

OSCAR ELIAS BISCET: A hero to all

By Mitt Romney

Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet is a truly worthy recipient of the 2007 Presidential Medal of Freedom. President Bush should be commended for honoring this gentleman with our nation's highest civilian award and for their unwavering commitment to the Cuban people.

For over two decades, Dr. Biscet has sacrificed his life in the pursuit of dignity and freedom for his fellow Cubans. Sadly, Dr. Biscet will not be present to receive his award at the White House because the regime knows he is a danger to its existence. Like so many other Cubans, Biscet has been confined to Cuba's tropical gulags as a prisoner of conscience. He is one of hundreds of political prisoners in Cuba today. This award is as much a tribute to him as it is to the thousands of Cubans who have shared his fate.

Dr. Biscet is a respected leader for an increasing number of Cubans who have demanded the unconditional freedom to elect their leaders and express their beliefs. He has also stirred the ire of Havana's despots by challenging the regime's policy of coercing abortions. His courageous nonviolent campaign of civil disobedience has made him the victim of torment and torture at the hands of these cruel tyrants. It is clear that Dr. Biscet is not a threat to the Cuban people; he only poses a threat to the injustice that pervades on the island.

Biscet's example has earned him the respect of friends of freedom everywhere and, more importantly, has called the Cuban people to action against their unacceptable condition. Like Martin Luther King, Jr., Ghandi and John Adams before him, Dr. Biscet is a descendant of those who have been fighting the centuries-old struggle for freedom. His ideals are so universal and powerful that this regime has failed in wiping them off its land.

Biscet reminds us of the hope and courage that prevails among the Cuban people, despite the regime's best efforts to cripple them. It is hope and courage that we see in the students who ask for "CAMBIO" in the face of government-organized mobs, as well as the Ladies in White who march and pray for the liberation of their incarcerated husbands. Hope lives on in the prison cells of political prisoners like Biscet who, through their loved ones, continue to speak to the world about the ideals and values that must prevail in the face of one of the harshest climates freedom has ever known. On a map, Cuba is just 90 miles from America's shores. But never have we been as close as we are now to having a free Cuba on our doorstep. Coupled with international support, efforts like these are creating the groundswell for change that even the regime cannot stop.

Every American should be proud that the Presidential Medal of Freedom is being awarded to Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet. It should also serve as a reminder of the moral responsibility the next President of the United States has to keep the spotlight on the regime's abuses, maintain pressure on it to grant its people freedom, and ultimately support the Cuban people when they finally have the opportunity to shape their country's future. As President, I would be honored to welcome these Cuban patriots to the people's house in Washington. In the meantime, we must praise their work and remain faithful to their cause.

As our nation honors Dr. Biscet, I send my own message to him. Dr. Biscet, you are an inspiration to the world. You are not alone in your struggle. The prayers of the freedom-loving world are with you. You represent the best of the Cuban people. You remind us of the many who have sacrificed their lives in the pursuit of freedom. The annals of history will reserve a special place for you and only infamy for the despots that understand you are a witness to their atrocities. The future of Cuba is bright because of you and those you have inspired.