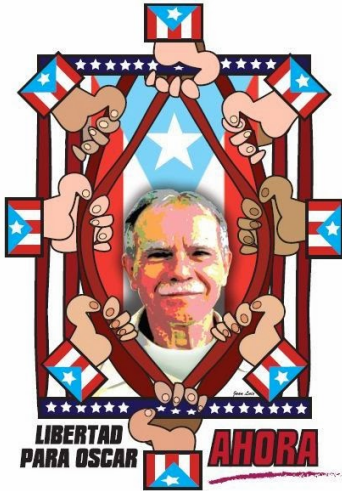


Oscar López Rivera must be free

Escrito por Socialist Worker
Miércoles, 27 de Mayo de 2015 08:18



Sandy Boyer, the co-host of Radio Free Eireann, which has endorsed the East Coast March to Free Oscar López Rivera on May 30 in New York City, explains why this important freedom fighter needs our support.

"After more than 30 years, Oscar López Rivera is in prison for the crime of seditious conspiracy, conspiring to free his people from the shackles of imperial injustice.

Now is the time for his immediate and unconditional release."
-- Desmond Tutu

Oscar López Rivera must be free

Escrito por Socialist Worker

Miércoles, 27 de Mayo de 2015 08:18

May 27, 2015.- Oscar López Rivera, a Puerto Rican revolutionary who is beginning his 34th year in a U.S. jail, is the longest-serving Puerto Rican political prisoner in American history.

He was a member of the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), which conducted an armed struggle for Puerto Rican independence. They planted a series of bombs in U.S. cities that killed six people and injured others.

The group was out to "rid Puerto Rico of Yanki colonialism," according to a FALN communiqué from 1974. The FALN proclaimed that while it was fighting "Yanki capitalist monopoly" U.S. workers were its "allies in the struggle against Yanki fascism."

The government could never tie López Rivera to any injuries or loss of life suffered from the group's armed struggle. A 1980 Chicago Tribune editorial noted that FALN operations were "placed and timed as to damage property rather than persons," and that the group was "out to call attention to their cause rather than to shed blood."

U.S. officials resorted to charging López Rivera with seditious conspiracy, which has been used overwhelmingly against Puerto Rican nationalists. By contrast, no member of a right-wing militia has ever been convicted of seditious conspiracy.

At his trial, López Rivera refused to recognize the court, saying it had no right to try him because the U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico is a crime against humanity. Judge Thomas McMillen proceeded to sentence him to 55 years in prison.

In words that López Rivera would preserve in his book *Oscar Lopez Rivera: Between Torture and Resistance*, Judge McMillen declared that he would sentence López Rivera to the "electric chair" if he could. The lead prosecutor added that he "would like to see these Puerto Ricans die in jail."

López Rivera later received a 15-year consecutive sentence for "conspiracy to escape," based on an alleged escape attempt concocted by government agents and agent provocateurs. He is now serving a 70-year sentence and wouldn't be released until he's 107. Barring a pardon from Barack Obama or his successors, Oscar López Rivera is virtually certain to die in a U.S. prison.

U.S. COURTS and the prison system have treated Oscar López Rivera and all Puerto Rican political prisoners with special savagery. Beginning in 1898, there have been 2,000 Puerto Rican political prisoners, whose sentences added together come to 11,116 years.

In 1981, when López Rivera was sentenced for seditious conspiracy, the average federal sentence for murder was 10.3 years. His sentence was more than five times longer than the average sentence for murder--even though he wasn't even accused, let alone convicted, of hurting or killing anyone.

Oscar López Rivera must be free

Escrito por Socialist Worker

Miércoles, 27 de Mayo de 2015 08:18

His 15-year sentence for conspiracy to escape is even more outrageous. Conspiracy to escape is such a rare charge that the government doesn't even keep statistics on it. López Rivera's sentence on this charge is more than eight times longer than the average sentence for an actual escape.

López Rivera was held in the notorious Supermax prisons for more than 12 years. As he wrote in one of his letters that have been published in the Puerto Rican newspaper El Nuevo Día:

[T]he maximum-security prison...is designed for the worst criminals in the United States and is considered the hardest and most impenetrable in the country? There the prisoners have no contact with each other, it's a labyrinth of steel and concrete built to isolate and incapacitate. I was among the first men in this prison.

When I arrived, I was woken several times during the night, and for a long time I couldn't sleep for more than 50 minutes at a time. There were only four prisoners in that ward, but one of them had a long history of mental problems, and he spent the night and day shouting obscenities, fighting his war against invisible enemies.

