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CUBA Political prisoner nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, a prominent political prisoner in Cuba, was last week nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. He is one of eight remaining political prisoners locked up during the Black Spring of 2003, following the release of Hector Maseda and Angel Moya last weekend.

Dr. Biscet, who is entering the eighth year of a 25-year prison sentence because of his human rights activism, was nominated by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Lord David Alton of the UK House of Lords, and individual members of the UK, US and Canadian legislatures.

A devout Christian and pacifist, Dr. Biscet has at various times been denied his Bible, access to other religious materials and visits from a religious leader throughout his ten years in prison.

Prior to his trial in 2003, Dr. Biscet was sentenced to and served three years in prison for “disorderly conduct” related to his pro-democracy work. He was freed on October 31, 2002 but detained again on December 6. Although he was arrested a few months before the wave of arrests of human rights and democracy activists known as Black Spring, his trial took place alongside the others in April 2003. He was charged with crimes relating to state security and handed a 25-year prison sentence.

Despite promises by the Cuban government in July 2010 to release political prisoners locked up during the Black Spring of 2003, the long-time human rights and democracy activist continues to languish in the Combinado del Este Prison in Havana. Dr. Biscet refuses to leave Cuba, a condition forced on the majority of the political prisoners who have been freed.

Andrew Johnston, Advocacy Director at Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) said, “CSW has supported Dr. Biscet for over ten years and we welcome and support his nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. We call on the Cuban government to fulfill their promise to release Dr. Biscet and the seven other remaining prisoners without conditions as soon as possible.”

Notes to Editors:

1. Black Spring refers to the Cuban government's crackdown on dissidents in March 2003 that led to the imprisonment of 75 human rights and pro-democracy activists.
2. The Cuban government under President Raul Castro agreed to release 52 of the Black Spring prisoners in a deal brokered by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and Spanish government in July 2010.