



House Foreign Affairs Committee
Testimony of Catherine Lois Puzey
Mother of Slain Peace Corps Volunteer Kate Puzey
Regarding the Urgent Need for Peace Corps Reform

May 11, 2011

Catherine Irene Puzey, or “Kate”, was murdered on March 12, 2009, while serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Benin, West Africa. As her mother, I am coming forward now to act as my daughter’s voice and to help prevent future tragedies for other families.

My statement is divided into four sections:

1. Background information, including a brief biography of Kate, her purpose for entering the Peace Corps, her relationship with the administrative staff in the Benin Peace Corps Office, and her experiences as a Peace Corps Volunteer.
2. Information regarding the circumstances that led to Kate’s death in March 2009.
3. A description of our family’s experiences with the Peace Corps after Kate’s death, and how these led us to seek legislative action assuring that other families would not experience the unnecessary suffering that we endured after losing Kate.
4. Finally, a review of proposals to help strengthen the Peace Corps, specifically by enhancing the rights of PC Volunteers who become victims or whistleblowers, and why it is essential that these reforms be legislated to ensure that they are properly followed and remain consistent over time.

Section 1: Background Information on Kate Puzey

A. Biographical Sketch

Catherine Irene Puzey, or ‘Kate’, was born on June 19, 1984 in Augsburg, Germany, the second child of Harry & Lois Puzey, career teachers for the Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DODDS). Kate lived in Augsburg until the age of nine, when our family moved to Okinawa, Japan. From an early age, Kate showed a remarkably compassionate and talented spirit. In a DODDS high school with over 2000 students, she was elected Student Council President both her junior and senior years. After graduating at the top of her class in 2002, Kate attended The College of William and Mary, and majored in sociology with a minor in business. She studied abroad her junior year in France at the University of Montpellier, developing the proficiency in French that would later allow her to become a teacher for the Peace Corps in Benin.

Kate dedicated much of her life and talents towards caring for others. She worked with underprivileged children throughout college, assisted refugees for a year with the International Rescue Committee following graduation, and then joined the Peace Corps in July 2007. Throughout her life, Kate was known as an unusually kind and giving person; she possessed and nurtured a gift for embracing people of all walks of life, a talent for understanding the nuances of human nature, and a delight in living life to the fullest.

B. Purpose for Joining the Peace Corps

In her application to join the Peace Corps, Kate was asked to write an Aspiration Statement.

Here is an excerpt of her words:

“I consider myself an optimistic realist. In a world of many problems, you can't just stand by at a macro-level and wish them all away. Enabling progress requires getting down and working alongside those who know best what is halting it in the first place. Forging relationships with local communities in need, while providing them necessary support and human resources, seems to me an excellent strategy. It is one that is represented by the work of PCVs around the world.”

C. Kate’s Experiences with the Benin Peace Corps Headquarters

During her time in Benin, Kate repeatedly told us about problems she observed with the Benin Peace Corps staff, including what she described as a lack of professionalism and a disconnection between top-level staff and Peace Corps Volunteers in the field. But as an “optimistic realist” Kate still worked to cultivate a good working relationship with them. When she initially arrived in Benin her training was provided by some Volunteers in their second year of service who were often cynical and pessimistic about what they were accomplishing and the senior staff. In a 2007 Survey of PC Volunteers, the performance of this office was ranked in the bottom ten per cent. Volunteers were frequently frustrated by the management style of the Country Director, as well as **a lack of confidentiality** within the office. The following year, Kate was nominated to help

train the incoming class of Volunteers; she strived to be more upbeat and professional with them, and by all accounts did so – despite the continuing problems with the administrative staff.

D. Kate’s Experiences as a Volunteer

Like many Volunteers, Kate embraced the challenges of Peace Corps life. She felt fortunate to have been selected to work in education, and she enjoyed her work as an English teacher; her village of Badjoudae was also considered a desirable place to be stationed. Kate committed herself to becoming fully integrated into her community and, over the next eighteen months, she built a strong relationship of trust and affection with the students and villagers. Kate was particularly close with the women and children. She helped create a girls club and soccer team. She also worked on projects at school and within the local community, such as a celebration called the ‘Day of the African Child’. We will always take pride in how widely respected Kate was both within her village and as a recognized model among the Peace Corps Volunteers.

Section 2: Circumstances Leading to Kate’s death.

How did such a conscientious and widely loved Volunteer become the victim of murder?

