

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 25, 2007

The Honorable Santiago A. Canton
Executive Secretary
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
Organization of American States
17th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20006

Dear Mr. Canton:

I write to you to encourage action by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to protect the human rights of Raul Jose Diaz Peña, a Venezuelan prisoner.

Reports suggest that the Venezuelan authorities have deprived Mr. Diaz Peña, who has been incarcerated pending trial for almost four years, of proper medical attention. There are also indications that Mr. Diaz Peña is seriously ill as a result of the lack of medical care.

Such treatment, if it is occurring, violates not only the law of Venezuela, but also the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, to which Venezuela was an original signatory in 1948. The Declaration's introduction acknowledges "the dignity of the individual" and Article I guarantees the "right to life, liberty and personal security."

It is the Commission's responsibility and moral obligation to protect the basic dignity of all human beings in the Hemisphere and ensure that the Chavez government does not violate the rights of the Venezuelan people. Taking immediate steps to provide for the welfare of Mr. Diaz- Peña is an important first step by the Commission toward fulfilling its duty.

Therefore, I request that you immediately intervene to obtain Mr. Diaz Peña's transfer to a medical facility or to the prison at Ramo Verde, so that he may obtain all necessary medical care. Furthermore, I ask that you, or a designated representative, interview Mr. Diaz Peña and inspect the prison cell and conditions in which he is being held to ensure that he is being treated properly and that the Government of Venezuela is upholding its obligations under the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and other international human rights and humanitarian legal principles.

I thank you in advance for your efforts in this case and for your personal commitment, as well as that of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, to upholding human rights throughout the Americas.

Sincerely,



ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

Ranking Member

House Committee on Foreign Affairs