

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

4TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

CONSTITUENT SERVICE CENTERS:

1540 Kuser Road, Suite A9
Hamilton, NJ 08619-3828
(609) 585-7878
TTY (609) 585-3650

108 Lacey Road, Suite 38A
Whiting, NJ 08759-1331
(732) 350-2300

2373 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3004
(202) 225-3765

<http://chrissmith.house.gov>



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

June 1, 2012

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DEAN, NEW JERSEY DELEGATION

The Honorable Roberta Jacobson
Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Ms. Jacobson:

I am writing with respect to your upcoming participation in the Organization of American States General Assembly, taking place in Cochabamba, Bolivia next week from June 3rd through the 5th. As the State Department's deputy spokesperson Mark Toner noted during today's daily press briefing, this is "an important part of our vision for a free, prosperous, and democratic hemisphere."

As you know, Mr. Jacob Ostreicher, a U.S. citizen who went to Bolivia to engage in a business venture, was arrested on June 3, 2011, and has been incarcerated for nearly one year at the Palmasola prison in Santa Cruz. At least 15 hearings have been scheduled in his case, but only three have actually taken place. The government has produced no evidence that Mr. Ostreicher has committed any crime. Yet there is no indication that the Bolivian government is preparing to release him, and under Bolivian law, he could languish in prison for another six months on these preliminary, unsubstantiated charges.

Mr. Ostreicher started a liquids-only hunger strike on April 15th, and his physical health has deteriorated significantly. His daughter, who is a constituent in my central New Jersey congressional district, and other family members are deeply concerned about both his physical and mental health, as well as the dangerous environment of the prison which is reportedly run by fellow prisoners.

I hope you agree that is inconceivable that a high-level United States official could attend an OAS General Assembly in Bolivia without raising Mr. Ostreicher's case in the context of promoting freedom, prosperity, and democracy in Latin America. The United States certainly cannot advocate for these causes for the Latin American people and ignore them when they are being denied to one of our own citizens in the country in which the OAS event is being held.

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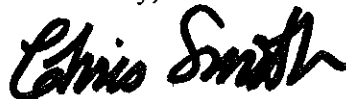
Ms. Roberta Jacobson

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Therefore, I strongly urge you to use every appropriate means to publicly and assertively advocate for Mr. Ostreicher's release while you are attending the General Assembly. Mr. Ostreicher's safety and life are in danger, and it is incumbent on all United States officials to use every means available to help him obtain his freedom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

Chairman

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health
and Human Rights

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