A. Sexism in West Africa: A Clash of Cultures

Having lived and traveled outside the United States, Kate understood the clash of western values with cultures in which women are still subjugated. In these situations, Peace Corps volunteers face a delicate balance, seeking to respect the mores of the local culture, while coming to terms with acts that would be considered wrong in any culture. Even though Kate respected these cultural differences and possessed exceptional people skills, she struggled morally with such issues throughout the time that she lived in Benin.

Kate worked diligently to gain the respect of her predominately male teaching colleagues, who initially did not take her seriously because she was a woman. She witnessed how women were treated as second class citizens with no voice, valued mainly by their ability to produce children and to be obedient to men, who often did not act in their best interest. While seeking to be respectful of the cultural gender differences in Benin, Kate and other Volunteers worked with the girls in their communities to help educate and empower them. However, one situation presented Kate with a cultural dilemma that greatly troubled her and that she was unable to resolve.

B. Kate’s Accused Killer

From almost her first day in Badjoudae, Kate was warned about the aggressive sexual behavior of a man—Constant BIO—who is now accused of killing her. This man taught at the school where Kate was assigned to teach. He also worked for the Peace Corps during the summers, helping to provide language training to the new Volunteers. In this role, he regularly ignored the Peace Corps policy prohibiting sexual relations with the Volunteers and had a reputation for making aggressive, unwanted advances. Some saw him as a charming womanizer who used females for his needs and then discarded them; others viewed him simply as a sexual predator.

More worrisome was his attitude toward the students in the village. When Kate arrived in 2007, she was warned by the exiting Volunteer who served there before her to watch out for this man. It was rumored that he pressured his female students for sexual favors and had fathered at least two children with them. In our culture this would be unacceptable behavior and a criminal act, but in West Africa the lines are less clear. Over time, Kate became increasingly concerned as she saw his behavior become more aggressive towards female students. She talked to the School Director, who was unwilling to confront Constant. She also talked to us, her parents, and her brother on numerous occasions about the moral dilemma she faced.

When I visited Kate in Benin during the summer of 2008, she and other Volunteers had been hoping that, given some downsizing, her accused killer would not be hired again as a language facilitator for that summer's Peace Corps training. However he was rehired, presumably because of his brother's influence as the Benin Assistant Peace Corps Director for the Business Sector.

During the fall and winter of 2008, the accused killer's behavior clearly became unacceptable. He started coming to school drunk; his students often refused to go to his class. He developed a reputation for becoming violent when he was drinking. Finally in February 2009, teachers and students told Kate that he had actually raped two of the female students, and begged for her to help with having him removed from his job.

C. Report of Allegations to the Benin Peace Corps Director

Kate wanted to prevent Constant from causing further harm, but she was unsure how to proceed. She had received no training in how to be a whistle blower and **there were no clear outlined steps for her to follow**. This situation was made even more precarious by the fact that this man's brother worked as an Assistant Director in the local Peace Corps Benin Headquarters. Kate was in a particularly vulnerable position, isolated with the accused killer in her village eight hours from Cotonou, Benin's largest city and the location of the Peace Corps Country Office.

In late February 2009, Kate decided to travel to the closest Peace Corps work-station several hours away at Natitingou because she had no electricity or internet service in her village. There, with the assistance of some fellow Volunteers, she decided to write a very professional request for assistance to the Peace Corps Benin Country Director. Here are excerpts from the email:

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“Please believe I’m not someone who likes to create problems, but this has been weighing heavily on me. I’ve loved my time as a volunteer and it’s important to me that Peace Corps remain a respected organization in the eyes of our host country. This man is not someone I want representing Peace Corps to the Beninese community.”

“I’ve had the opportunity to observe his behavior at work and around town. My concerns about this person were first raised by repeated stories of him harassing/sleeping with students, coming to work inebriated, etc. I know for a fact that this school year alone students have refused to attend his classes on several occasions because of his lack of professionalism.”

“For obvious reasons, it’s important to me that I remain anonymous in this situation. However, please feel free to contact me (cell phone 979011962). I would appreciate if you could respond, even briefly just to let me know you received this email.”