After more than 12 years in total isolation, López Rivera was finally moved to a regular maximum security prison, but that hasn't stopped the prison administration from imposing unique punitive conditions.

He has to report to guards every two hours. He hasn't been allowed to do an in-person media interview for 15 years. Even a delegation that included a New York state senator, a New York assemblyman and New York City Council members was turned away.

López Rivera would be free today if he'd been willing to leave his imprisoned comrades behind. He was offered a pardon in 1999, when Bill Clinton pardoned 13 Puerto Rican political prisoners. He refused it because two of his comrades--José Alberto Torres and Haydée Beltráne--were excluded. He felt he shouldn't be free while they were still in prison. Since then, they have both been paroled, while López Rivera remains behind bars.

In 2011, the FBI intervened to stop him from getting parole, presenting emotional testimony about an FALN bombing in New York City, though they knew perfectly well that López Rivera had never even been accused of setting the bomb. The Parole Commission used the bombing to deny him parole at least until January 2026.

- - - - -

THE GOVERNMENT has tried to demonize Oscar López Rivera as a terrorist, but this campaign has failed miserably in Puerto Rico, where he has virtually unanimous support

Last November, at least 35,000 people marched in San Juan to call for a pardon. At the rally, an LGBT rights leader publicly hugged an evangelical, anti-gay pastor inside a mock prison cell to symbolize the extraordinarily broad support for López Rivera.

Oscar López Rivera must be free

Escrito por Socialist Worker

Miércoles, 27 de Mayo de 2015 08:18

The governor of Puerto Rico has visited López Rivera in prison. Every Puerto Rican political party--whether they advocate independence, statehood or commonwealth status--demands that he be released immediately.

Throughout the world, organizations and individuals have urged Barack Obama to pardon López Rivera--on humanitarian grounds at the very least. Among them are the AFL-CIO, Coretta Scott King, Jimmy Carter, 10 Nobel Prize laureates, the president of Colombia, the United Council of Churches of Christ, United Methodist Church, Baptist Peace Fellowship, Episcopal Church of Puerto Rico, the Catholic Archbishop of San Juan and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

Leftists and socialists obviously fully support this call, but we go much further. We don't believe the U.S. government has any more right to try or imprison a Puerto Rican freedom fighter than that it would have had to go after a member of the National Liberation Front during the Vietnam War. Oscar López Rivera and his comrades should answer only to the Puerto Rican people.

We don't think that the FALN's strategy of armed struggle is an effective way to liberate Puerto Rico, but we share with them a complete opposition to U.S imperialism and a commitment to doing whatever we can to help Puerto Rico win its freedom and independence.

Right now, that starts with Oscar López Rivera. On Saturday May 30 in New York City, more than 5,000 people are expected to march and rally in East Harlem for a Day for Oscar López Rivera. Marchers will assemble at 11 a.m. at 125th Street and Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard, and march to a rally at 106th Street and Lexington Avenue.

We can't stop until Oscar López Rivera is finally free. In that effort, we can be inspired by his own words:

The important thing, I think, is that I could survive in this toxic, dehumanizing and violent world without losing my sense of humor, with my spirit and will to fight and resist intact, with my heart full of love for my people and justice and freedom, and with great faith in the ability of human beings to make the world better and more just.

What you can do

Join the [East Coast mobilization to demand justice for Oscar López Rivera](#) on May 30 in New York City. The demonstration will assemble at 11 a.m. at 125th Street and Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard, and march to a rally at 106th Street and Lexington Avenue.

Oscar López Rivera must be free

Escrito por Socialist Worker

Miércoles, 27 de Mayo de 2015 08:18



Tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans of all ideologies, will grab their phones and call President Barack Obama and USA Attorney General to send them a clear message:

FREE OSCAR LOPEZ NOW!



White House, (Washington DC):

1-202-456-1414

Message: President Obama

Free Oscar Lopez Now!

Federal Justice Department:

1-202-514-2000

Message: Attorney General Loretta Lynch

Free Oscar Lopez Now!

Or, if you prefer, please email:

- President Barack Obama president@whitehouse.gov
- James Albino (Executive Director, Presidential Task Force): James_Albino@ondcp.eop.gov
- Cecilia Munoz (Domestic Policy Council): Cecilia_Munoz@who.eop.gov
- Jerry Abramson (Co-leader Presidential Task Force): Jerry_E_Abramson@who.eop.gov



www.facebook.com/32Xoscar



<https://twitter.com/32Xoscar> - @32XOS

You Tube

www.youtube.com/user/32Xoscar