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VOICE OF REVOLUTION

Publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

June 5, 2015

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Free Oscar López Rivera : 1-15

PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE FIGHTER

Obama: Provide Immediate and Unconditional Release for Oscar López Rivera

A march of thousands in New York and Puerto Rico, representing the broad unity of millions worldwide, spoke with one voice to President Obama: Provide Immediate and Unconditional release

for Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera. Obama has the power to immediately release Oscar and doing so would be a stand in favor of human rights.

Free Oscar López Rivera • 3



Support Reunification of Korea : 16-22

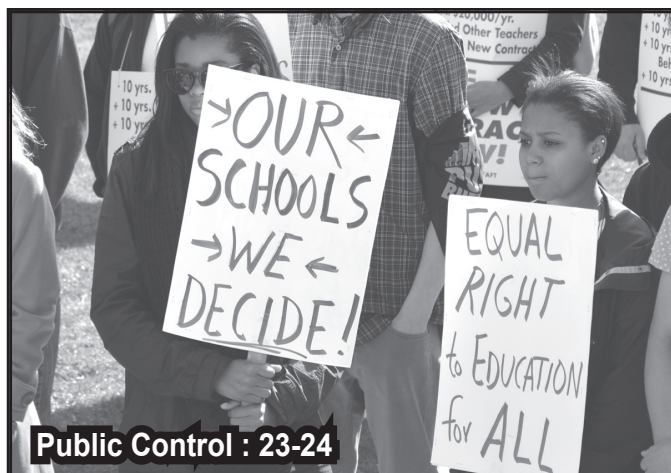
ALL U.S. TROOPS HOME NOW

Support the Reunification of Korea! Sign a Peace Treaty Now

On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the June 15 Joint Declaration on reunification, *Voice of Revolution* sends its warmest revolutionary greetings to the Korean people and their leadership and wishes

them every success in their historic mission to reunify their nation. By relying on their own efforts, defending their independence and defying the U.S. imperialists on

Support Reunification of Korea • 16



Public Control : 23-24

REFUSE STATE TAKEOVER AND MAYORAL CONTROL

Public Control of Public Schools Now!

New York Governor Cuomo and the private monopoly interests he serves are clearly very worried about the growing resistance in Buffalo and the public's stand to defend the equal right to education for all. This fear largely explains the specific targeting

of Buffalo and repeated state efforts to remove the public from governance. This is being done at a time the public has shown, in Buffalo, Chicago, Newark and elsewhere — its ability and readiness to govern and decide.

Public Control • 23

ALL U.S. TROOPS HOME NOW! FIGHT FOR AN ANTI-WAR GOVERNMENT

June edition of ***Voice of Revolution***

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I • Free Oscar López Rivera

Oscar has been a prisoner for 34 years now, the longest held Puerto Rican political prisoner in U.S. history. He has remained in prison despite never having been charged with harming anyone or any violent act. Contending with the torture of solitary, being kept far from family and friends, facing severe and inhumane conditions for years on end, he has remained a Puerto Rican patriot for independence, determined and undaunted. The U.S. keeps him imprisoned because he refuses to submit to U.S. demands to abandon the fight for Puerto Rican independence. Oscar's unyielding social love for his people and all those fighting worldwide is an inspiration to all, and this too the U.S. rulers fear.

The injustice of Oscar's imprisonment has been denounced through out the Americas and worldwide. He is known as the Mandela of the Americas — jailed like Mandela for "seditious conspiracy," a charge used to attack the political views and stands of those opposing colonialism and imperialism.

The growing strength and scope of support for Oscar is such that the Governor of Puerto Rico visited Oscar in prison — the first time such a visit to a political prisoner by a governor occurred. He commented that Oscar's sentence of 70 years is excessive and ran against the principles of "justice, humanity and reason." He added that Oscar "has not been connected to any violent act. He was accused of conspiring. The line that divides 'conspiring' from 'thinking' is very fine," (see p. 6).

The political parties of Puerto Rico, artists, musicians, universities, lawyers and numerous associations and organizations through out the Americas, all are demanding the immediate release of Oscar and condemning his imprisonment as a violation of human rights. Many bring out that international law supports the right of a colonized people to resist and organize for self-determination. It is colonialism that is the crime, resistance justified.

The U.S. has colonized Puerto Rico since 1898 and has made every effort to crush the struggle for independence, using terrorism,



assassinations, jailing and violence against the resistance. It has also imposed severe poverty on the country, another means to limit resistance as people put all their efforts into surviving. According to



the American Community Survey, Puerto Rico's poverty rate is about 45 percent — three times the national U.S. figure. An estimated 80 percent of children live in high-poverty areas. This impoverishment has also forced millions of Puerto Ricans to come to the U.S. to live. But like Oscar, who came at the age of twelve, their hearts remain in the struggle for Puerto Rican independence.

Voice of Revolution demands that president Obama immediately free Oscar López Rivera and submit to UN declarations for the end of U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico. We also support the demands of patriotic Puerto Rican organizations for 1) the complete decontamination of the island of Vieques (used as a weapons testing range by the U.S. Navy); 2) an end to the continuing political repression and criminalization of the Puerto Rican community.

Despite 34 years in prison, Oscar remains unvanquished in his stand for Puerto Rican independence and for the rights of all. This can be seen in the artwork he has developed as a prisoner and in his writings. Taking his stand against colonialism, Oscar has stated, "Colonialism, dear members of the jury, is a monumental injustice according to the norms of civilized humanity and a crime under international law... No nation, ladies and gentleman, has the right to take over another nation. The military invasion and occupation of Puerto Rico clearly depicts the rapacious and voracious nature of the United States government, with the armed forces, rifles, and cannons it used to subjugate a people into submission and reduce a nation of one million inhabitants to a commodity for the bartering of human beings. For 89 years, this nation, conquered by force — the Puerto Rican people — have been denied their basic rights to self-determination and independence." Today that struggle for independence continues and Oscar is an example of its vitality and determination.

*Immediate and Unconditional Release of Oscar López Rivera!
End U.S. Colonialism! Independence for Puerto Rico!*

Thousands March in New York and Puerto Rico to Free Oscar López Rivera

On May 30, 2015, about 5,000 people marched in New York City demanding that President Obama provide the immediate and unconditional release of Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera. Puerto Rico also celebrated their 2nd Caminata Nacional (National March) for the Puerto Rican political prisoner who completed 34-years behind bars May 29.

The New York march went from Central Harlem to El Barrio for a rally. It brought together delegations from Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Massachusetts, numer-

ous community organizations, as well as city, state and federal elected representatives. Those fighting to free political prisoners, such as those demanding the release of Native American fighter Leonard Peltier and African American resistance fighter Mumia Abu-Jamal, also marched. The broad support for Oscar was seen in the many professors, students, journalists, health workers and people from all walks of life that joined the demonstration.

As the banner put it, there is *One Voice for Oscar* demanding his immediate and unconditional release.



34 COUNTRIES, 17 STATES REPRESENTED

“100,000 Tweets for Oscar” Campaign Reaches Over 500,000 People

La Respuesta Media

More than 500,000 people were reached on Oscar's 72nd birthday, as the National Boricua Human Rights Network and La Respuesta coordinated the “Social Media Campaign for Oscar López.” Using various hashtags (e.g. #freeoscarlopez, #gift4oscar, #regalopaoscar) on Twitter primarily, but also Facebook and Instagram, the campaign publicly brought together a broad spectrum of supporters, from Calle 13's René Pérez to actor Luis Guzmán; from NYC Council Speaker Melissa Mark Viverito to Congress people Nydia Velázquez and Luis Gutiérrez; from blogs like Latino Rebels to newspapers like *El Nuevo Día*.

Elected city and state officials from three different states also supported the social media campaign: State Representative Leslie Acosta and Philadelphia Councilwoman Maria Quiñonez in Pennsylvania; Chicago Alderman Roberto Maldonado, and State Representative Cynthia Soto in Illinois. Organized labor contributed: 1199 and Labor Council For Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)'s Facebook page also carried the message.

In Puerto Rico, the campaign was tweeted and posted on Twitter and sometimes Facebook by former governor Aníbal Acevedo Vila; the Puerto Rico Department of Labor; pro-independence organizations, including the Movimiento Pro-Independencia Nacional Hostosiano; and the committees working for Oscar's freedom: the Human Rights Committee of Puerto Rico and 32x0scar.

Popular blogs/newspapers also mentioned the campaign in the days leading up to January 6. Thanks go out to Latino Rebels,

80Grados, El Nuevo Día online, Telesur, and Primera Hora, as well as the German online blog “Derstandard,” the Japanese “AppleDaily,” and Mexico's APIAvirtual.net.

Activist and movement-based organizations such as Jericho Network, Leonard Peltier Support Committee, Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Committee, and Irish and Palestine support committees also posted to Facebook and Twitter.

Community-based and educational organizations that also contributed are: El Puente in Brooklyn, Taller Puertorriqueño in Philadelphia, Roberto Clemente Community Academy, The Puerto Rican Cultural Center and Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School. Tweets came from Hawai'i, California, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington DC, Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee.

The international community was present with Tweets from 34 countries: Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka; Australia; Austria, France, Italy, Kosovo, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom; Israel, Lebanon; Algeria, Ghana, Morocco; Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Venezuela, and the United States.

Many people also participated in creative actions by highlighting their talents such as writing songs, sewing puppets, baking cakes, and producing original artwork as their ‘gift’ for Oscar.

We will free Oscar!



Puerto Rico's Petition for Oscar López Rivera

El Nuevo Dia Editorial, March 20, 2015

The hearings in Washington, DC of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, dedicated to Puerto Rico and focused on the defense of individual liberties, must be interpreted, among other purposes, as a summons to the Obama Administration to finally end the prolonged political imprisonment of Oscar López Rivera.

The human rights violations that leave the worst impression on a society are not only those that imply crimes or physical torture, but also those that exude the poison of intolerance and psychological abuse.

But the claims revolved not just around López Rivera, since the petitioners, who traveled from Puerto Rico to the event of the organ of the Organization of American States (OAS), were members of civil rights groups, women's organizations and law school clinics from three universities. There has probably never been a better stage for exposing the inequalities that emerge on a daily basis on the Island, and that, to date, have not managed to arouse the necessary attention, not in the United States, nor in the rest of the world.

The progress of having been heard, both petitioners as well as some distinguished officials of the Puerto Rican government, has given this meeting special relevance.

Figures such as the political counselor at the United States mission to the OAS, Anthony Pahigian, as well as the executive director of the White House Working Group on Puerto Rico, James Albino, attended the meeting and were able to learn first hand of the great economic, judicial and even statistical obstacles that prejudice entire communities.

