



The President

300374 14.01.2010

D. Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas
Coordinador del Movimiento Cristiano Liberación
La Habana, Cuba

Dear Mr Payá,

Thank you for your letter of 15 November 2009, calling on the European Parliament to support the appeal for the release of political prisoners in Cuba as well as in favour of the possibility for Cuban citizens to freely exercise their constitutional rights.

Your suggestions are fully in line with the position of the European Parliament. When the Parliament decided to award you the Sakharov Prize in 2002, it was one of the most visible and strong ways of showing our support for the Varela project and for peaceful and democratic change in Cuba. When, a couple of years later, the Parliament decided to give the same prize to the Ladies in White, we wanted to express our support and solidarity with the political prisoners and their families. This was also reiterated when we last year celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the Prize, where you were, once again, not able to participate in person despite all our efforts to obtain the permission for you to leave the country. We are, therefore, well aware of the continuing repression in your country.

In its last revision of the EU Common Position on 15 June 2009, the Council gives a clear message which has our full support. It calls upon the Cuban government to improve the human rights situation, in particular in the field of civil and political rights, and adopt political reforms, and calls for the unconditional release of all political prisoners, including those who were detained and sentenced in 2003. We also support the reaffirmation of the EU's readiness to contribute positively to the future development of all sectors of Cuban society.

I can reassure you that the European Parliament will follow this issue closely, and that the human rights situation will remain a key priority for us in assessing the possible development of relations with Cuba. In particular, I have no doubt that at meetings with the Presidency of the EU, Members of Parliament will be looking for reassurance that our approach to this issue is shared by the other EU institutions.

Yours sincerely,

Jerzy Buzek