We believe that Kate saw this as merely a first step towards resolving the problem and thus don’t believe she felt she was in immediate danger. Volunteers have told us that Kate presumed the Director would contact her directly, and then Kate could elaborate on her message. Kate hoped the Director would thereafter launch an investigation into the allegations, which could lead to the accused being removed from his position both at the school and with the Peace Corps. Finally, since Kate was scheduled to complete her work in the village in only a few more months, she thought that these actions might well happen after she had left the village altogether in order to protect her from retaliation.

D. Kate’s Murder

Instead, the events that followed would lead to Kate’s death. When Kate sent her email, the Country Director was out of the office for a week. Then, on March 2nd, she sent Kate a short response to her email saying she would discuss the issue with the training director. On March 6th, the Country Director sent Kate the following email:

“Dear Kate,

Given the below information. Peace Corps will not renew Mr. Constant BIO’s contract. He will receive a letter shortly to let him know this, as well as the reason why. We are also looking into how to prevent him from continuing this behavior at this school. We will take care not to mention you or involve you in any way.

Thank you again for drawing our attention to this matter. We definitely don’t want someone like this working for the Peace Corps.”

Unfortunately, Kate never saw these emails, and therefore was completely unaware of the potential danger she faced. At the time they were sent, she was back in her village, where there was no internet, and no way to receive email. This should have been well known to the Country Director, as both Kate and many other Volunteers had consistently requested that they be contacted by phone since many of them had no local internet access.

Furthermore, although Kate had stressed the importance of confidentiality – knowing that the brother of the man she was accusing worked in the Peace Corps local headquarters – and despite the Country Director’s promise that this confidentiality would be respected, the Peace Corps’ Inspector General report later determined that **Kate’s confidentiality was breached.** Indeed, the brother of the accused killer apparently told Constant BIO that Kate’s complaint had led to his firing within only a few days.

The Peace Corps Benin Country Director mishandled this issue by:

- **Not talking to Kate directly before taking action.**
- **Taking no precautions to protect Kate, such as removing her from a situation with an obvious potential for danger**
- **Simply terminating the accused without any further process or investigation**
- **Allowing Kate's confidentiality to be breached, despite the contrary request, the potential for retaliation, and the risk the brothers would communicate**

Although she did not know it, our precious Kate was in horrific danger. On the night of Wednesday, March 11th, 2009, Kate decided to sleep on her locked porch, a normal practice in Benin during the hot season. It is believed that the accused, Constant BIO, probably drunk and angry, slipped onto Kate's porch that night and murdered her. It is also believed that he was assisted in some way by his neighbor, who was seen drinking with him that night; both have been held in jail for the crime. Also the man's brother, the Benin Assistant Peace Corps Director, currently continues to be jailed.

On the morning of March 12, 2009, my husband, who was hospitalized at the time, was called by the Director of Peace Corps with the horrifying news that Kate was dead. However, we were given no details or explanation.

Kate was the heart of our family, and our great source of joy. Shocked and devastated, our lives are shattered, and no words can truly convey the anguish we have endured.

Section 3: Our Family's Interactions with the Peace Corps Following Kate's Death

In our experience, Peace Corps volunteers and staff are often people who are smart, talented, and compassionate. The Peace Corps was supportive during Kate's funeral, and they have done many things to honor her over the past two years. They have agreed to assist us financially with the cost of returning to Benin if the murder trial is held and within the past year have finally taken steps to correct some of the policy failures that led to Kate's tragic death and our initial negative experiences as a grieving family.

However, this was not at all our experience in the first year after Kate's death.

A. Negative Experiences with the Peace Corps [March 2009 - October 2010]

At the beginning, our expectations were that the Peace Corps would be forthright with us, acknowledge their mistakes, and be there to advocate for us with the Benin justice system to see that the accused (even though two were Peace Corps employees) would be brought to justice. We also fully expected that after fifty years of operation and the deaths of over 280 Volunteers, the Peace Corps would have an efficient family support system in place, with reasonable services to assist grieving families, and expected honest transparency in regards to the circumstances leading to Kate's murder.

