



## National Boricua Human Rights Network

Boston • Chicago • Cleveland • Detroit • Hartford • New England • New York • Philadelphia

2739-41 W. Division Street PASEO BORICUA, Chicago, IL 60622

info@boricuahumanrights.org • www.boricuahumanrights.org

August 26, 2010

Barack Obama

President of the United States

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Washington, D.C.

Re: Puerto Rican Political Prisoner Oscar López Rivera

Dear President Obama, We write to ask you to release Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera. Given the injustice of his lengthy sentence, and the irrationality of his continuing imprisonment, we add our voice to the voice of the many civic, religious, political and community leaders in the U.S. and Puerto Rico who have asked him to come home, be it by presidential commutation or parole.

Mr. López, arrested in 1981, is serving a sentence of 70 years for seditious conspiracy, for his commitment to the independence of Puerto Rico. He was not accused or convicted of causing harm or taking a life. His projected release date is in 2023, when he will be 79 years old. Having served 29 years behind bars, including over 12 years in torturous conditions of total isolation and sensory deprivation, this 67 year old man is among the longest held political prisoners in the history of Puerto Rico and in the world.

A decorated Viet Nam veteran, Oscar worked as a community organizer in Chicago, for better housing, education, employment, and living conditions for Puerto Ricans and Latinos, helping to found institutions which are thriving today, including the Pedro Albizu Campos Alternative High School, in the heart of Chicago's Puerto Rican community.

In 1999, President Clinton commuted the sentences of eleven Puerto Rican political prisoners arrested in the 1980's, 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 the Puerto Rican political prisoners, 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.

The conditions of President Clinton's 1999 offer to commute Oscar's sentence—that he serve an additional ten years of clear conduct in prison—have been fulfilled. Of all the Puerto Rican political prisoners convicted in the early 1980's, only Oscar remains in prison. Carlos Alberto Torres, who was not included in the commutation, was released on parole in July of 2010 after serving 30 years. Some of those released in the 1999 commutations had sentences longer than Oscar's. All those released in the 1999 commutations are living successful lives, fully integrated into civil society.

Oscar's daughter Clarisa and granddaughter Karina, as well as his brothers and sisters and extended family, have asked him to come home. Their request is fueled by the recent death of Oscar's sister Clara, after a long illness during which prison officials refused to grant him a furlough to visit her bedside or to her funeral.

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.

We are anxious to welcome him home and to facilitate his integration into civil society. We urge you to release him immediately.

Very truly yours,

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_