet was once again recognized for his struggle for human rights. He was honored with the International Award for Human Rights, the Dr. Rainier Hidelbrandt Medal. This medal is named after the man who founded and who until his death directed the House Aum Checkpoint Charlie, a museum that documents the attempts to escape from communism to the West. Dr. Angel E. Garrido, Vice-President of the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights, accepted the award in his name. The most recent commendation received by Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet was a human rights award, an honorary plaque from the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic. On February 27, 2008, Dr. Rigoberto Rodriguez, director of the Lawton Foundation, received the award on behalf of Dr. Biscet at the Czech Embassy in Washington, DC.

Presently, this peaceful human rights activist and devout Christian, follower of the philosophies of H. D. Thoreau, Ghandi, the Dalai Lama, and Martin Luther King, Jr., remains in prison due to his struggle for justice in Cuba. We urgently ask all men and women of good will, the international press, human rights organizations, world health organizations and dignitaries of democratic nations to denounce before the Cuban government the unjust incarceration of this Cuban physician whose only crime is to honor the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to desire the reestablishment of democracy of his own country, Cuba.

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