

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF CHAYA WEINBERGER

BEFORE THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, AND
HUMAN RIGHTS HEARING "SEEKING FREEDOM FOR AMERICAN TRAPPED IN BOLIVIAN
PRISON"

AUGUST 1ST, 2012

Thank you Mr. Chairman and other members of the Subcommittee, for bringing my father's plight to the forefront and for scheduling this hearing. I will never forget all that you have done for my family during this time of crisis and we will forever be grateful.

The image of my dear innocent father accompanies me as I speak before you this afternoon. It is an image that causes me to shudder when I think of it. His face is swollen with hunger, his skin is pale and lifeless. But his eyes are alive. They are very much alive and filled with longing, pleading with me to try with all my waning energy to rescue him before its G-d forbid too late. He still hopes, after all these months, for freedom and liberty, back home in the land that he loves. I cannot let him down. And so, although it very hard for me to be in the limelight once again, I appeal to you, the government of my homeland.

My father's situation has not changed in the slightest since his detention began more than a year ago. It has been a long, painful year filled with let-downs and postponed hearings, and we have just about had enough. We are enraged at the injustices, lies and scandalous acts that are being committed against my father. We have tried going patiently through the Bolivian legal system and bearing with their way of governing, but they have shown us that their justice system is flawed beyond repair. Rather than pursue justice for victims and the accused alike, the Bolivian justice system appears to be a vehicle for political maneuvering. I have been appalled by what I have witnessed first-hand while in attendance at one of my father's hearings in Bolivia. At my father's very first scheduled hearing, the judge was texting on his blackberry and even answered a phone call while the defense lawyers were arguing their case. Although I was not in attendance at my father's most recent hearings, we have learned that the Minister of Government requested that the judges should recuse themselves; a political maneuver to postpone my father's hearing for as long as possible, done in the course of a hearing for everyone to witness. How can my father possibly be receiving fair treatment in a country with a government that does not even bother to hide its corruption? How much longer must he wait and wonder when his salvation will come? For it will not come through the Bolivian justice system. Time has shown us that.

It is clear to us that his only chance for liberation is if the American government will jump into action and demand his freedom from his captors before its too late. He deserves to be free. It is my sincere belief that the only reason for his being kept hostage in that hell is because he stood for the American ideals of free enterprise and capitalism, and the Bolivian Government saw him as a threat to its way of life and control of the rice markets.

The abuse and torture my innocent father is going through, both mentally and physically would stun the mind of any sane person. I have seen it with my own eyes, it was so ghastly, I felt

as if I were in a horror movie. Sewage runs through the streets of the huge prison. There are no guards to protect the inmates, and the only security comes from other inmates. Fistfights erupt between the prisoners often, it is a common occurrence for a corpse to be carried out. It is a scene from a nightmare, and my dear father is living this nightmare daily. Every second that he is being kept there, his basic human rights are being violated.

Our website is being visited daily by hundreds of people who are praying and care very much about my father. More than 35,000 people have signed a petition in support of his release from detention. These people see how the Bolivian government has perverted justice and they are sickened by it. They want to see their country act on behalf of their fellow citizen.

My father is literally clinging onto his sanity. He tells me that the one thought that gives him the strength to endure, is the hope that the American government will do everything in their power to secure his release. He often stares at the American flag painted on the wall by his cell and dreams about the day when he will proudly sing the song of liberty, in salute to his homeland.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, let's show my father that his dreams will become a reality. Show him and the world that America is what it professes to be, a country that stands for liberty; a land that will fight for her citizens. A country that will not allow its innocent citizen be kept hostage in a foreign country and won't let anyone stand in her quest for truth. Prove that American citizenship is a commodity worth having and that the star spangled banner will triumph once again over those who mock all she stands for. That she will not stay in my father's cell in the Palmasola prison, but will rather be carried back with my father to the greatest nation on Earth. Let her be back where she belongs, together with my father, dual witnesses to the supremacy of their country, the United States of America.

Please do everything in your power to bring my father back to his homeland, back to his children and grandchildren, before it's too late. And for all the time and effort that you're investing in this cause, may God bless you all, may God bless my father and may God bless the United States of America.