

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 21, 2012

Nancy A. Donaldson
Director
International Labour Organization – Washington Office
1808 I Street, N.W., 9th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Ms. Donaldson,

We are writing to request you investigate reports that the Cuban regime and its foreign partners operating in the island have used prisoners of conscience as slave labor, in clear violation of internationally-recognized labor standards.

Recently, it was revealed that IKEA used Cuban political prisoners for cheap labor to build furniture in the 1980's, but this is not an isolated incident.

Media reports have indicated that Cuba's PROVARI also used forced political prisoner labor to manufacture goods and offered a deal with Spanish companies in the 1990's to produce kitchenware. These reports, if true, indicate PROVARI has violated universally-recognized humanitarian norms and subjected Cuba's countless political prisoners to forced slave labor.

The Cuban regime deprives the Cuban people of universally recognized human rights and uses short term detentions and imprisonment to threaten, harass, and silence opposition and human rights leaders. Many of these prisoners have been unjustly incarcerated, held in isolation, physically abused, and subjected to inhumane prison conditions. Reports that the Castro regime is further exploiting the Cuban prisoners through this kind of slave labor must be seriously reviewed and examined.

Cuba is a member of the International Labour Organization and must comply with your organization's mandate, including the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which prohibits "forced or compulsory labor." We strongly urge the International Labour Organization to investigate these reports and hold the regime accountable for its systematic violations of International Labour Standards and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Sincerely,



ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN
Member of Congress



ALBIO SIRES
Member of Congress



MARIO DIAZ-BALART
Member of Congress



DAVID RIVERA
Member of Congress