It therefore came as a shock when we felt that our family and Kate had been abandoned. Negative experiences in the first year after her death included the following:

- **We were left on our own to piece together what happened to Kate.**
The Peace Corps was extremely reluctant to give us *any* information about the circumstances of Kate's death, or to even assist us in gathering the facts ourselves. They wouldn't honor our request to see the initial email that had started this nightmare; we had to retrieve it ourselves. All the information we learned came from Kate's friends among the Volunteers and villagers, and eventually representatives from the Justice Department. Ironically, Brian Ross from ABC 20/20 received much more information from the attorney defending Constant BIO than we—the victim's family—did from the organization we had entrusted with our daughter's safety.
- **We were, likewise, denied any information from the investigation by the Peace Corps Inspector General Report**
We knew there had been an investigation of the Benin Country Office by the Peace Corps Inspector General, but we were denied access to any of the results, and felt entirely 'left in the dark'. We only heard through Volunteers that new confidentiality and sexual harassment training was provided to the Benin office staff after Kate's death, and that the former Country Director resigned and moved to another government job.
- **The Peace Corps stopped all communication with us after four months, stating that it had no part in the investigation.**
This blackout of communication continued until we finally requested a meeting with Director Williams a year after Kate's death, in March 2010.
- **No Peace Corps representative ever came personally to deliver the awful news of Kate's death,** even though we live less than an hour from the Atlanta regional office. As I mentioned before, my husband, who was hospitalized at the time, was the first to learn of Kate's death.
- **The majority of Kate's effects arrived unaccompanied six months after her death; they were simply dropped in our driveway by a FedEx delivery truck without any condolences from the Peace Corps.**
- **There was no support or counseling service provided** to help my husband, son, or I deal with the grief and the shock of the violence that had happened to our daughter.
- **We were heartbroken to discover that Peace Corps, unbelievably, had no whistleblower policies or training procedures for Volunteers.**
After fifty years, such policies were finally proposed two weeks after Kate's death, and not officially implemented until January 2011.

This shocking treatment by the Peace Corps presented us with an unexpected dilemma. Kate loved the Peace Corps, despite her concerns about the Benin country staff, but we felt completely abandoned by the organization she had so respected at a time when we really desperately needed their support and honesty.

Eight months after Kate's murder, my husband's cancer returned, this time as terminal. At the same time, the trial of those accused in the murder was postponed.

After so much heavy grieving and feeling betrayed, we finally decided to stop being victimized, hoping in vain for support from the Peace Corps. As a family we developed an Action Plan to discover what had really happened to Kate and to assure that justice was done on her behalf. We created "Kate's Voice", an advocacy group made up of family, some of Kate's college friends, and fellow Benin Volunteers to 'speak for her' since she could no longer advocate for herself, and to seek resolution for our family.

In late February 2010, we traveled to Washington DC to meet with Director Williams and other staff at the Peace Corps Headquarters. We also scheduled meetings with several staffers of Congressmen who are involved with oversight of Peace Corps, and with Georgia Senator Johnny Isakson, who has been our strongest supporter from the onset. *(Senator Isakson attended Kate's memorial service, has honored her in speeches on the Senate floor, and has been a valuable emissary with the State Department and Benin Justice System. We want to extend a special thanks to him - he continues to be our strongest advocate, and has proposed and continues to pursue legislation for us.)*

The goals of our trip were simple:

- To request that Peace Corps provide greater transparency with our family regarding the circumstances of Kate's death and also to acknowledge any actions on its part that might have contributed to her death.
- To request that the Peace Corps enact some policy changes to ensure that other families would not suffer experiences similar to our family; these include whistleblower protections and more sensitive, supportive policies for families and Peace Corps Volunteer victims of rape or sexual assault
- To bring attention to Kate's story, in hopes that this would help to focus attention to the trial (which still has not been scheduled after two years)

Director Williams, whose leadership had begun in the fall of 2009, seemed unaware and shocked when we told him the details surrounding Kate's death, but also receptive to some of our policy proposals. We continued our discussions through a series of letters over the next few months. However, the Peace Corps remained reluctant to answer any questions relating to Kate's death or even to allow us to meet with the Peace Corps Inspector General. The Peace Corps then claimed it was severely restricted in what could it could tell us because they were concerned about compromising the trial, though we have felt this was also due to unwarranted concern about legal action by our family. In either event, we continued to feel that the Peace Corps was not being forthright with us or taking us very seriously, and it was very hurtful to see the wide gap between the information that was available (such as was later provided by the accused killer's attorney to a journalist) and that which was provided to our family by the Peace Corps.

In the summer of 2010, eighteen months after Kate death, we finally were able to meet directly with the Peace Corps Inspector General, Kathy Buller, to seek some answers. However, Mrs. Buller could still not answer most of our questions, although she did confirm that Kate's confidentiality had been breached by personnel in the Benin Peace Corps Office. She said we would be able to have a copy of her report after the trial, and told us that she had not allowed the two agents responsible for the investigation to accompany her because she didn't want them to provide us with "too much information."

