



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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CANF URGES BUSH ADMINISTRATION TO IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE  
REGULATIONS OF CASH REMITTANCE PROGRAM TO DISSIDENTS IN CUBA

The Cuban American National Foundation has recently learned that critical cash remittances sent to the opposition in Cuba are not being released to them. In the last month, CANF has received over a dozen reports from democracy activists and the families of prisoners of conscience complaining that the funds sent to them by NGO's operating under Treasury Dept. licenses are not reaching them. This seems to be the result of a recent adjustment by the Administration to tighten even further the regulations governing disbursement of cash remittances on the Island. In a letter dated yesterday, the CANF urged the White House to seriously commit to correcting the faulty system this ill-advised policy creates, and ensure that opposition activists receive the private funds sent to them.

The implementation of even stricter regulations in handing out this much needed cash assistance to the opposition is uncalled for and not in line with an Administration which vows to aid the Cuban dissident movement. Their struggle cannot be relegated to mere lip service. As recently as yesterday, President Bush stood before the world and pledged his support to the opposition in Cuba. This is an opportunity to prove the true meaning of the President's words.

*Enclosed, please find letter to President Bush by CANF, dated June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008*

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June 10, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.  
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of myself and the Board of Directors of the Cuban American National Foundation, we are writing to express our grave concern regarding current restrictions on cash remittances to Cuba that are adversely affecting the ability for Cuban-American groups to send humanitarian remittances to Cuba's brave dissidents, opposition leaders, and the families of political prisoners. The 2004 regulations imposed by your Administration to eliminate cash remittances by Cuban-Americans to non- nuclear family members in Cuba, has severely crippled the ability of organizations such as ours to help further the cause of Cuban freedom.

For the past four years, the Cuban American National Foundation has been granted a license through the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) to provide direct cash remittances to Cuban political prisoners and their families, political dissidents, and members of independent Cuban civil society. Since the inception of our program, we have experienced tremendous difficulty with remittance forwarders that do not understand that there is an unwritten exception to the regulation that allows support for non-family members that are members of the opposition movement. Despite the best efforts of the Cuba Desk at the State Department to work with Western Union, in particular, we continue to experience much the same difficulties.

In the past month, we have received information from over one dozen Cuban dissidents and prisoners of conscience, several of whom were among the 75 arrested and sentenced during the 'Black Spring' of 2003, stating that they have been unable to pick up their cash remittances in Cuba and have been told that this is a result of a tightening in restrictions governing cash remittances imposed by your Administration. If this is the case, this action is diametrically opposed to your stated policy of 'support for the Cuban people'. On many occasions you have invoked the names of dozens of Cuba's political prisoners and dissidents, stating the importance of helping them further their work, yet in

practice, the policy you have imposed ironically deprives them of the resources to do just that. Attached you will see an e-mail communication sent to us that illustrates the difficulty dissidents experience in retrieving their remittance. The e-mail's author is Jorge Olivera, director of the small independent news agency, Havana Press, who was arrested and convicted in March of 2003 to 18 years in prison. He was conditionally released in 2004 because his health condition was so precarious; the regime feared he would die in custody.

We ask that on behalf of brave dissidents like Mr. Olivera, that you alert the proper agencies regarding the exception for remittances to Cuban dissidents and the families of political prisoners and ask them to immediately implement a process to help facilitate these critical cash remittances. Cuba's people are living through a critical juncture in their history, now more than ever the United States should step up its efforts to help facilitate a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba by providing those on the frontlines of the struggle for freedom, the resources necessary to triumph.

Sincerely,

Jorge Mas Santos,  
Chairman

Cc: Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Hon. Lincoln Diaz-Balart  
Hon. Mario Diaz-Balart  
Hon. Robert Menendez  
Hon. Mel Martinez  
Hon. Albio Sires