The hearings addressed precisely affairs such as the repeated lack of services for disabled children, institutional barriers that limit the struggle for gender equality, and the continued pressure to apply the death penalty in the Island – an incomprehensible punishment in the 21st century, whose imposition by the U.S. Attorney violates the rights and beliefs of Puerto Ricans who oppose it, which is the

vast majority of the population.

Representatives of the United States Department of State and Department of Justice had the opportunity to learn, this time directly and up close, the unanimity that exists regarding the call for the release of Oscar López Rivera, the 72 year old man who is facing yet another milestone – he will have served 34 years in prison as of this May – and who was accused of seditious conspiracy but never of causing any bloodshed.

There is no reason for President Obama to continue ignoring the case of Oscar López. The clemency petition, filed by his lawyers in November of 2010, and by Oscar himself, from prison, in September of 2011, presumably still at the Justice Department, doesn't even need the Justice Department's approval or recommendation, since the president has the power to sign it whenever he pleases.

Again, the intense call for his release is consistent with the humanitarian efforts that are demanded of other countries. Oscar should not have to face getting sick in prison; that should be avoided at all costs.

Human rights organizations require that prisoners of conscience be permitted to serve their sentences as close as possible to their places or origin and their loved ones. In violation of this principle, Oscar López has served years in the remote prison at Terre Haute, Indiana, and to be able to see him, his closest family members have to invest many hours traveling and great sums of money. As the Attorney General of Puerto Rico, César Miranda, said so well at the hearings: "To speak of individual civil liberties without all of us blushing, in chorus we must demand the release of Oscar López Rivera."

A good point of departure for continuing the dialogue here would be to follow up on the initiatives that the petitioners presented, and to keep the channels of communication open, with more strength every day, to protect fundamental rights.

Puerto Rican Governor Visits Oscar in Prison

Governor Alejandro García Padilla visited Oscar at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana – the first time in history that a governor of Puerto Rico visited a Puerto Rican political prisoner. "The governor's office said the visit to López was done in representation of the people of Puerto Rico and the respect they have for the principles of democracy and López's release. 'On multiple occasions, through a range of different large-scale activities and through outreach to the top levels of the U.S. government, Puerto Ricans have called on President Barack Obama to release López. We reiterate that call today.' [...] The governor called López's sentence 'excessive' and said it ran against the principles of 'justice, humanity and reason. It's time for Oscar to come home,' he said."

Following his visit in October 2014, the governor wrote a column for Puerto Rico's main daily newspaper, in which he said, "Oscar López Rivera has been in prison for 33 years. He has not been accused of committing any violent act. He has not been connected to

any violent act. He was accused of conspiring. The line that divides 'conspiring' from 'thinking' is very fine. I do not think Oscar would be a danger to the future of our country, our community, or our family... Oscar López Rivera owes no debt to society, and if he ever did, he paid it a long time ago. "

After visiting for about three hours, I asked him what message, if any, he wanted me to bring to you. He thought for a moment. He said he was grateful for what has been done for his release. Then he spoke of hope and of solidarity. Yes. This man who has been in prison for 33 years. Who is already 71 years old. He still has heart and spirit to talk about solidarity and hope. What a lesson for so many people! The time arrived for me to leave. I had to go back to Indianapolis to catch my flight. I wanted to talk longer with him. I gave him a big hug. I told him that we would keep working for his release.... I hope to greet that compatriot again, in Puerto Rico.

Highlights from Campaign to Free Oscar López Rivera

National Boricua Human Rights Network

(2015 saw many actions, including for Oscar's 72nd birthday about 500,000 people were reached in a campaign on twitter; 33 Women in New York continued their regular actions; and a demonstration of about 5,000 in New York and similar actions in San Francisco and Puerto Rico spoke with One Voice for Oscar, demanding his immediate and unconditional release. To inform our readers of the many actions and broad unity of the people in Puerto Rico and worldwide demanding that President Obama release Oscar now, we reprint below portions of a review of organizing efforts in 2014 The entire list and more recent actions can be found at boricuahumanrights.org)

* * *

January

Oscar marks his 71st birthday, and writes to his daughter Clarisa: "I feel very comfortable with my life and in my skin. I know I chose to serve the most just and noble cause that a Puerto Rican citizen could serve. My years in prison are only the occupational hazard that the struggle costs. But I was conscious of what awaited me, because the women and men who had chosen to serve the same cause and who had been imprisoned had allowed me to see what awaited me. From them I learned that I could survive, no matter how great the challenge."

• Congressman Alan Grayson writes to President Obama seeking Oscar's release: "I am constantly approached regarding the imprisonment of Oscar López-Rivera. My constituents, a significant number of Puerto Ricans, and political leaders from all three major political parties in Puerto Rico are pleading for his release. Mr. López-Rivera's 71st birthday is in four days, on Three Kings Day, or 'Día de Reyes' as it is known in Puerto Rico. I can think of no greater gift to him, his family, and the Puerto Rican community than his freedom and allowing him to return home on this important holiday."

• President of the Puerto Rican Senate, Eduardo Bhatia of the Popular Democratic Party, calls for Oscar's release. "The people of Puerto Rico, regardless of party lines, thought and politics, are all in agreement that Oscar López must be released."

• Puerto Rico's main daily newspaper, *El Nuevo Día*, continues its series *Las manos en el cristal*, letters from Oscar to his granddaughter Karina. The series appears regularly in the newspaper throughout 2014.



• Fundación Nacional para la Cultura Popular's best record of 2013 goes to "La lucha es vida toda," an original musicalization of

Oscar's life, produced by Tito Auger and Walter Morciglio, and featuring some of Puerto Rico's finest musicians, including Andy Montañez, Danny Rivera, Lucecita Benítez, Roy Brown, Antonio Cabán Vale "El Topo," Zoraida Santiago, Tony Mapeyé, Fofé, Así Somos, and Intifada.

• Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro participates in a forum dedicated to the independence of Puerto Rico and calls for the release of Oscar and the independence of Puerto Rico. "Oscar López Rivera is the longest held Puerto Rican political prisoner in the last four, five decades. He has spent 33 years behind bars for the sole crime of seeking, aspiring, dreaming and struggling for the independence of Puerto Rico (...) We should all get involved in the cause for the release of Oscar López Rivera," said the president.

• The Conferencia Afroindígena, Latinoamérica y Caribe de Iglesias por la Paz (Conference of Afro-indigenous, Latin American and Caribbean Churches for Peace) in Mexico passes a resolution supporting Oscar's release.

• Psychologists joined the monthly women's vigil on the Puente Dos Hermanos. "The imprisonment of Oscar for 32 years, of which more than a third has been in isolation, is a reminder of how the system in which we live operates and how, if we want to achieve justice and equity in the population, we have to change the system," said the president of the Asociación de Psicología de Puerto Rico (APPR).

February

• Cornel West advocates for the release of Oscar at Trinity Lutheran Church in Brooklyn, an activity attended by hundreds, including City Council Speaker Melissa Mark Viverito and Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez. "It's insulting," said West, "to have our dear brother in prison for 32 years for simply standing up for justice."

• Popular Democratic Party Senator Antonio Fas Alzamora, writes to President Obama: "Oscar López' freedom is a matter of human rights and justice. López has served more than enough time, and doesn't deserve to be deprived of his freedom any longer. If the United States has been the defender of human rights in the world, internally it must practice this example. The case of Oscar López is the opportunity to practice what it preaches."

• Puerto Rico's main daily newspaper publishes an editorial, "Indulto presidencial a Oscar López Rivera," calling for Oscar's release, and asserting, among other things: "Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera, convicted of seditious conspiracy in the context of his struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico, has spent more than three decades in federal prison. Oscar was never accused or found guilty of causing harm to or the death of anyone. His sentence is, by any reckoning, viciously disproportionate, beyond the limits of what can be considered just. Consequently, President Barack Obama should pardon López Rivera, so that he may leave as soon as possible for the free community like the rest of his compañeros, as has been the practically unanimous demand of figures representative of every social, political and ideological sector in Puerto Rico and the international community. The request

FREE OSCAR LÓPEZ RIVERA NOW

is to end this nightmare that is an assault on human rights. [...] All the prisoners, without exception, freed fourteen years ago, stand out today for their productive and exemplary lives. Elizam Escobar, to cite just one example, is today one of the most important artists in Puerto Rico and a respected professor. Exactly the same can be expected of Oscar – famous among those who know him well for his wisdom and stoicism. In fact, he has been a great educator in prison, teaching many fellow prisoners the basic skills of reading, writing, English, as well as painting and drawing.”

- New York City Puerto Ricans convene a community dialogue about the campaign for Oscar’s release and mount an exhibit of his paintings.

March

Leaders of the Puerto Rican community in Orlando, Florida, rally for Oscar’s release, and similar activities take place in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Hartford, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco.

- Puerto Ricans living in Madrid rally for Oscar’s release, picketing at the U.S. Embassy, leafleting on the street and holding teach-in’s at various universities.

- An Argentinian audience of many thousands at a Calle 13 concert respond to René Pérez’ call for Oscar’s release, holding their lighted cell phones up. Huge audiences in Chile, Uruguay and Mexico demonstrate the same enthusiasm for Oscar’s release, in response to René’s call.

- 33 black men in the Dominican Republic, in solidarity with 33 black men in Puerto Rico, march in the plazas of nine different cities in solidarity with Oscar’s release.



- In France, Puerto Rican artist Josean Ramos exhibits “Simultáneas de Chaplin,” including a painting of Charlie Chaplin holding a sign reading “Free Oscar López.” Ramos stated, “I have no

doubt that the human dimension of Charles Chaplin would lead him to be in solidarity with the release of political prisoner Oscar López Rivera, who federal authorities have kept in prison for more than three decades [...].

- The monthly vigil of 32 women takes place at the Puente Dos Hermanos, and in New York City, a similar group launches. “We want to initially focus our efforts in communities where there is a large Puerto Rican population because the rally is not only about sending a message to President Obama to exercise his constitutional power of pardon, but to educate and organize our community around Oscar’s release,” said one of the New York City organizers.

April

Thousands in the U.S. and Puerto Rico tweet at President Obama to #freeOSCARLOPEZ, so many that it becomes a trending topic.



- The International Association of Democratic Lawyers, meeting in Brussels, Belgium, adopts a resolution calling for Oscar’s release.

- Following an arson fire in Adjuntas’ Bosque del Pueblo, a tree is planted for Oscar. “We have said that the reforestation of the Bosque del Pueblo is a metaphor for Puerto Rico. We want to show that it is possible to move from the crisis, the anger and indignation, to national reconstruction. But we can’t have an in-

klings of the path toward reconstruction without the freedom of Oscar López Rivera, whose imprisonment is one of the greatest injustices our people have lived,” said Alexis Massol, director and founder of Casa Pueblo, which manages the unique forest.