B. Improved Experiences with Peace Corps *[October 2010 – March 2011]*

In early October 2010, an investigative team from ABC's 20/20 began researching Kate's death for the program that aired in January 2011. We will always be grateful for their commitment to tell Kate's story because this finally led to a truly improved relationship with the Peace Corps. The new Peace Corps Director of Operations, Carrie Hessler-Radelet, agreed to be interviewed by them and also contacted our family. She has since become a compassionate advocate on our behalf. In November 2010 the Peace Corps finally began to act as a liaison for us concerning the trial. Mrs. Radelet also made us aware of recently implemented changes related to our concerns. She advised us that Peace Corps has undertaken the following actions:

- The Counseling and Outreach Unit for Volunteers and Families was created by expanding the scope of work of the previous Office of Special Services
- The Peace Corps has formalized procedures for notifying families of the death of a volunteer and the return of the volunteer's personal possessions. This is to include a phone call from the Director of the Agency, an offer of an immediate visit by a grief counselor, the return of personal possessions by a Peace Corps employee, and support by a team of clinical psychologists.
- The Office of the Inspector General has conducted an audit of the Peace Corps' Safety and Security procedures.
- The Peace Corps has strengthened its staff and Volunteer training in Safety and Security and held the first ever global training for Safety & Security Coordinators and Safety & Security Officers in Washington DC last summer.
- There are new policies on the handling of confidential information and Volunteer allegations, with ongoing training and reinforcement of these policies for both staff and Volunteers.
- There is now enforcement of a policy requiring background checks for all Peace Corps staff and contract workers.
- The Peace Corps has improved lines of communication and technical support to Posts from the Office of Safety and Security.
- A multi-disciplinary Peace Corps Sexual Assault Working Group was created to strengthen agency protocols and recommend new strategies for addressing sexual assault prevention and response, handle difficult cultural issues, and better support Volunteers in the field.
- There are now very strict guidelines for handling confidential information. There are written guidelines for both Volunteers and Staff in their handbooks that clarify the process, and these are reinforced with every training.

Section 4: Next Steps - Legislation, An Apology and Justice for Kate

Our family and the rest of the “Kate’s Voice” advocacy group are pleased to see that some changes are being made; we want to strongly note that **we believe in the mission of the Peace Corps and are in no way seeking to cause it harm.** We want it to be the strongest organization possible and to address issues that could undermine its potential.

However, we still have some unanswered questions about the circumstances surrounding Kate’s death, and we request that the Peace Corps be completely transparent with us. Moreover, **we are also painfully aware that if we hadn’t reached out to Peace Corps, and if ABC 20/20 had not investigated, they would not have reached out to us.**

A. The Peace Corps Administration Failed Kate and Our Family

To this day Peace Corps still has not honestly acknowledged the critical role that the Benin Country Director and office played in Kate’s death. She trusted them to assist her and instead their mismanagement, unintentionally, placed her in harm’s way. The report of Peace Corps IG confirms that there was a confidentiality breach in the Benin office. **The Peace Corps, including the present administration, has never taken any honest responsibility for this or acknowledged any mistakes on their part.**

More disappointing is what they did do. The Peace Corps, including the current administration, not only did not assist us in our investigation to find out what happened to our beloved Kate, they actually took steps to make it more difficult. We know for a fact that the staff at the Benin office, including the director at the time of her death and the director afterwards, were told not to have any contact with us. If any correspondence was necessary, they were required to first send it to Peace Corps headquarters for their approval and editing. In all cases, the Peace Corps treated us like a potential legal or public relations problem rather than a grieving family suffering an unthinkable tragedy.

Our family wants and deserves for Peace Corps to have a painful but honest conversation with us about its actions at the time of Kate’s death and afterwards. We feel we deserve total transparency and **a formal apology for any actions that contributed to her death.**

B. Legislation is Necessary to Ensure Policy Reforms are Followed

Finally, after our unexpectedly negative experiences, over a year of research, and hearing the stories of many current and former Volunteers, we firmly believe that legislation is necessary in order to ensure that our aims of protecting Volunteers and supporting any victims and their families are fulfilled. Here is why we have reached that conclusion:

- The current Peace Corps staff has worked diligently within this past year to initiate some necessary reforms. However, given the 5-year limit on tenure with the Peace Corps, we want to make sure these remain in place over time and that such policies are strictly followed; this has been a notable problem in the past. Legislation is the only way to guarantee this consistency remains over time.

