

Press Statement

Richard Boucher, Spokesman

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Treatment of Oscar Elias Biscet and Other Cuban Political Prisoners

The United States is deeply concerned that the Cuban government has escalated its harsh treatment of Cuban political prisoner Oscar Elias Biscet. Cuban authorities have now moved him to solitary confinement. Dr. Biscet, one of Cuba's leading dissidents and a staunch advocate of Dr. Martin Luther King's teachings of non-violence, was arrested on December 6, 2002, in his home as he held a discussion on human rights. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Dr. Biscet has been forced to live on handouts from fellow prisoners because regime authorities refuse to permit his wife to bring in the meager rations of food and medicine that are allowed other prisoners. The Cuban regime has knowingly done this while his health has deteriorated markedly.

Unfortunately, Dr. Biscet is only one of 75 independent civil society activists sentenced to long jail terms in April 2003 whose only crime was to call for peaceful change in Cuba. We call on the Cuban government to allow humanitarian organizations to monitor its treatment of prisoners. The State Department continues to compile a watch list of Cubans who abuse their fellow citizens. Those who forbid Cubans from exercising their fundamental freedoms will not find refuge in the United States.