



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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May 23, 2012

The Honorable Hillary Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I write to you in your capacity as a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors to share the concerns of my fellow bishops arising from a May 3 editorial signed by the director of Radio and TV Marti that criticizes Jaime Cardinal Ortega of Havana, Cuba. Mr. Carlos A. Garcia-Pérez, the director of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, called Cardinal Ortega a “lackey” of the Cuban Government and accused him of lacking “understanding and compassion toward the human reality” of dissidents occupying a church in Havana and of speaking with “scorn and arrogance.”

It was Mr. Garcia-Pérez who spoke with scorn and arrogance directed at a Church official whom your own Department has commended for his work in vindicating human rights and securing the release of political prisoners in Cuba. Mr. Garcia-Pérez’s leadership position in an organization affiliated with the U.S. Government makes his remarks all the more troubling since they could be interpreted as representing the views of the U.S. Government. His comments do not serve the cause of religious freedom.

As your own Department’s most recent report on human rights in Cuba concludes, the Church provides crucial social services and support to the most vulnerable: the young, the elderly, the imprisoned and the marginalized. Cardinal Ortega is unquestionably a distinguished and well-recognized leader of the Church, and of its life-affirming efforts. In commenting on the TV Marti matter, Professor Jorge Domínguez of Harvard University noted, “Who freed the political prisoners in Cuba? Not the European Union. Not the U.S. Government. And not Radio and TV Marti. It was [Cardinal] Ortega who convinced Raul Castro to let them out.”

We urge Radio and TV Marti to issue an apology to Cardinal Ortega and to review their policies to ensure future unfortunate incidents are avoided.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace