

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 31, 2008

The Norwegian Nobel Committee
NO-0255 Oslo,
Norway

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Alfred Nobel wished to honor every year the person or persons who “shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between the nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses”. Due to his legacy, we have a special opportunity to honor and recognize those who are doing good in the world. Over time, the qualifications for the Nobel Peace Prize have grown to include witnesses to, and victims of injustice – people who have responded to wrongs with a steadfast commitment to non-violence.

It is in this spirit that we, the undersigned members of the United States House of Representatives, hereby nominate for the Nobel Peace Prize, Dr. Oscar Biscet, the heroic prisoner of conscience unjustly imprisoned in Cuba. Along with Dr. Biscet, we nominate the many prisoners of conscience who languish beside him.

In the tradition of 1935 Nobel Peace Laureate Carl von Ossietzky, the peace-minded prisoner of conscience in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany, and 1991 laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the peaceful Burmese opposition leader locked up by military dictators, Biscet has peacefully stood up for the ideals of humanity despite the suffering and indignities of unjust confinement. Like Ossietzky, Biscet has suffered from health problems while confined, while his captors have ignored his afflictions.

Trained as a physician, Biscet began to protest human rights violations in Cuba in the 1980s, leading to a one-year suspension from his job at Hospital Nacional. He founded the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights in collaboration with fellow members of the peaceful opposition movement in 1997. The non-governmental humanitarian and peaceful organization is based upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and promotes the study, defense, and denunciation of human rights violations. Biscet was expelled from the Cuban health system in 1998 after courageously raising his voice in protest against government practices in medicine. He was arrested in 1999 and was sentenced to three years in prison for "inciting delinquent behavior" and "insulting the symbols of the homeland." Dr. Biscet was released in November 2002, but was arrested again a month later after he dared to meet with an American diplomat stationed in Cuba. He was then sentenced to 25 years in prison.

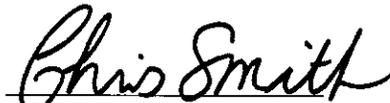
The regime’s abuse of Dr. Biscet has been horrific. He has endured solitary confinement for refusing to wear a prisoner's uniform. He has lived with insufficient light or no light at all, no running water and no bed. He has spoken out and tried to lend

a hand to other prisoners who are being mistreated, and for that has spent time in a “special” cell known as the dungeon. To try to break his will – or worse - his captors have housed Biscet with violent criminals. But throughout his ordeal, this long-time human rights activist and doctor has espoused non-violence, and has called forth the memory of personal heroes such as Mahatma Ghandi and 1964 Laureate Martin Luther King, Jr.

While Biscet may be one of the most visible prisoners of conscience in Cuba, according to 1977 Laureate Amnesty International, there are over 60 others who share his fate – locked up for purely imagined threats to the Cuban dictatorship. (This figure does not include the hundreds of detainees classified by human rights organizations as political prisoners). The prisoners of conscience are Cuba’s bravest and brightest, including independent journalists and librarians, leaders of independent labor unions and opposition parties. Some are better known, others nearly anonymous. But they share not only a common suffering due to an association, or due to beliefs in liberty, democracy, or freedom of religion. They also share a determination to stand, peacefully, in line with their ideals, no matter what temptation they face to recant or back down.

We ask that the Norwegian Nobel Committee stand with Dr. Biscet and these Cuban prisoners of conscience, recognizing their heroic example. A recognition of their peaceful stance in the face of unjust suffering would inspire the world, and call attention to their plight.

Sincerely,


CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress


LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART
Member of Congress


MARIO DIAZ-BALART
Member of Congress


ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN
Member of Congress


ALBIO SIRES
Member of Congress