- Attorneys from Puerto Rico José Enrique Ayoroa Santaliz and César Hernández Colón visit Oscar. Ayoroa Santaliz wrote of the visit, “At a given moment, with tears in his eyes, César said to Oscar: ‘You are the most free man I have known, free of fears, free of rancor, free of hate...’ giving an xray of his soul. That is Oscar López Rivera.”

- 33 women in New York City once again gathered, this time in Fordham Plaza, with much spirit and support.

- An ambitious walk launches in anticipation of the 33rd anniversary of Oscar’s imprisonment (May 29) through 33 towns in 33 days. In San Lorenzo, hundreds gather as the mayor leads the planting of 33 trees in Oscar’s name, 33 doves are released, 33 flags of Puerto Rico fly, 33 cannon shots fire, 33 yellow flowers are tossed from a helicopter, 33 mothers read letters to President Obama seeking Oscar’s release, and 66 children of all ages hold posters with the same message.

May

The 33 Mujeres del Puente mark the one year anniversary of their monthly demonstrations for Oscar’s release. In the group, “there are women of different ideologies, but all are firm believers in human rights and admire the verticality, strength and patriotic commitment of Oscar López Rivera. The Mujeres del Puente have said more than once: “There is no reason whatsoever for Oscar to be in prison, when all of his co-defendants accused of the so-called crime of seditious conspiracy, which is nothing more than the criminalization of political ideas, were released many years ago and have led productive and worthy lives in Puerto Rican society. If it is really true that the president of the United States believes in human rights, he should immediately and unconditionally release Oscar. This

OSCAR IS PUERTO RICO'S MANDELA



demand has been taken up by the most diverse sectors, including political parties. We women have appeared Sunday after Sunday, a commitment we made, to come here to this Puente in front of the sea, the last Sunday of every month, to demand Oscar's return home, to his loved ones, where he belongs."

- Uruguayan president José "Pepé" Mujica visits President Obama at the White House and asks him to release Oscar.

- In commemoration of the 33rd anniversary of Oscar's arrest (May 29), creative and multitudinous activities are held throughout the world:

- Civic and religious leaders and human rights activists gather on a street corner in downtown Philadelphia to demonstrate their support for Oscar's release on the occasion of the 33rd anniversary of his arrest.

- 60 activists in Chicago bicycle in Oscar's footsteps to commemorate his 33 years in prison.

- In the Bronx, several hundred people march for Oscar's release.

- Many mayors and city councils in Puerto Rico express their support for Oscar's release on the occasion of this 33rd anniversary, including San Sebastián, Sábana Grande, San Lorenzo, Jayuya, Orocovis, Yauco, and Comerío.

- In San Juan, "Al mar por Oscar," organized by 32 X Oscar, alluding to Oscar's stated yearning to see the ocean, Oscar symbolically arrives by sea (the Agua, Sol y Sereno cabezudo), welcomed by his daughter Clarisa and granddaughter Karina, thousands of supporters, a performance group, a concert with some of the nation's finest musicians, and a giant kite soaring over the grounds of El Morro.

- The 333 mile walk, "33 towns in 33 days," organized by Carlos López and Félix Adorno and supported by the Comité Pro Derechos Humanos de Puerto Rico, arrives in San Juan, welcomed by hundreds including the Mayor of San Juan, Carmen Yulín Cruz, and a concert featuring more of the nation's finest musicians. The walkers traversed the center of the Island, where they enjoyed in each town a unique reception, for example, in Orocovis, where the mayor received the walkers, solidarity in the plaza was such that even a homeless man emptied his pockets to contribute change to the campaign for Oscar's release; in Cayey, the mayor, accompanied by his daughter, welcomed the walkers, saying, "Here are the people of Cayey: the schools, the City Administration, and the citizens, saying 'present!' for a cause we understand to be very just,"

calling the activity "a great example of the capacity of consensus we Puerto Ricans have, to unite above our partisanship or the faith we profess." Additionally, many of Puerto Rico's finest athletes and sports writers participated in and supported the walk.

- The Movimiento Olímpico de Puerto Rico (Olympic Movement of Puerto Rico) and the Colegio de Entrenadores (Association of Trainers) proclaim their support for Oscar's release.

- Puerto Rico's main daily newspaper publishes another editorial calling for Oscar's release, "Ya llegó la hora de liberar a Oscar," stating, in part, "A combatant in Vietnam, decorated for his heroism in that war, Oscar López Rivera, born in the town of San Sebastián 70 years ago, has been doubly punished: in the first place for his independentista ideals and his sympathies for groups that promoted the battle for independence on the fringe of the legal framework and electoral conventions. In the second place for rejecting the clemency offered him in 1999, in solidarity with other Puerto Rican political prisoners who were left out of that offer.

- "That gesture, which reveals his moral and human stature and his extreme calling to sacrifice, refusing to leave prison until his compañeros could also leave, should have been interpreted by the authority that keeps him in prison as a show of political integrity and moral strength. To the contrary, the fact that he rejected the clemency, which in any other circumstance, in any other country, would have been understood and praised, bothered the U.S. authorities,



who have increased their hostility against Oscar López."

- The Senate of Puerto Rico passes a resolution calling for Oscar's release.

- Meeting in Buenos Aires, the Movimiento por la Paz, la Soberanía y la Solidaridad entre los Pueblos (MoPaSSol) (Movement for Peace, Sovereignty and Solidarity among Peoples) and the Confederación de los Trabajadores de la Educación de la República Argentina (CTERA) (Union of Education Workers of the Republic of Argentina), participate in a human rights campaign for the self-determination of Puerto Rico, and distinguished leaders sign a declaration calling for Oscar's release.

- *Mother Jones Magazine* publishes "This Man Is Serving 75 Years for 'Seditious Conspiracy.' Is He a Danger to Society? Members of Congress, Nobel laureates, and the Puerto Rican government say 33 years was enough for Oscar López Rivera. Now it's up to Obama."

- In the Dominican Republic, social movements, political

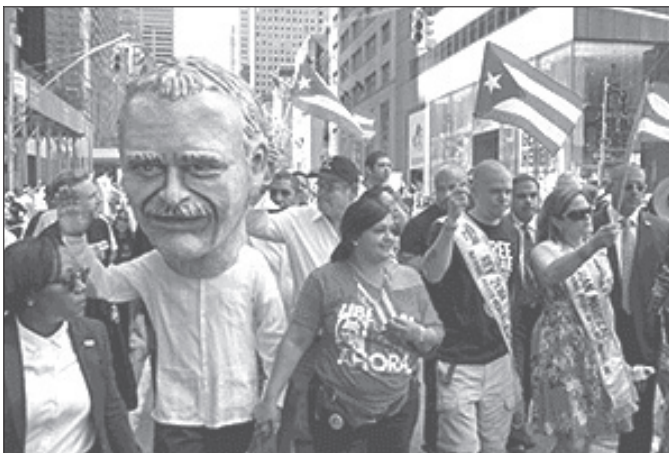
FREE OSCAR LÓPEZ RIVERA NOW

organizations, students, professors, intellectuals, and ambassadors from the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) expressed solidarity with Oscar.

June

Champion Argentine boxer Sergio Maravilla Martínez uses his Twitter account to broadcast a photo of himself sporting a tee-shirt reading “Free Oscar López Rivera Now!”

• New York City’s National Puerto Rican Parade honors Oscar as a Puerto Rican patriot and officially calls for his release: “Oscar López Rivera was not convicted of a violent crime,” says Orlando Plaza, Board Member for the National Puerto Rican Day Parade. “He was incarcerated for his beliefs and affiliations, and it is time that his prison sentence of nearly 33 years comes to an end. For that reason, we honor him to generate awareness and mobilize our community in support of the ‘Free Oscar López’ movement.” René



Pérez of Calle 13, King of the Parade, wears a Free Oscar tee-shirt, and walks beside Oscar’s daughter Clarisa.

• In New York City, “Postcards4Oscar” opens, an exhibition of postcard art organized by Miguel Luciano with National Boricua Human Rights Network, with the theme of Oscar, and works by some of Puerto Rico’s most well known artists.

• Puerto Rico’s PEN Club, comprised of writers and academics, writes to President Obama, saying, in part, “Oscar López is not a threat to society. What is a threat to democracy and to human rights is that he is the longest held political prisoner in United States prisons and he is not freed. What is a threat to democracy is that the United States does not embrace justice and does not comply with democratic values and human rights that make its nation strong. [...] From there, you are not hearing the clamor of a people of every ideology asking you to open the cell door and allow him to embrace his family. Even the waves of our ocean clamor for his return. We want him to be able to live out his dream, to return to contemplate the ocean of our Island. Nevertheless, in spite of the torture that his isolation brought and his long live in captivity, longer than (Nelson) Mandela, his soul remains unharmed and his heart full of love.”

• Puerto Rico’s College of Physicians and Surgeons write to Obama, saying, among other things, “We want to present you with a humanitarian plea with a goal of obtaining the immediate release

of Oscar López Rivera, who is currently the longest held Puerto Rican political prisoner in prison in the United States. As protectors of the health of all our people, meaning their complete state of physical, mental and social well-being, we feel it is our duty to bring to your attention a matter that is today perceived around the world as a case of unjust and unusual punishment.”

• Puerto Rico’s main daily newspaper publishes another editorial, “Traiciona la democracia la prisión de Oscar López,” calling for Oscar’s release, stating, in part, “The very fact that, contrary to the criminal justice policies of almost every country in the world, Oscar is held in a prison so distant from Puerto Rico, hindering regular family visits, is a form of incomprehensible torture by a nation which purports to have a humanitarian calling. President Obama, who claimed to feel moved when he visited the historic cell of Nelson Mandela in Robben Island, South Africa, should know that in the prison at Terre Haute, in Indiana, there is a man accused of the same “crimes” as Mandela – the same legal charge, seditious conspiracy – for which, different from the South African leader, he has served six years longer in prison: Mandela endured 27 years in prison; Oscar López has just marked 33 years in prison. [...]”

July

Thirty-three women journalists join the 33 women of the Puente Dos Hermanos at the monthly women’s demonstration for Oscar’s release. Spokesperson Sara Del Valle expressed, “I think it’s important when journalists see something that isn’t right, they get involved and they speak. The role of the press can’t be mere spectatorship. When you see that something is incorrect, the journalist can’t just fold her arms. To do nothing is also a position, and there are moments when the journalist must get involved.”

• The annual commemoration of the assassination of young independentistas Arnaldo Darío Rosado y Carlos Soto Arriví at Cerro Maravilla is dedicated to Oscar’s release.

August

The Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes (OCLAE) (Continental Latin American and Caribbean Organization of Students) confers on Oscar the “José Rafael Varona Berríos” award. The organization of more than 3,000 students also passed a resolution calling for Oscar’s release.

