



United States Embassy
Havana, Cuba

Havana, June 12, 2020

Dear José Daniel,

The time has come for us to continue our conversation. The only thing which has alleviated my outrage at your unjust detention and mistreatment is the happiness of your family when finally reunited with you. It was a great relief but only a small step toward your final exoneration. What you suffered at the hands of your government was a widely recognized injustice.

“Justice, Justice, Shall You Pursue,” goes the Jewish biblical instruction. Scholars interpret the repetition of the word “justice” to emphasize the fundamental duty to pursue justice for everyone, everywhere and with persistence. The Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. similarly implored, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

You and I have discussed these matters of humanity and share a belief in a society that has the freedom to advocate for change. We have observed how the Cuban people are denied these independent means to speak truths. Even minor views can receive harsh punishment. Yet you and others remain committed incessantly to full rights for all Cubans.

My country, the United States, is in the midst of another historic round of public and difficult conversations about justice. There has been heartbreak. It is not the first time we see this painful, open dialogue, and it won't be the last. As you have commented publicly, open dialogue of this nature is prohibited in Cuba.

Berta Soler and the Ladies in White received beatings for trying to attend church mass to pray for Cuban political prisoners.

Pastor Alain Toledano's church was destroyed.

An older family man like Roberto Quiñones was stripped of legal recourse and forced to serve hard labor for showing up in front of a courthouse.

Silverio Portal, a man of ill health, was beaten in prison – hard enough to lose the vision in an eye – and yet, cannot say hello to his wife.

Again and again, truth-tellers – men and women – are beaten, fined and coerced. Families are bullied and harassed.

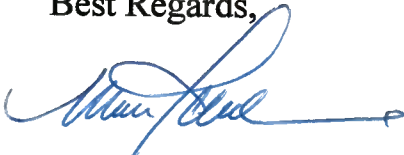
You are still not free.

All this, and more, goes on, while the constitution says, according to Article 51, “People may not be subject to forced disappearance, torture, or cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment.”

While you were incarcerated, I met with your family. As a woman, I found it moving, got to talk with your wife, Nelva, and daughter, Martha Beatriz. Both showed courageous commitment to your well-being, deeply rooted in these values and principles that you and I have discussed. You, they and the others in Cuba who refuse to be silenced have a great deal to teach and should be heard.

The United States speaks up to help that day come soon. We are reminded that there are very many people all over the world who support basic liberties in this country. You have visualized the day when Cuba enjoys full democracy. That will be the day when Cuba fulfills its exceptional promise.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mara Tekach', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mara Tekach
Chargé d'Affaires
U.S. Embassy, Havana