

Hon. Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President

We are writing to you as members of the Puerto Rican Civil Society, to bring to your attention the current state of affairs of our nation, Puerto Rico, and our opposition to our government's policies. Our country is on the brink of a civil conflict of significant proportions, promoted by the current administration of Governor Luis Fortuño (Republican), due to its insistence on actively imposing a public policy of dismantling cherished civil institutions and vital government services. Said policy practically amounts to a political coup, contrary to basic democratic principles, in so far as it is opposite to the peoples' mandate in the recent local elections and our general well being.

It is for this reason that the local government is increasingly depending on the state's repressive apparatus to support its unpopular and illegitimate policy. As a result, the people have called for a national strike this October 15, 2009, which comes as a consequence of the failed attempts to establish a dialogue with the current government.

Since 1950, through the US Congressional Act 600, your government offered self-rule to the people of Puerto Rico, while leaving us, contradictorily, under the plenary powers of the U. S. Congress. Later, in 1953, it made a concrete yet unfulfilled commitment before the United Nations General Assembly to continuously respect and promote our people's inalienable right to self-determination and self-government. Although we may have differences as to the nature and implementation of these legal prescriptions, under the applicable International Law concerning decolonization, we all agree that as a people --even with all the present limitations of our territorial status, and the encumbering interference of the three branches of the Federal Government and the US Armed Forces-- we have clearly established our people's firm commitment to social justice and democracy during the past 59 years.

However, the current political administration, in dire violation of the spirit of the 1950-53 constitutional framework, the political and cultural democratic tradition, and the civil, constitutional and human rights of our people, has launched in the past 10 months an open campaign to dismantle civil institutions and the local government and to increase the level of repression against all sectors of society who oppose these measures. Moreover, in certain occasions it has even contravened Puerto Rico's constitutional and legal framework, notwithstanding the aforementioned illegitimacy of its actions.

Mr. President  
Page Two  
October 14, 2009

As an example, the current government has activated the Puerto Rico National Guard, to be potentially used against the civilian population in case of civil disturbances. Of particular interest is the fact, in the context of the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, that the Governor has delegated such authority --to call the local National Guard-- to his Chief of Police, which is in contravention of the applicable legal framework under which the Commander-in-chief is the Governor. In addition, most recently, the Governor's Chief of Staff, together with the Chief of Police and the Secretary of Justice, threatened the population with the application of the US Patriot Act of 2001, if anyone incurs in public demonstrations which they, in advance, label as acts of terrorism.

As intellectuals and academics, we are deeply opposed to these measures and we are particularly concerned with the rapidly deteriorating state of affairs of our nation. While engaging in every opportunity for protest and in every effort to reestablish dialogue, we are aware of the political and psychological clout that your government has on our elected officials. We consider that no effort should be spared in order to avert the increasingly confrontational and violent nature of the present crisis. Thus, we remind you of the commitment you expressed, as a presidential candidate, to our people's right of self-determination and political and economic development, and to your most recent manifest commitment, as President, to peaceful and democratic progress for all nations.

Respectfully,

In Puerto Rico, 14 October 2009

100 INTELLECTUALS AND ACADEMICS