• Eduardo Lalo, Humanities professor at the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras, opens the 2014 academic year with the traditional Inaugural Lesson before the hundreds of students gathered, by talking about the role of the university in a colonial context, including these remarks:

“For this reason, in a place like this, where the memory of our people survives, I am taking advantage of the opportunity to address you to claim once again the liberation of Oscar López Rivera, who has been in prison in the United States for more than 33 years. In spite of the massive and general clamor of Puerto Ricans and many more citizens throughout the world who demand an end to the injustice being committed against Oscar, the government and the president of the United States persists in ignoring our demand. I wonder if it isn’t one of the functions of this university to clearly and openly join the campaign for the release someone who has

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sacrificed his life for the cultural and political existence of Puerto Rico. Chancellor, isn't this a shared purpose? Wouldn't we, as the University of Puerto Rico, thus be setting an example so that other public and private institutions would contribute to liberate a man undeservedly punished and to show that institutional courage must be a fundamental part of institutional life? Don't we find here, as well, the ethical leadership that our institution should exercise?"

Not only do the students loudly applaud; the chancellor goes to the podium and commits to raise the issue with the Academic Senate and to meet with the entire faculty, "so that from the University would emanate, with firm and convincing voice, the demand for the liberation of López Rivera."

- The Sao Paulo Forum, meeting in Bolivia, reaffirms its previous commitments and passes a resolution calling for Oscar's release, and the independence of Puerto Rico.

September

The Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Chicago sponsors Fiesta Boricua, a two day celebration of Puerto Rican music and culture, where Oscar banners grace the main stage, the National Boricua Human Rights Network activists sport Free Oscar tee-shirts and collect signatures for his release, and the musicians and dignitaries on stage call for his release.

- Bishop Rafael Moreno Rivas of the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico and President of the Puerto Rico Council of Churches makes a pastoral visit to Oscar at FCI Terre Haute, Indiana. Wrote the Bishop, "Over and above his time in solitary confinement, maximum security, sensory deprivation and inadequate nutrition, he maintains his character resolute. The courage with which his mother faced the vicissitudes of life and his life forged in the anvil of prejudice and the fire of inequality have been his strength in struggle. He has fine skin and a sweet character for tenderness and noble causes, but thick skin for injustices and inequality. I was before an honorable, upright man, of much respect for human beings and humble to know how to listen even to ideas that he may later have to refute. [...] I made a commitment in the name of the country's churches and religious organizations to work collaboratively with churches and religious organizations in the United States to contribute to the process of his release."

- The annual commemoration of the anniversary of the Grito de Lares in Puerto Rico is dedicated to Oscar, "to reaffirm the demand of the Puerto Rican people for his release." In honor of the occasion, supporters in Spain hang a banner calling for Oscar's release on a main boulevard in Madrid.

- University of Sagrado Corazón professor and writer Rubis Camacho, convenes Escritores y Escritoras por Oscar ... ¡Levanta tu lápiz! (Writers for Oscar ... Lift up your pens!) on the campus, and devotes her radio program D'Letras to the participating writers, who read their works and who each called on their fellow writers to "alzar su lápiz por la libertad de Oscar." She urged, "The freedom of Oscar López Rivera is the cause of the Puerto Rican community, because it is the defense of our human rights."

- The National Lawyers Guild, at its 77th annual convention in Chicago, passes another resolution calling for Oscar's release.

- President of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro addresses the United

Nations General Assembly and calls for Oscar's release, saying "I want to raise the name of a man who has been in prison for 33 years, subjected to offensive conditions, he and his family, a man of Latin America, of our Caribbean. I am talking about Oscar López Rivera, the longest held Puerto Rican political prisoner in the world, and he is in a United States prison. We demand his immediate release."



October

The Nicaraguan ambassador to the United Nations, in his intervention in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee of the General Assembly, "calls for the immediate release of Puerto Rican patriot Oscar López Rivera. The United States should listen to the universal humanitarian clamor that seeks the unconditional and immediate release of this Puerto Rican patriot."

November

The University of Puerto Rico Student Council sponsors three days of activities in support of Oscar's release – a conference supported by the entire university community: the President, the Chancellor, the Asociación Puertorriqueña de Profesores Universitarias (Association of Puerto Rican University Professors, a labor union), the Hermandad de Empleados Exentos No Docentes (Brotherhood of Non-Teaching Employees, a labor union), with the painting of a mural, an exhibit of books about the Puerto Rican political prisoners, a photo exhibit about Oscar, several group discussions at different departments and university programs, and a concert, concluding with a letter from Chancellor Dr. Carlos Severino Valdez to President Obama, calling for Oscar's release.

- The Conferencia Parlamentaria de las Américas (COPA) at its 13th General Assembly, adopts a resolution supporting Oscar's release. Meeting in Paraguay, the organization, comprised of the congresses and parliamentary assemblies of the unitary, federal, federated and associated States, the regional parliaments and the interparliamentary organizations of the Americas, resolves that Oscar "has undoubtedly served more than enough time, given that he was convicted under the controversial anti-sedition legislation," and that his release "is a question of justice and human rights, as he has been deprived of freedom for too long and does not deserve to be imprisoned for even one more day," and that since "the United States has traditionally championed human rights the world over,

it must set an example and release Oscar López Rivera.”

- Poetas en Marcha and El Post Antillano convene 33 Hours of Poetry for Oscar, with Puerto Rican and Latin American poets and writers participating in a continuous reading in front of the U.S. court in San Juan.

- The Federación Latinoamericana de Periodistas (FELAP) (Latin American Association of Journalists) passes a resolution at its meeting in Ecuador calling on President Obama to release Oscar from prison.

- Puerto Rican athletes participating in the Juegos Centroamericanos y del Caribe (Central American and Caribbean Games) in Veracruz, México, bring Oscar to the fore: in the opening night parade of athletes, boxer Jeyvier Cintrón unfurls a banner supporting Oscar’s release, and judo athlete Augusto Miranda dedicates his silver medal to Oscar, saying, “I want to use this forum for all the people of Puerto Rico and the people of the U.S. It is an abuse that they are detaining Oscar López Rivera, a political prisoner. It’s time to grant his release.”

December

On the arrival of several Guantánamo prisoners to Uruguayan soil, outgoing Uruguayan president José “Pepé” Mujica publishes an open letter to President Obama, once again calling on him to release Oscar.

- On International Human Rights Day,

- The Comité Pro Derechos Humanos de Puerto Rico mounts “Arte a la Libertad,” an art exhibit dedicated to Oscar and the sale of works donated by Puerto Rico’s finest painters, sculptors and photographers, to raise funds for the campaign for Oscar’s release.

- Honduran human rights champion Bertha Oliva, director of COFADEH, speaks out in support of Oscar’s release.

- The Red de Intelectuales, Artistas y Movimientos Sociales en Defensa de la Humanidad (Network of Intellectuals, Artists and Social Movements in Defense of Humankind) conference declares its support for Oscar’s release.

- On the 119th anniversary of the first flying of the Puerto Rican flag, Puerto Rico’s main daily newspaper publishes yet another editorial, Más alta la bandera por la excarcelación de Oscar” (Raise higher the flag for Oscar’s release), calling on President Obama to release Oscar.

At the Ateneo, a bastion of Puerto Rican history and culture in San Juan, Oscar is the special invited guest at the annual commemoration of Flag Day, and his daughter reads his words to the hundreds gathered, including the mayor, senators, and Oscar’s brother, “[Today] I will fly the same little Puerto Rican flag that has accompanied me for more than three decades, the one I swear loyalty to every morning when I wake up. At the same time you raise our flag at the Ateneo, I will be raising mine.”

Statement in Support of the Release of Oscar López Rivera, Puerto Rican Independence Fighter

American Association of Jurists (AAJ)

American Association of Jurists (AAJ) in its Assembly of National Chapters at the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, declares the following:

The AAJ endorses the annual Resolutions of the United Nations Decolonization Committee affirming that Resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960, which embodies a people’s inalienable right to self-determination, applies to the colonial case of Puerto Rico. The Decolonization Committee’s annual Resolutions also recognize the humanitarian case of Oscar López Rivera, a 71 year old Puerto Rican fighter committed to the independence of Puerto Rico, serving lengthy imprisonment under inhumane conditions in the United States, and repeatedly request the President of the United States to release him.

The AAJ has on many previous occasions demanded that the United States government and President Obama use the means allowed by law to free Puerto Rican fighter Oscar López Rivera, including at its annual conferences and in its oral and written interventions at the Human Rights Council.

One of the longest held political prisoners in the Western Hemisphere, and the longest held in the history of the movement for the independence and self-determination of Puerto Rico, López Rivera has served 33 years on a disproportionate sentence of 70 years for the offense of seditious conspiracy. The disproportionate sentence and the cruel conditions and

mistreatment under which he has been held demonstrate that he is being punished not for his conduct, but for his beliefs, in crass violation of international law.

Thus, the Assembly of National Chapters of the AAJ reaffirms its previous statements and oral and written interventions at the Human Rights Council demanding that the United States government and President Obama use the means allowed by law to free Puerto Rican fighter Oscar López Rivera.

It is important to invoke Declaration 2625 (XXV) of 1970 (Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (A/8082), adopted by the General Assembly on Oct. 24, 1970); and also the Proclamation of Teheran by the International Conference on Human Rights in Teheran, May 13, 1968, which reaffirms the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which includes self-determination.

It is unconscionable that the United States continues to detain this political prisoner for so long and in defiance of the expressed will of the people of Puerto Rico, its diasporic communities, regional organizations, and others who respect human rights, including organizations, personalities and individuals at the international level.

In Buenos Aires, Argentina on the 27th day of November 2014

“In Freeing Political Prisoners, We Are All Contributing to Our Own Freedom”

Dr. Luis Nieves Falcón

We reprint below remarks given by Dr. Luis Nieves Falcón, Puerto Rican patriot and great defender of human rights and fighter for the Puerto Rican political prisoners at the 7th Congress of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) held in Ottawa at the end of March 1998. It is fully relevant today. And while freedom for most of the political prisoners he refers to was achieved, Oscar López Rivera remains unjustly jailed.

I wish to thank the organizers for inviting us to participate in this Congress. This is a reflection of Comrade Bains' concept of solidarity. He, for one, resolutely gave us a voice in these halls of yours so that the voice of the voiceless, the voice of Puerto Ricans around whom U.S. imperialism has built a wall of silence could be heard in Canada and from Canada to the rest of the world. Thank you very much for allowing me to share some ideas with you.

I think I should start by saying that the most salient characteristic in the relations between Puerto Rico and the United States is the absolute power of the U.S. Congress. There is no avenue of Puerto Rican life, which is not controlled by the United States. The relations have been characterized by a systematic denial of democratic reforms in the island. In addition, for the last 13 years, the UN Decolonization Committee has requested from the United States to initiate the process of self-determination for Puerto Rico. The United States has refused to comply with the request of the UN Decolonization Committee and instead has stated that Puerto Rico is not a colony. Because of this stand of the United States what you see in U.S.-Puerto Rico relations is a continuous effort by the U.S. to cover up the colonial condition of Puerto Rico; what they successfully cover

up in the media but are unable to cover up in the minds of the Puerto Ricans is a continuous persecution and incarceration of anti-colonial combatants leading to the continued existence of Puerto Rican political prisoners. And there will be more political prisoners as long as our sovereign power is not returned to the people of Puerto Rico.

