

**APPEARANCE OF MARTHA BEATRIZ ROQUE CABELLO BEFORE THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN AN ENCOUNTER TO HAVE THE ASSEMBLY
TO PROMOTE CIVIL SOCIETY IN CUBA**

APRIL 27, 2005

[The following is an excerpt from Martha Beatriz Roque's speech in which she speaks about Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet.]

Distinguished Members of Parliament:

First of all, we would like to thank you for offering us this opportunity to address you. It is truly an honor! I would also like to express my gratitude to all those who have made this encounter possible, among them: the representatives of the Partido Radical who contacted us, to all members of the Cuban nation who traveled specifically to be with us on this occasion: M.A.R. for Cuba, Plantados hasta la Libertad y la Democracia, Federación Sindical de Cuba en el Exilio (Federation of Cuban Labor Union in Exile) and the mother of political prisoner, Normando Hernández González; and also the headquarters of the Comisión de la Unión Europea (European Commission in Cuba) in Cuba which has so graciously made us their guests.

It is impossible for those of us who live in this country lacking democracy and who struggle peacefully to establish it to begin a conversation without speaking about the political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. In the more than 200 jails and prisons that there are in the country, there are over 300 political prisoners. In particular, there are those who remain in that classification since Marzo Negro de 2003 (Black March, 2003) when on a single occasion 75 of us were incarcerated. It is important for the world to know that the regime imprisons those who lift up their voices against it, and that they are held in prison as an exchange token for their political intention. **Although there are some who suffer more than others due to illness, distance from family, personal harassment as well as harassment to their family, it is necessary to ask that they all be liberated since the worst illnesses that they suffer from are "innocence" and "injustice." WE COULD MENTION HUNDREDS OF THEM, BUT ONE NAME SUFFICES SINCE WE CONSIDER IT TO BE THE FLAG THAT FLUTTERS AS AN INESCAPABLE EXAMPLE; I AM REFERRING TO DR. OSCAR ELÍAS BISCET.** The issue is not only to obtain the immediate liberation of those who are in prison but to once and for all eliminate, end the practice of putting innocent people in prison merely due to their ideas. If not, we would soon be advocating for new prisoners. This implies that it is important to demand that the Cuban government stop this denigrating practice. Within our beloved homeland, over 360 small opposition organizations have grouped together to organize the development of a "sociedad civil" after a complete phase of preparation, we intend that on the upcoming 20th of March, an important date in our history since it was on that date in 1902 that the Republic was established, we plan to hold a Reunión General in the City of Havana, to which we have invited numerous world personalities and a large part of the

diplomatic corps accredited in the country. This meeting does not constitute a confrontation with the Government. It is an act in the exercise of the right that we have to develop a civil society in Cuba, which has been drowned in the depths of the sea impossibilities by the totalitarian regime. We do not want to take up all of our time detailing all of the acts of harassment and “show of power” that the government has used against all of us who are part of this initiative. That is why we have asked the representation of the Comisión Europea in Cuba to distribute the documents with the information that we have prepared for that purpose and that contains some attached papers.

I would like to make you aware that the number of acts of repression is disproportionate. We have over 30 specific cases of individuals, throughout the country, who have been harassed by the political police. Among these, is the letter from two prisoners from the municipality of Manzanillo in the province of Granma who were sentenced in less than a week to two and three years in prison for the “delito de peligrosidad” (crime of dangerousness”) which is equivalent to saying that they did absolutely nothing but the government considers they may be prone to doing something [continued]