

## Demonstrations Inside and Outside the United Nations for Oscar López Rivera

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On June 23, as the Special Committee on Decolonization of the United Nations was holding its day of hearings on Puerto Rico, a demonstration for Oscar López Rivera was being held in Ralph Bunche Park just across the street.

Literature and petitions on Oscar's case were made available beginning at 9am, and a rally was held at 1pm with a number of petitioners from the UN hearings, as well as diplomats from other Puerto Rican organizations, both island and Diaspora-based. The demonstration lasted into the evening, coinciding with the hearings taking place within the UN.

The Special Committee on Decolonization has addressed Puerto Rico's colonial situation annually since it took up the issue in 1972, eleven years after its founding in 1961. A recognized part of this colonial issue is the political imprisonment of independence supporters like Oscar López Rivera. At this year's hearings, a number of petitioners made statements in support of Oscar's release, some asking for 33 seconds of silence for his now 33-year incarceration. The Special Committee itself, in a resolution, committed to seeking the General Assembly's reiteration of its own request for his release.

While the decision by the UN Special Committee to support the request for Oscar's release – a decision it also made in recent years – is a considerable and important part in influencing U.S. President Barack Obama to effect such, continued protest by people all the way down to the grassroots will remain key. Unfortunately, the resolutions made by this Special Committee in recent years in support of Oscar, as well as its now thirty-three resolutions since 1972 calling for the U.S. to initiate a process of decolonization, is not enough for President Obama to set him free just yet.