What has the colonial situation imposed by the United States meant? For one thing, the most obvious manifestation of this American control is the fact that Puerto Ricans are unnecessary in their own country. And in order to foster this principle, the United States has systematically continued in Puerto Rico a

process of sterilization of women. As a result of the massive sterilization of women, probably the largest mass sterilization in the world, one-third of our women in their fertile years are underproductive. As a result of that process, population growth in Puerto Rico at this moment is not due to the birth of Puerto Ricans, but to the birth of foreigners brought into and encouraged by the United States to come into the Puerto Rican territory. To the genocidal treatment of the Puerto Rican women, particularly women from the poor sectors, one has to add the massive displacement of Puerto Ricans from their own country to the metropolis; a

cycle initiated for economic reasons, in order to move them to ghettos created in the United States where they become the lowest paid and the most discriminated against people. As a result of that, more than one-third of the Puerto Rican population is outside Puerto Rico, so we are exploited not only on the island but also in the entrails of the monster.

To this one has to add that Puerto Rico has become the classic experimental laboratory of the United States. My brothers and



FREE OSCAR LÓPEZ RIVERA NOW

sisters, the Agent Orange that was used against the people of Vietnam was put to the test in Puerto Rico, to see what its effects were, so that it could later be used on the brothers and sisters of Viet Nam. As



well, all the experimental contraceptive pills have been tested first in Puerto Rico. Among these things, one also has to mention that some of the experimental work conducted in Puerto Rico included, as recorded by history, the transplant of cancer cells to healthy patients in order to see how cancer affects healthy patients. So, in this sense, Puerto Rico has been the subject of genocidal treatment by the United States.

But, in addition to this decimation of the population, one also finds the economic control that the United States exercises on Puerto Rico. There is not a single sector of the economy which is not controlled by the United States, to the extent that our tropical country is forced to import many products it itself produces, including oranges and grapefruits from Florida! In Puerto Rico the saying is that we produce what we do not consume and we consume what we do not produce. So in a sense, the control of the population, the control of the economy, has been followed naturally by pervasive conditions of poverty.

In this showcase of “democracy,” in this showcase of “American endeavor,” more than half of the population lives below the poverty line. More than half of the population! More than half of the population, under the protection of this “democratic” and “civilized” country, depends on food stamps in order to be able to maintain minimum dietary requirements. But it is not only this economic control, these economic conditions, an unemployment rate that was calculated officially at 16 per cent, but we know that the statistics are underrated by 15 per cent, which leaves an unemployment rate in my country of around 30 per cent. If you take unemployment of 30 per cent, if you take more than half of the population living in poverty, more than half of the population needing food stamps in order to survive, you do not have to think too much in order to know what are the results of this supposedly democratic interference of the United States in my country.

Furthermore, we find in this colonial situation, an increase of all those social indicators that reveal a kind of social malaise of the people. We have some of the highest rates of criminality, we have some of the highest rates of drug addiction, we have one of the highest rates of interpersonal violence, we have one of the highest rates of suicide and we have one of the highest rates of mental illness. If you are analyzing a country, and you see this level of violence, but violence which has not yet been turned against the oppressor, but instead exists amongst the people themselves, encouraged by the United States, you will conclude that as long as the Puerto Ricans are violent amongst themselves, the oppressor

is safe and he can continue ruling.

In order to cope with this situation, the United States has invented various legal referenda, supposedly to solve the political situation in Puerto Rico. We are at

the moment undergoing one of these enterprises, a political electoral enterprise of the United States in which the U.S. is considering whether to conduct what they call a “self-determination referendum” in Puerto Rico. But do not let the name fool you. It is not a self-determination referendum. Why? For one thing, the results of the referendum are not mandatory for the United States. The United States has said that this referendum is like a big public opinion poll because, allegedly, up till now, it is unclear what the Puerto Ricans prefer; but the U.S. will not be bound by whatever the Puerto Ricans decide.

It does not comply with the basic international requirements for referenda on self-determination. There is nowhere a transfer of sovereign powers to the people of Puerto Rico, so in a sense what you have here is a slave dealing with the master, not in a position of equality, but in a position of subordination, because there is no transfer of sovereign power to the colonial people.

In addition to that, a country that has been decimated economically by the United States for 100 years, which refuses to oblige itself to offer some sort of economic compensation that will allow the new nation to stand on its own, in order to develop itself and carry on. In addition, the Americans talk about a Puerto Rico referendum for self-determination but the militarization of the country is increasing during this whole process. The Southern Command that was in Panama has been transferred to Puerto Rico and the Special Forces that are now in the States are going to be transferred as well. Brothers and sisters, those from Canada and those from other countries worry very much about the implications for their revolutionary movements because the Americans might send their marines. Brothers and sisters, Americans do not have to send their marines to the island. There are 13 American bases in Puerto Rico surrounding the whole population. So you can ask, is it possible to have a democratic referendum with this military pressure on the people of Puerto Rico?

Furthermore, the United States has encouraged the migration of foreigners to Puerto Rico, some of them the most conservative elements from the countries from which they have come and those people have become American citizens and in the referendum for self-determination, all American citizens are allowed to vote! This means that those foreigners can decide the future of Puerto Rico and at this moment their numbers, their presence in the Puerto Rican population will immediately tell you that they will be the ones who will decide what will be the alternative that will be selected in such an electoral process.

OSCAR IS PUERTO RICO'S MANDELA

The solutions to the colonial status of Puerto Rico that are being discussed are impossible solutions; they are solutions really designed to ensure the continuation of the status quo and the colonial condition. Why do I say that they are impossible solutions? Independence? Sure independence for a country that has been under American colonization for 100 years with no obligation on the part of the United States to assume financial responsibility for at least the years necessary to ensure that the new nation can develop in a healthy way.

What of statehood? Well, the only way that statehood is possible for Puerto Rico is if Spanish ceases to be its main language and English becomes the official language of the island. In fact, a law has just been approved by the U.S. House of Representatives that specifically states that in order to aspire to statehood, they have to ensure that every Puerto Rican child is fluent in English by the age of ten.

Brothers and sisters, this systematic attack on our language and culture began with the arrival of the United States in Puerto Rico in 1898. Since 1898, our culture and language have been under continuous attack. From 1898 to 1952, we could not speak Spanish in our schools. We had to learn all the academic subjects in English and as a result there was very little that we could learn because it was a language, which in culture, in experience, in its linguistic format, was so different from ours. So I have the impression that this impossible independence and this impossible annexation is just a façade, is just a story, to ensure that the continued colonial condition of Puerto Rico is not altered.

To further ensure that it is not altered, there is a systematic persecution of every Puerto Rican who either fights for independence or sympathizes with independence. In the past, I have expressed the horrendous conditions, which our 14 brothers and sisters experience in the U.S. prisons. They are 14 brothers and sisters whose only crime has been to believe in and to struggle for independence in Puerto Rico. [As a result of determined struggle, including demonstrations of 150,000 in Puerto Rico, all but Oscar Lopez Rivera have now been released.]

Very briefly, to summarize some of those conditions, I can mention first the disproportionate sentences. All of them were convicted for seditious conspiracy that is for conspiring to overthrow the legal power of the United States over Puerto Rico. Their sentences are ten and twelve times longer than the sentences imposed on the most horrendous crimes committed the year that they were sentenced. [...]

In addition to the disproportionate sentencing, you must add the condition of exile. There is a U.S. jail in Puerto Rico and even though the American judicial system says that a person detained should be incarcerated in the prison closest to his or her family in order to avoid the disruption that incarceration can promote between

the person in jail and their family, all of them are so remote from their parents, from their communities, from their friends that it is impossible for them to get the moral and spiritual support they need. [A problem that remains today for Oscar.] [...]

In addition to their exile, you find them suffering the most horrendous conditions. There are six women amongst this group of 14. All of them have been sexually violated in the prison by their jailers. All of them are subjected to sensory deprivation. All of them are subjected to extreme conditions of isolation. Oscar López Rivera, was placed alone in a small cell, painted white, with 24-hour-a-day lighting for five years. He did not have anybody to talk to. Even his meals were pushed through a hole in front of the outer door of his cell.

These comrades have resisted in spite of all sorts of tortures. You are also acquainted with strip search. A strip search is a search of all the cavities of the prisoners — the nose, ears, mouth, their armpits, the penis, the vagina and the rectum. In many cases, such strip searches were performed on the women by male personnel. They used to perform four strip searches on Oscar López Rivera before he had a visit and four more strip searches after the visit. What does this tell us about the defender of human rights and of democracy in the world? It is a mockery. The United States is the principal violator of human rights not only in its own country but also outside of it. (Applause)

So what you find, brothers and sisters, is that the United States is laying down the foundations for a new confrontation with the Puerto Rican people. There was a massacre in 1957. There was a massacre in 1954. There was a revolution in 1950 when masses of Puerto Ricans were also massacred and I think they are laying the foundations for a new confrontation not only with the independence sector but also with a very small, though very systematic and persistent clandestine sector that has harassed the Americans and whom they fear. They are afraid of them because of the influence they can have on the Puerto Ricans in the United States as well as the Puerto Ricans at home and the damage this influence will cause them.

Brothers and sisters, at this moment this is the situation in Puerto Rico and the situation for these compatriots of mine who are incarcerated. Now as in the past I come here and I ask you to use your voice and ask [the President of the United States] to free the Puerto Rican prisoners. Because after all, brothers and sisters, solidarity also is a sharing of the pain, a sharing of the hurt that one feels when these things happen to our compatriots. I feel that their incarceration is representative of the incarceration that we all experience in this continent controlled by imperialism and by capitalism. Let's join in the effort to free the Puerto Rican political prisoners because in freeing them, we are all contributing to our own freedom.

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I • Support Reunification of Korea

the basis of their principles and convictions they are sure to achieve victory.

The Joint Declaration was signed by then leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Kim Jong Il and then President of the Republic of Korea Kim Dae Jung, (see p.20). It was issued at the historic north-south summit held in Pyongyang in 2000. It opened a path to common efforts north and south and reflected the ardent desire of Koreans everywhere to reunify their country. The declaration opened a new era in relations between the north and south. It declared to the world that the Korean people are determined to prevent the U.S. imperialists from subjugating the entire Korean peninsula as part of its drive to take over Asia and achieve world empire.

