

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 6, 2016

COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
SMALL BUSINESS AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

Cuban democracy leader and Sakharov Prize winner Guillermo “Coco” Fariñas has been on a hunger strike for 48 days. He has been hospitalized four times after collapsing and losing consciousness in his home. I personally spoke to him about a month ago when he first initiated his hunger strike and I told him, *“We will keep praying for you, we will keep talking about you, we will keep highlighting your case. And I wanted him to know that I had called him to let him know that we are standing with him.”*

Fariñas is fighting for freedom for his fellow Cubans, as the daily harassment and repression by the Castro regime has only increased in recent years. This year, according to the Cuban Commission for Human Rights (CCHR), 845 peaceful dissidents were arrested in the month of July, which represents an increase from the previous month when 498 detentions were registered.

America is a beacon of hope and freedom for people around the world and seeing democracy activists like Mr. Fariñas risk his life for the cause of freedom should awaken all of us to the injustices he is fighting. His principled demands of the Cuban government are simple:

The regime should immediately cease the brutal beatings and arbitrary home raids and expropriation of private properties from peaceful citizens that hold dissenting views; The regime should immediately cease the daily abuses it is committing against the “self-employed” (“cuentapropistas”), who have been increasingly subject to confiscations, arbitrary fines and displacements, as the Cuban military takes advantage of the increase of travel.

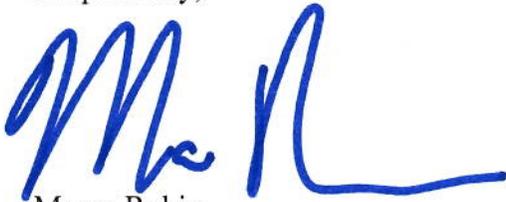
As I told Mr. Fariñas when I last spoke to him, he and his life’s work will be an important chapter in the history of how Cuba once again becomes free and democratic. His excruciating decision to wage a hunger strike in protest of the Castro regime’s repression has highlighted its brutal nature and the fact it cannot be changed with unilateral concessions and appeasement.

I know you have met Mr. Fariñas in the past. I would urge you to call him now to express your support for his courageous acts. I urge you to hear firsthand his account of the deepening repression in Cuba since you changed longstanding U.S. policy toward the regime. I urge you to listen to his demands that the Castro government cease the violence against peaceful members of Cuba’s independent civil society, and that you discuss with him how your Administration

can adjust its policies toward Cuba to bring about measurable gains regarding human rights on the island. I ask that you convey his demands to the Castro regime and not lose this opportunity to help one of Cuba's finest freedom fighters.

I sincerely pray that you do not let Guillermo "Coco" Fariñas' courageous stand continue without clear support from you. If he dies without your clear support in both words and policy actions, this chapter of U.S.-Cuba history will be marred by America's failure to demonstrate moral leadership at a critical moment.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MR', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marco Rubio
United States Senator