Dear President Obama

We again appeal to you today, Mr. President, as we did in the past to your predecessor President Bush, on behalf of the Namibia-Cuba Friendship Association and all peace and justice loving Namibian people for the immediate and unconditional release of the 5 Cuban patriots, who have been unjustly incarcerated in U.S. prisons for fighting against terrorism directed at the Cuban people.

We also demand the immediate granting of humanitarian visas to Adriana Perez and Olga Salvanueva and multiple entry visas to the family members of the CUBAN FIVE so that they can visit their husbands, sons and fathers.

On 12 September 1995 five Cuban men, now famously known as the CUBAN FIVE, were arrested by FBI agents for observing, monitoring and reporting on the terrorist activities aimed at the independent and sovereign state of Cuba. Their only “crime” was to report on the plans of a terrorist network, based in Miami Florida, which for over 40 years has coordinated terrorist attacks on Cuba. The single aim of the Cuban Five was to save innocent lives in Cuba and in the United States. Anti-Cuban terrorism has caused the death of almost 3500 CUBANS over the years.

Fernando Gonzalez, Rene Gonzalez, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernandez and Ramon Labanino were falsely charged with several offences, the most serious of which were conspiracy to commit espionage, and in the case of Gerardo Hernandez, conspiracy to commit murder in connection with two planes that were shot down after illegally entering Cuban airspace. The five were placed in solitary confinement for 17 months. They were cut off from their families and were not permitted to communicate with each other.

The trial of the Cuban Five took place in the politically charged and witch-hunting atmosphere of Miami. Jurors were intimidated, anti-Cuban demonstrations took place in front of the courthouse, witnesses were bullied and the defense lawyers were denied access to necessary documents. Defense attorneys’ requests to move the trial to another city were denied five times by the judge, although it is obvious that a fair trial was impossible in Miami, a city well known for its hostile attitude towards Cuba. During the seven-month trial, the prosecution failed to present evidence of the involvement of the accused in espionage or murder. Nevertheless, in a blow to justice, the Cuban Five were convicted on 8 June 2001 and were given the following sentences of imprisonment:

- Fernando Gonzalez, 19 years; Rene Gonzalez, 15 years; Antonio Guerrero, life term plus 10 years; Gerardo Hernandez, two life terms plus 15 years; life term plus 18 years.

The CUBAN FIVE celebrated a short lived victory in the United States Court of Appeals, in which the Court overturned the convictions of the Cuban Five and ordered a new trial outside Miami. The struggle to obtain their release suffered several legal setbacks. The Court of Appeals in Atlanta confirmed the convictions of the Five. In the case of Antonio Guerrero, Fernando Gonzalez and Ramon Labanino the Court set the sentences aside and referred their cases again to the Miami District Court for resentencing. The Court did not interfere with the sentences of Gerardo Hernandez and Rene Gonzalez. The Five took their case right up to the United States Supreme Court. The United States Supreme Court on 15 June 2009 refused without any giving any reasons to review the case of the Cuban Five. This was despite very strong arguments presented by legal counsel on behalf of the Five and despite submissions of amicus curiae briefs by ten Nobel laureates.

On October 13, 2009 the resentencing hearing of Antonio Guerrero took place. The same judge that in December 2001 condemned him to a life sentence, plus 10 years, was constrained to admit that no evidence existed, that implicated Antonio in the offence of gathering or transmitting secret information. Despite this the judge imposed a sentence of 21 years and 10 months imprisonment plus 5 years of supervised release.

The resentencing hearings for Fernando Gonzalez and Ramon Labanino took place on December 8, 2009. The original sentence of Fernando Gonzalez of 19 years was changed to 17 years and 9 months imprisonment, while Ramon Labanino’s sentence of life plus 18 years was reduced to 30 years imprisonment.

We, Mr. President, condemn in the strongest terms the conditions of the incarceration of the CUBAN FIVE which have been cruel, unusual and in violation of many rights and privileges that by law must be granted to prisoners. Of the eight years each has already served in prison, much of the jail time has been in solitary confinement. Two of the five have never been permitted visits from their wives, while one has a young child whom he has never seen. We remember fondly the visit of 3 of the family members of the Cuban Five to Namibia and the moving account of the pain and suffering from the separation of their loved ones has inflicted upon them. We were moved by their resolve to continue the struggle for the release of all the Five. We say today to them: YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN YOUR FIGHT FOR JUSTICE! WE STAND WITH YOU TODAY, AS YOU DID DURING OUR DARKEST HOURS OF APARTHEID AND OPPRESSION!

Mr. President Ten Nobel laureates have already awarded you the Nobel Peace Prize for your work in bringing about a better world.

Mr. President for the release of the CUBAN FIVE you have the support of millions of people around the world. Nobel laureates and many human rights associations have condemned the incarceration of the CUBAN FIVE as unjust and unfair and have demanded their immediate release. The Namibian National Assembly on 9 July 2008 unaniously adopted a motion calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the Cuban Five.

We join their call today and demand today the unconditional release of the CUBAN FIVE heroes. Mr. President STOP THE INJUSTICE NOW!

We call with all peace loving people of the world, for justice for the Cuban 5 and their immediate release from prison!

Namibia Cuba Friendship Association
Namibia Committee to Free the Cuban Five

12 YEARS OF INJUSTICE – WE DEMAND THE IMMEDIATE AND UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF THE CUBAN FIVE

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