Important success were achieved under the banner of the Joint Declaration, including improvements in bilateral relations between the north and south on the political, cultural and economic fronts. This has increased the collective confidence of the Korean people and strengthened their resolve to rid their nation of the U.S. military occupation and to achieve independent, peaceful reunification as soon as possible. Despite repeated U.S. efforts to block reunification and intensify tensions, Koreans north and south have persisted in their efforts.

For the Koreans and all the peoples of the world, reunification is a vital factor for peace and stability. For the U.S. it is a threat to their empire building and they are organizing brutal efforts to block reunification. This year the U.S. is putting in place the war machinery necessary for an invasion. It insisted on conducting its joint war games with south Korea, bringing in rapid attack ships designed to penetrate coastal waters. A first of its kind joint U.S.-south Korea army division, under U.S. command has now been formed (see p.22). Drone helicopters are in operation. This is in addition to the numerous warships and almost 30,000 U.S. troops occupying south Korea. These are the actions of an

aggressive force putting in place invasion war machinery.

For their part the DPRK made a proposal to ease tensions, offering to end testing for its nuclear weapons in exchange for the U.S. not conducting its war games. The U.S. refused. The DPRK has also made repeated efforts to negotiate a peace treaty so as to finally end the state of war that has existed since 1953. An armistice halting the Korea war was signed then, but no permanent peace treaty. Such a treaty would greatly contribute to easing tensions and express the anti-war drive of the peoples of the region.

Voice of Revolution calls on all its supporters and readers to support the Korean people in their historic task of national reunification. Concretely we as Americans have the responsibility to demand that all U.S. troops and weapons be removed from Korea now, that the U.S. disarm all its nuclear weapons and ban the policy of pre-emptive first strike, and immediately act to normalize relations with the DPRK and sign a peace treaty, now.

Such actions contribute to organizing here at home for an anti-war government. U.S. aggression and empire-building threatens the peoples everywhere. The militarization of all aspects of life necessary for such empire also means greater repression and government impunity at home and abroad. This is a path to destruction, not peace and security.

Fighting for an anti-war government is a fight in the interests of all. The unflinching stand of the DPRK, her fight for sovereignty and for the dignity of all Koreans, also represent a bulwark against U.S. ambitions in the region, its war machinery and its ultimate aim of dominating the world. *Voice of Revolution* salutes the efforts of the DPRK, her leadership and all Koreans, as they work for reunification and their right to decide their own affairs free of U.S. interference. We urge all to join in opposing U.S. aggression by demanding *All U.S. Troops Home Now* and working for an anti-war, pro-people government.

U.S. Major Obstacle to Korea's Reunification

DPRK UN Mission, May 22, 2015

Seven decades have passed since Korea was divided into the north and the south. It is a tragedy that Korea, a homogeneous nation which had lived for 5,000 years in one territory with the same blood and one culture, has been suffering national division for such a long period.

What then is the obstacle in the way of Korea's reunification? In short, it is the U.S.

In August 1945, when Japan was defeated in the Second World War the U.S. drew a line along the 38th parallel across the Korean peninsula to artificially divide it into two. Upset by the aspiration of the Korean people to establish an independent, democratic and unified government, the U.S. enforced separate elections in the south of Korea in 1948 to divide the country

permanently.

In June 1950, it egged the south Korean army on to ignite a war against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), bringing the Korean peninsula into the holocaust of fratricidal war.

In the early 1960s when the tendency towards reunification in alliance with the north gained momentum in south Korea under the slogan, "Let's go to the north, come to the south, let's meet at Panmunjom!" the U.S. instigated military rogue Park Chung Hee to stage the May 16 military coup, putting a spoke in the wheel of the reunification movement of the north and south.

Allen Dulles, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, openly said that the most successful of the overseas

SUPPORT REUNIFICATION OF KOREA

operations of the CIA during his tenure were the 2 military coups in south Korea.

In the 1970s when the July 4 Joint Statement on achieving national reunification on the principle of independence, peace and great national unity was signed between the north and the south, the U.S. came out with the theory of “simultaneous entry into the UN by the north and south of Korea,” clamoring about “two Koreas.”

In the 1980s when the north and south started a dialogue through various channels and exchanged art troupes and home-visiting groups, the U.S. advocated the “cross recognition” of the north and south and staged the north-targeted Team Spirit joint military drills.

In the 1990s when the Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, Cooperation and Exchange was adopted between the north and south, the U.S. made a lot of noise about the north’s nuclear crisis, hindering the development of inter-Korean relations and the reunification movement.

In the 2000s the north and south held two rounds of historic summit meetings for the first time in the history of Korea’s division and adopted the June 15 Joint Declaration with the ideal of *By Our Nation Itself* as its gist, and the October 4 Declaration as its action program. At that time, too, the U.S. pressured the south Korean authorities to sabotage their implementation.

Whenever a sign of improved relations was shown between the north and south, the Americans would deteriorate the situation on the Korean peninsula and cast a chill over their improvement by waging frenzied war rehearsals.

The US-south Korean joint war exercises have reached an extreme in the new century. Due to their largest-scale military drills waged throughout last year and skirmishes in the West Sea of



Korea, all the scheduled dialogues and exchanges for the reunion of separated families and high-level talks have been suspended.

At the outset of this year the DPRK set forth bold and audacious proposals to open up a broad avenue to the independent reunification in this year of the 70th anniversary of Korea’s liberation and has taken sincere measures to this end. The U.S., however, pursues an outrageous confrontation policy, driving inter-Korean relations toward an irrecoverable catastrophe.

Typical examples are the large-scale Key Resolve and Foal Eagle joint military drills the U.S. has forcibly waged in defiance of the strong protests and denunciations by the international community.

The drills aimed at the removal of the DPRK’s leadership and “occupation of Pyongyang” through sudden preemptive strikes; involved huge forces including U.S. ground, naval and air force strike groups; several hundred thousand south Korean troops and the US-led combined force, and the latest military hardware. This has created a grave challenge to north-south relations in Korea, which was overflowing with aspiration for reunification at the start of this year.

It stands to reason that there can be no dialogue about reunification when gunfire is rampant.

Whenever the inter-Korean relationship shows signs of improvement, the U.S. acts in this way. It is not accidental that the south Korean media branded the U.S. as a wire-puller of inter-Korean relations, pulling them astray whenever they seemed to be improving.

The 70-year-long history of national division clearly shows that the improvement of inter-Korean relations and all the reunification processes have been hindered by U.S. interference.

The issue of Korea’s reunification is not limited to the region, but is directly related to world peace and security. That is why Korea’s peaceful reunification must be achieved at an early date and the U.S. must stop its moves against reunification at once.



HOW TO GUARANTEE PEACE ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

The Need for a Well-Balanced Approach to Issues on Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia

Kim Ye Jin, Researcher, Institute for Disarmament and Peace, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DPRK

Since World War II, the power structure of Northeast Asia has been compressed onto the Korean peninsula, where both the north and the south aspire for reunification. Within these circumstances, all neighboring countries, which have political, military and economic interests on the peninsula, are deeply concerned about the reunification formula since it is directly connected with security and peace in Northeast Asia.

Danger of Korean Reunification Through Confrontation of Systems

The north and south of Korea have developed along different paths since the division of the country, maintaining different ideologies and political systems for almost 70 years. Neither of them wants to abandon its respective ideology and system although reunification is their common aspiration.

Within this stark reality, if one side tries to force its ideology and system on the other, it will bring about a war, threatening peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The geopolitical position of the Korean peninsula remains unchanged. The Korean peninsula is surrounded by big powers and on the peninsula their interests are intertwined. The geographical particularity of the Korean peninsula may either prevent or instigate conflicts among big powers. Confrontation and conflict between the two sides of Korea will inevitably invite big powers into the conflict and reconciliation and cooperation between the north and the south will promote the stability of the region, including among big powers, and check the outbreak of possible conflicts.

A north-south fratricidal war, caused by the confrontation of the two systems, may draw neighboring countries into that fight, but on the other hand, the peacefully reunified peninsula could serve as a buffer zone that ameliorates strategic confrontation among neighboring countries.

The new U.S. Asia-Pacific Strategy is aimed at the containment and control of other major powers and the Korean peninsula is considered the main stage for that strategy. To cope with U.S. moves, neighboring countries strengthen their strategic countermeasures and expand their areas of cooperation.

This reality increases the dependence of the security of Northeast Asia on the reunification formula of the Korean peninsula. In 2012, the U.S. developed its new defense strategy and since then has annually dispatched an aircraft carrier fleet to conduct the U.S.-Japan-South Korea joint naval exercises in waters around the peninsula, accelerating preparations to establish a trilateral missile defense system. In response to the U.S. moves, Russia and China stage joint naval exercises around the peninsula and join efforts to counter U.S. attempts to establish a missile defense system in Asia.

Under these circumstances, the continuation of confrontational systems can only bring war to the Korean Peninsula, where no mechanism to prevent an armed conflict and war exists as the Armistice

Agreement has been nullified. Such a war will continue until the winner is decided and fan the flames of strategic confrontation among neighboring countries, so as to cause the complete destruction of a security balance in Northeast Asia and in the long run, an Armageddon in the region. If a war breaks out on the peninsula, it will be a clash of fire and nuclear weapons and its catastrophic aftermath will not compare to the 1950s Korean War or recent Middle East turmoil or the case in Ukraine.

In conclusion, reunification through a confrontation of systems is unrealistic and counter to the interests of both north and south Korea as well as neighboring countries and might open a Pandora's Box that will destroy the long-term interests of the Korean nation and Northeast Asia.

The north and the south should refrain from absolutizing their own ideologies and systems and pursuing a confrontation of systems and instead realize national reunification peacefully and play a pivotal role in efforts to transform an unstable peace in Northeast Asia into a durable one.

Korean Reunification Through System Coexistence — The Only Way

As it is obvious that a confrontation of systems will only bring about a war, the peaceful way for Korean reunification is, of course, the coexistence of the systems of the north and the south.

Some believe that differences in the systems of north and south Korea might be a reason for them to be unable to coexist. However, this cannot be a reason. The differences in the systems are not an Achilles heel to reunification but an inevitable reason for the coexistence of the systems. This is proven by the fact that the Korean nation's aspiration for reunification has never weakened but grows stronger and stronger even though the different systems have been formed and consolidated in the north and south of Korea.

Two different systems, diverse political activities and various forms of ownership can coexist in a state. It has been proved in practice in other countries.

Both north and south Korea recognize that each has its own system. Therefore, if they respect each other, cooperation between the two sides will be easily realized and the achievement of reunification will not be a problem.

The north's proposal to reunify the country with the formula of maintaining two systems is not aimed at forcing its interests and system on the south, and bringing hardship and suffering to both. The north does not force its socialist system on the south and has never done so. However, this does not mean that the former would tolerate having the latter force its system on it either.

When reunification is promoted with the formula of two coexisting systems, neither side will need to gamble with their lives for reunification or sacrifice their interests.