- Mandating additional reporting requirements to Congress by the Peace Corps could help ensure more transparency so that critical problems can be identified and addressed more promptly, instead of waiting until after a tragedy occurs.
- We believe that Peace Corps Volunteers who become victims of violence while serving should be supported, much as victims who serve in the armed forces are provided with support. We believe this is more likely to happen if Peace Corps victims' rights are legislated rather than left to the discretion of the organization.
- Congress had an opportunity to install whistleblower protections that, if in place, might have actually protected Volunteers like Kate, but unfortunately did not enact the 2007 Dodd Bill with these protections. We hope and trust that since the tragedies that can occur without sufficient oversight are now more clearly known that this Congress will see why passing such legislation is so critically needed.

C. Our Legislative Proposals

1. **Whistleblower Protections:** The Peace Corps made no effort to establish any whistleblower procedures during its fifty years until after our daughter's death. It took Kate's murder for them to act. We also know that there is a history of policies lapsing over time due to the Peace Corps frequent turnover created by the five-year only employment regulation. Therefore, we strongly feel that the Peace Corps Staff Manual Section 271 should be codified into law. It covers many aspects of whistleblowers protections and allegations of mismanagement. However, we believe at least one additional requirement should be added under 5.0 Handling Allegations and Concerns:

- If the Volunteer is in possible danger she/he should be promptly removed from the site. The Peace Corps should be required to investigate the safety of the site before the Volunteer can return. (This would be applicable not only in a whistleblower situation, but also for any serious threat to Volunteers of sexual/physical assault).

2. **Support for Victims and Victims Families:** A systemic weakness for Peace Corps is their handling of victims and their families when things go wrong. The Peace Corps has a moral duty to compassionately handle victims and their families, and Congress needs to monitor this through legislation. We have been supporting First Response Action, a group of assault victims, since before the 20/20 program aired in January. We think it would be advantageous to merge their proposals as described in the *Peace Corps Volunteer and Safety and Security Act of 2011* with Senator Isakson's proposals to better support grieving families of fallen Volunteers, enhance whistle blower protections and increase reporting requirements (as listed herein).

3. **Reinforced Quality Standards:** The Peace Corps has already implemented some needed policy changes internally. However, the Peace Corps still needs to standardize the quality and efficiency of its country offices so that all are well managed; all sites should be monitored frequently so that problems can be addressed in a timely manner. Congress can help reinforce and assure this by requesting from the Peace Corps the following additional reporting requirements:

- a. Annual Volunteer Survey and any action(s) taken as a result of that survey
- b. The results of any reviews of PC Country Directors and country programs
- c. The annual report on volunteer safety and violent acts against Volunteers
- d. Investigations of crimes against Volunteers, including an evaluation of whether the Peace Corps Inspector General should be made independent once again from the PC, and/or take the lead in such investigations.
- e. The annual rate of early termination among Volunteers, including as much demographic data as possible. This should also be available for applicants to the Peace Corps as well.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. While nothing will ever be able to bring our beloved Kate back to us, we hope that Congress will work together to enact legislation this year to help reform and strengthen the Peace Corps, so that it can fully meet its potential and honor its great legacy. More importantly, we hope you will do so to ensure that no other Volunteer or family has to endure what our family and others have had to endure. We believe that legislation would honor Kate's memory.

D. Justice for Kate in Benin

Finally, though it is perhaps outside of the purview of this specific hearing, I feel I should also share some devastating news that our family recently received regarding the trial in Benin of those accused in Kate's murder:

After two previously judges ruled that enough evidence existed for the accused to be brought to trial (which is akin to a sentencing hearing in our system) a third judge took the, apparently, highly unusual step of reversing course and ruled last month that enough evidence did *not* exist to proceed to the final stage. This was of course shocking news for our family, including my husband who had hoped to live to see those accused convicted. Our family has been beyond horrified that the men responsible for our beloved Kate's death could possibly go free and face no justice at all.

We ask for any assistance possible in making requests to the Beninese government that this case be given utmost consideration and examination in hope that those responsible for Kate's murder will face some justice and not simply walk free.

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Thank you again for your time and consideration. Following my oral testimony, I am happy to answer any questions regarding the issues that I have outlined here.