



Committee on International Justice and Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

September 26, 2013

Dr. Susan E. Rice
National Security Advisor
The White House
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Dr. Rice:

I write as Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). On September 15, 2013, the Cuban Bishops' Conference issued an important Pastoral Letter, "Hope Does Not Disappoint." This visionary statement courageously challenges the Cuban government to engage in dialogue and reform and foster human rights and human dignity. We stand with our brother bishops in Cuba echoing their call for greater respect for the human person.

The Pastoral also has implications for U.S. policy toward Cuba. I attach the Spanish original of this Pastoral Letter for your ready reference. The following passage is of special relevance to the United States (translated from the original Spanish):

36. [I]t is necessary to consider Cuba's relations with the United States, which for many decades, in different ways and steadily and deeply, have affected the lives of our people. It was of this that Blessed John Paul II was speaking in saying that "the isolation has caused indiscriminate impact on the population, increasing the difficulties of the weakest concerning basics such as food, health and education." He concluded by calling for the elimination of "the measures imposed from outside the country that are unjust and ethically unacceptable."

We urge efforts to lift the U.S. embargo against Cuba so that greater support and assistance can flow to ordinary Cubans. It is also time to remove the designation of Cuba as a sponsor of state terrorism. Such an obsolete classification prevents engagement between our countries and peoples. Engagement will do more than isolation to advance human rights and alleviate human suffering. It will also recognize Cuba's constructive role in mediating Colombian peace negotiations and cooperating with the U.S. Coast Guard in drug interdiction activities.

It is long past due that the United States establishes full diplomatic relations with Cuba, withdraws all restrictions on travel to Cuba, rescinds terrorist designations aimed at Cuba, encourages trade that will benefit both nations, and facilitates cooperation in the areas of environmental protection, drug interdiction and scientific exchanges. More engagement will help the people of Cuba achieve greater freedom, human rights and religious liberty.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates

Bishop of Des Moines

Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace

cc: Ricardo Zuñiga, Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs

Encl.