SUPPORT REUNIFICATION OF KOREA

On the contrary, they can butter both sides of their bread.

The reunification formula based on two coexisting systems is not aimed at imitating the unification experiences of other countries but at achieving reunification in line with the reality of the Korean peninsula. In other words, it is the formula agreeable to and already agreed to by the north and the south. If the north and the south, the key parties of reunification, fail to respect the spirit and articles agreed to by each other and try to copy the experiences of others and apply them to the Korean peninsula, it will be a naive attempt to build a Cuckoo Land.

The unification experiences and formulas of other countries may conform to the realities and conditions of those respective countries, but they will definitely not be suitable for the reality of the Korean peninsula.

On the road to reunification, the north and the south have already agreed on a charter and program for reunification, such as the Three Principles of National Reunification, the historic June 15 Joint Declaration and the October 4 Declaration, thus demonstrating to the whole world the nation's mettle and determination to reunify the country.

The three principles of national reunification we refer to are namely the principles of independent, peaceful reunification and great national unity.

The three principles of national reunification serve both north and south Korea as a foundation for all previous agreements and declarations between the north and the south and a cornerstone for reunification based on system coexistence. When our nation propels reunification in accordance with the Three Principles of National Reunification, there is no need to pick the brains of others for our reunification formula or to beg for the approval of outside forces, but to choose coexistence based on the great national unity instead of a war, which will result from confrontation.

The current south Korean authorities should highly respect and value the three principles of national reunification, along with the other inter-Korean agreements.

Nothing is impossible if our nation joins in efforts together.

When we resolve all inter-Korean relations on the basis of the reunification charter and the great program of the whole nation, the reunification issue can be addressed fairly and smoothly in conformity with the common interests of the nation.

Korean Reunification Through Coexistence of Systems and Its Positive Impact on Northeast Asia

The north and the south agreed on the ways to improve inter-Korean relations and the reunification formula in the June 15 Joint Declaration and the October 4 Declaration. They are, in a nutshell, improving the inter-Korean relations and achieving national reunification peacefully while leaving the two different systems intact. When the north and the south resolve the reunification issue according to this formula, it will promote regional peace and stability by turning the Korean peninsula, the hot-spot of Northeast Asia, into a buffer zone.

From a politico-military aspect, it has been rigidly presented that only when the armistice is terminated and a peace mechanism established on the Korean peninsula, can the hostilities be ended and reunification achieved. However, if reunification through the coexistence of systems is promoted by the north and the south, armistice



Historic North-South Summit, June 15, 2000, with DPRK Leader Kim Jong Il (left) and south Korean President Kim Dae-jung.

and hostility will naturally lose ground and a peaceful environment will follow.

Reunification through the coexistence of systems inevitably gives birth to a neutral state. Guaranteeing the neutral position of neighboring countries will cause the confrontational security structure to disintegrate into one that promises peace in Northeast Asia.

In terms of the economic aspect, this formation will create tremendous benefits not only for the Korean peninsula, but also for Northeast Asia as a whole.

Many bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation projects can be found region-wide. They are initiatives aimed at connecting railways, roads, gas pipelines, electric power networks and energy development, natural resources, sea ports, special economic zones and environmental cooperation. Of course these initiatives require stable development of the inter-Korean relations on the Korean peninsula. Therefore, promoting peaceful reunification through the coexistence of systems agreed to by both the north and the south of Korea will satisfy the demands for regional cooperation so that the peninsula and the region will achieve a flying start at prosperity for all. It will further serve to make the member states of other regions, including Europe, look at opportunities for economic cooperation around the Korean peninsula.

Consequently, the smooth resolution of the reunification issue according to the formula agreed to by the north and the south is a well-balanced resolution that favors a peaceful environment on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia, so as to push and enlarge regional economic cooperation.

These points prove the validity of the ideas for reunification clarified by First Chairman Kim Jong Un of the National Defence Commission of the DPRK in his 2015 New Year's address. He stated that the north and the south should refrain from seeking a confrontation of systems by absolutizing their ideology and system and instead resolve the reunification issue in the common interests of the nation by transcending the differences in ideology in the way they have already agreed.

Reunification through the coexistence of systems is the only way to resolve the Korean issue peacefully and reasonably. When this is realized, the world will give its blessing and credit the wisdom and dignity of the Korean nation.

(February 2, 2015. Slightly edited for grammar and style.)

15TH ANNIVERSARY OF HISTORIC SUMMIT

Text of North-South Joint Declaration

True to the noble will of all the fellow countrymen for the peaceful reunification of the country, Chairman Kim Jong Il of the National Defense Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and President Kim Dae Jung of the Republic of Korea (ROK) had an historic meeting and summit in Pyongyang from June 13 to 15, 2000.

The heads of the North and the South, considering that the recent meeting and summit, the first of their kind in the history of division, are events of weighty importance in promoting mutual understanding, developing inter-Korean relations and achieving peaceful reunification, declare as follows:

1. The North and the South agreed to solve the question of the country's reunification independently by the concerted efforts of the Korean nation responsible for it.

2. The North and the South, recognizing that a proposal for federation of lower stage advanced by the North side and a proposal for confederation put forth by the South side for the

reunification of the country have elements in common, agreed to work for the reunification in this direction in the future.

3. The North and the South agreed to settle humanitarian issues, including exchange of visiting groups of separated families and relatives and the issue of unconverted long-term prisoners, as early as possible on the occasion of August 15 this year.

4. The North and the South agreed to promote the balanced development of the national economy through economic cooperation and build mutual confidence by activating cooperation and exchanges in all fields, social, cultural, sports, public health, environmental and so on.

5. The North and the South agreed to hold dialogues between the authorities as soon as possible to implement the above-mentioned agreed points in the near future.

President Kim Dae Jung cordially invited Chairman Kim Jong Il of the DPRK National Defense Commission to visit Seoul. (June 15, 2000)

CONFERENCES IN PYONGYANG AND SEOUL

International Delegation of Women Calls for Peace Treaty and Supports Reunification of Korea

On the 70th anniversary of Korea's division, 30 women peace-makers from 15 countries, including the U.S., organized to go to Korea and call for the signing of a peace treaty and reunification. The delegation includes two Nobel Peace Laureates, authors, artists, academics, humanitarian aid workers, faith leaders, mothers and grandmothers. The women organized peace conferences in both Pyongyang in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Seoul in south Korea. As the women brought out, theirs was an effort at building people-to-people relations and demonstrating that dialogue and negotiations are necessary and possible.

As one member of the delegation put it, "We are walking [from north to south Korea] to lessen military tensions on the Korean peninsula, which have ramifications for peace and security throughout the world. We are walking to end the Korean War by replacing the 1953 Armistice Agreement with a permanent peace treaty."

The delegation met with north Korean women in Pyongyang for an International Peace Symposium. They walked with them to the reunification monument in Pyongyang, expressing their support for the peaceful reunification of the country on the basis of the Korean's own efforts.

On May 24, International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament, they had hoped to cross the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) at Panmunjom, where the Armistice halting the U.S. war against Korea was signed. The U.S. command did not allow this. Instead the women crossed at Kaesong and were greeted there



by hundreds of south Korean women. A second International Peace Symposium was held in south Korea. The delegation heard from Korean women north on south about the damage the war caused, the grave threats posed by the U.S. in the region and the importance of a peace treaty now. The Korean women also spoke of their ardent desire to secure a united Korea. All spoke to the important role women can play.

The action brought to the fore the need for a peace treaty now in Korea, something long demanded by the Koreans but refused by the U.S. Some of the women traveled to Jeju Island in Japan after the action in Korea, as part of efforts to oppose U.S. militarism and support the struggle of all against war and for their rights.

Stop War Games, Start Peace Talks

Working Group for Peace and Demilitarization in Asia and the Pacific

The Korean War, known in the United States as “The Forgotten War,” has never ended. Every year, the United States stages a series of massive joint war games with its ally, South Korea (ROK). These coordinated exercises are both virtual and real. Among other things, they practice live fire drills and simulate the invasion of North Korea—including first-strike options. [This year a live shell struck the home of a civilian, another aspect of the danger posed by these war games — VOR Ed. Note] [...]



North Korea views these war games as an act of provocation and threat of invasion like that which we have witnessed in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya and routinely condemns these maneuvers as aimed at “bring[ing] down the DPRK by force” and forcing it to “bolster up the war deterrent physically.” South Korean activists also decry the role of these war games in the hostile perpetuation of the division of the Korean peninsula and are often persecuted for their protests under South Korea’s draconian National Security Law.

The U.S.-ROK “Key Resolve” and “Foal Eagle” annual war games, usually staged in March, and “Ulchi Freedom Guardian” in August, typically last for months and involve tens of thousands of U.S. troops stationed in South Korea and deployed from the United States, as well as hundreds of thousands of their ROK counterparts. U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine, and Space Command forces will participate in these exercises and practice scenarios including the removal of North Korea’s leadership, occupation of Pyongyang, and reunification of the peninsula under U.S. and south Korean control.

In South Korea, peace and reunification groups have long opposed these war games. They have called for peninsula-wide demilitarization entailing the eventual removal of U.S. troops. As one organization puts it, “Unless and until U.S. forces are completely and permanently withdrawn from south Korea, it will be impossible to establish peace on the Korean peninsula.”

We call upon the U.S. and south Korean governments to stop the costly and provocative war games and take proactive steps to deescalate the current tensions on the Korean peninsula.

The Perils of the U.S. Pivot

In the past five years, hard-won efforts by the Korean people to ease North-South tensions have been reversed. Through its massive military buildup across the region, the United States has amplified regional tensions. [...]

Crisis on the Korean peninsula furnishes a rationale for U.S.

militarization of the region, and the Pentagon has committed to deploy 60 percent of its air and naval forces to Asia and the Pacific to reinforce its air sea battle doctrine. Announced as the “pivot” of U.S. military resources to Asia and the Pacific, President Obama’s policy, which necessitates more training areas, runways, ports of call, and barracks for the massive shift of U.S. military forces, disregards the impact of militarization on the lives of ordinary people in the region.

The disastrous ecological and human costs of this “pivot”

are acutely apparent in the current construction of a naval base on Jeju, an “island of peace” in south Korea known for having the planet’s densest concentration of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Once celebrated for its pristine beauty and sea-based culture, Gangjeong, a 450-year-old fishing and farming village is being torn to shreds by the south Korean government in collaboration with the United States, which can freely use any ROK military installation. Base construction crews are dredging acres of world-class, bio-diverse coral habitats and covering them with concrete. The obliteration of these coastal ecosystems also destroys the millennia-old livelihoods of the villagers, with 94 percent of them voting against the base in a local referendum. Gangjeong villagers are watching their heritage, economy, vibrant local culture, spiritual center, and very core of their identity collapse into rubble.

This same multi-faceted people’s struggle is being played out in many places across the Asia-Pacific. Within President Obama’s “pivot” policy, U.S. bases in South Korea, Japan, Okinawa, Hawaii, and Guam are ever more important. Moreover, his administration has been pressing hard to open up previously closed U.S. bases in geo-strategically vital nations such as Vietnam and the Philippines.

The July 27, 1953 Armistice Agreement brought the combat phase of the Korean War to a temporary halt but did not end the war. The Armistice Agreement stipulated that a peace agreement be realized within three months and that negotiations take place for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea. Over the past several decades, North Korea, often portrayed in mainstream media as an irrational rogue state, has repeatedly requested peace negotiations with the United States. Yet today, we station nearly 30,000 military personnel and operate over 40 military bases on the Korean peninsula. We have spent the past 60 plus years living not in a post-war era, but under a ceasefire whose consequences are borne most acutely by the Korean people.

We — as human rights, Korean solidarity, faith-based, peace, and environmental organizations — call for attention to the human and ecological costs of permanent war as the modus vivendi of U.S.-Korean relations. Efforts that promote increased militarization and conflict and the destruction of the rich biodiversity in Korea are immoral and go against universally shared values of building peace, caring for Earth, and respecting the human dignity and worth of every person.

Resolution for Peace

We, the undersigned peace, human rights, faith-based, environmental, and Korean solidarity activists, call upon the U.S.-ROK governments to cancel their dangerous and costly war games

against north Korea.

We strongly urge the United States to turn to diplomacy for common and human security rather than militarization, which will only undermine regional and U.S. security. We further request that the Obama administration focus its strategic shift to the Asia region on finding diplomatic and peaceful solutions to conflict, and building cooperation with all nations in the region, including China, DPRK, and Russia. We join with our peace-minded brothers and sisters in Korea and call on the Obama administration to deescalate the current tensions and do its part in realizing “Year One of Peace” on the Korean Peninsula.

(Statement issued on 60th Anniversary of the 1953 Armistice Agreement, July 2013)

PUTTING IN PLACE

U.S. Activates First Ever Joint U.S.-Republic of Korea Combined Division

The U.S. activated the first-ever combined division of U.S. and Republic of Korea (ROK) troops June 3. The combined division falls under the U.S. 8th Army and includes Second Infantry Division (2ID) forces and south Korea’s 16th Brigade. It is headed by 2ID commander Major General Theodore Martin.

As Martin said, the new combined division “serves as a signal to the world, and to our potential adversaries in particular, that we have made the transformation that is necessary to succeed on the battlefield. We now have the best that both armies in the alliance have to offer — all in one division, under one flag, fighting united in effort and purpose.”

Eighth Army commander Lt. Gen. Bernard Champoux added, “Working closely together will better allow us to share common doctrine and procedures and will greatly enhance the overall interoperability between our two great armed forces,” he said. The combined division first tested itself in the recent Key Resolve U.S.-ROK war game directed against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). It is considered a main force for invading the DPRK.

The formal establishment of a combined infantry division is an indication that the U.S. is further putting in place the forces and command structure needed for such an invasion.

Foal Eagle and Key Resolve War Games

As further means to threaten the DPRK and China, the U.S. again conducted its war games Foal Eagle and Key Resolve in March and April. The war games involve about 200,000 south Korean troops and another 10,000 U.S. forces. About 3500 U.S. troops are brought in, mainly from the U.S., adding to the 28,000 troops permanently occupying south Korea. Key Resolve was observed

by Australia, Britain, Canada, Denmark and France.

Of significance was the presence the USS Fort Worth, considered an attack ship. It is a faster, shallow-draft ship that can come closer to shore. It has a maximum speed of more than 45 mph and can readily move into shallow coastal waters that would ground larger ships.

The Fort Worth also houses an armed, rigid-hulled boat as part of its surface warfare package. The ship’s armament is designed to deter “swarm attacks” by smaller coastal craft. It also flies surveillance missions with an MQ-8B Fire Scout unmanned drone helicopter, while also maintaining a manned MH-60R Seahawk helicopter. This is also the first deployment of the Fire Scout drone to the area.

Normally based in San Diego, the Fort Worth has now been deployed for 16 months to the region, the longest deployment of a U.S. Navy ship in 42 years.

The Navy is also sending new stealth destroyers and bombers capable of dropping nuclear weapons, additional littoral combat ships like the Fort Worth and an amphibious ready group to the Pacific. Navy Secretary Ray Mabus said this reflects the U.S. commitment to its military “pivot” to the region.

The war games, the new joint combat division and the long-term addition of the Fort Worth to the armada of other warships all reflect U.S. moves to have in place all aspects of the military force needed for invasion of the DPRK and potential battle with China. These actions are a grave danger to the region and the world. What is needed is demilitarizing the region by ending all the war games and bringing all U.S. troops home. Security lies not in use of force, but in defending rights, including the right of the people of Korea to peacefully settle their disputes and reunify their country.

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I • Public Control

A modern democratic government would welcome such developments and fully utilize them — as they are a cherished accomplishment of great value to the struggle to raise the quality of education. Instead, not only did the Governor, in the state budget passed, act to impose state takeover of Buffalo public schools (27 schools are already listed for state receivership). Now he and others are pushing state takeover using mayoral control. Anything but the public! This is backward, undemocratic and shows these politicians are not fit to govern modern society.

The current bill for mayoral control does nothing to oppose or stop state takeover using receivership. Nor does it stop state takeover using the Common Core testing and evaluation regime, something occurring across the country. Indeed, for Buffalo, it appears designed to facilitate both of these attacks. This is in part because by removing the elected school board and having the mayor appoint both the board and superintendent, the bill also removes *accountability to the public*. These appointed people are accountable to the mayor, who can fire them as he sees fit. The mayor in turn is accountable to the state in matters of public education, not the people of Buffalo, not the parents, teachers and students of Buffalo. His reports about the schools are submitted to state officials. And they are the ones who decide if mayoral control is to continue.

An appointed superintendent or receiver is to have power to decide all matters, not only of hiring and firing but of



What role will there be for the public once receivers control more than half the district, which could happen within 3-4 years? The whole effort is to block public control when it is clear that is the solution!

Mayoral control, like receivership, is an effort to further concentrate power in the hands of a few, serving private interests, not the public good. Resistance by the public, the demands by parents, teachers and students to have a say, regular elections, all are seen as obstacles by the private monopolies to complete control over the public treasury and takeover of the public schools. Having appointed governance by a single individual removes these obstacles while also serving to undermine resistance, making it appear as futile. Appointed individuals have little reason to even pretend to respect public concerns. This is readily apparent in the appointed Control Board in Buffalo, which publicly refuses to even acknowledge public comment, let alone respond to it.

While the state and the monopoly interests expect receivership and mayoral control to block the growing resistance, the public is gearing up to ensure the opposite is the case. Our right to decide is a right that we affirm. Our organizing, our demands, our efforts to redesign education so it serves the interests of the students and society, all are matters that *We Decide!* Our resistance is in our hands and based on our initiative. This means stepping up the efforts to REFUSE! receivership and mayoral control while advancing our own alternative. Such efforts include further building and expanding the united actions to demand *Our Schools, We Decide!* It means focusing efforts at school board meetings to denounce mayoral control and receivership and demand that the elected school board do the same. It means using various means, from songs and cultural efforts, to demonstrations and photo displays, to further build our united, conscious fight for *Public Control of Public Schools!*



curriculum and discipline and school closures and more. The superintendent can only be removed by the mayor, not the people, and the receiver by the state, not the people. What then will be the point in speaking out at a public meeting of such an appointed board with its appointed superintendent?!

No Evidence Mayoral Control Raises Quality of Education

As New York State politicians, including Governor Cuomo, try to impose mayoral control on Buffalo public schools, the claim is being made that it “works.” It is said that places like New York City and Boston have raised test scores and graduation rates. However, these claims are being made without actual evidence to back them up. They are commonly made out of context as well. Various factors, such as the level of public funding, the levels of poverty, the numbers of teachers and class sizes, have to be looked at to assess such issues. Further, it is also established that the Common Core testing regime, which is currently being used, is not a valid measure. It is unfair and arbitrary, as are most state standardized tests. They do not address the quality of education nor if it is being raised or not.

It is also the case that a survey of twenty-five years of research on the effectiveness of school boards, published in the *Review of Educational Research*, found few empirical studies, prompting its author to conclude that there is “not yet convincing evidence that appointment of school board members produces effective governance or greater academic achievement.” The Center for the Study of Social Policy surveyed what is known about various governance reforms and concluded that there is no clear evidence that mayoral

takeovers improve student achievement or fiscal efficiency. Yet those promoting mayoral control are claim to be doing so in the interests of the students.

On the other hand numerous studies confirm what parents, teachers and students directly experience. As one report providing a synthesis of research on parent involvement over a decade-long period concluded, “When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more,” (A New Wave of Evidence, a report from Southwest Educational Development Laboratory).

As those standing up for the right to education here in Buffalo have made clear, to raise the quality of education requires expanding and strengthening the role of parents, students, teachers and staff together — not eliminating it. Public control and decision making is the innovation of modern democracy. It is the means to take public education forward. State control, whether through receivership or mayoral control, serves to take education backward. It serves to concentrate more power in fewer hands. We have seen how such concentration in the economy has meant far more inequality. Such concentration in school governance will do the same.

Newark Students Again Walk Out to Demand Public Control

On May 22 more than 1,000 Newark high school students from across the city walked out of their classrooms in protest of the state’s control over the public school district. Shortly before noon, students left their schools and gathered at city hall. After a brief demonstration there, they marched to the intersection of Miller Street and McCarter Highway, blocking the street with a sit-in. Students opposed budget cuts, demanded the removal of appointed superintendent Cami Anderson and public control over their public schools. The students, organized mainly by the Newark Student Union, together with New Jersey Communities United, have demonstrated numerous times and also organized a sit-in at Anderson’s office, demanding that she resign.

Anderson is appointed by the New Jersey Governor. Like other appointed superintendents, she refuses to recognize the students and the public more generally. She has been responsible for closing public schools and expanding private charters, which do not improve education while taking public funds from public schools. Her current proposal includes forcing nine more schools into “turn-around” status, where all teachers must reapply for their jobs and the needs of students are commonly not met. Twenty schools are already in this category so students and teachers have experienced the failure of this approach. And



they are aware of the likelihood that these same schools can be closed.

Newark schools have been under state control for years, yet problems of inequality and poor quality persist. State control and an appointed superintendent have solved no problem facing the people.

Unlike Buffalo, the Newark mayor has repeatedly supported the students and opposed state control. He released a statement supporting these latest protests, saying state control has not only not helped, but has deepened the district’s problems.

Students in Newark continue to lead the way, demanding their right to participate in governance of their schools and refusing to accept state takeover.