

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION  
OF INQUIRY INTO THE CASE OF THE



**Testimony of BETINA PALENZUELA CORCHO,**

**Daughter of victim of terrorist attack.**

**Given at the International Commission of Inquiry into the case of the Cuban Five on Friday the 7th of March 2014, 09:40 to 11:00, Session 1: Terrorist Attacks against Cuba.**

On April 22nd, 1976, my mother, Adriana Corcho Calleja, aged 35 years, and Efrén Monteagudo Rodríguez, aged 32 years, died, as a result of a vile act of terrorism against the Cuban Embassy in Lisbon, Portugal.

Two Cuban families have been in mourning since then. On that day, a girl of 12 years and two boys of 11 and 10 years, respectively, mourned the death of our mother. In another house something similar happened when two girls aged 8 and 4 years were told about the irreparable loss of their father. Five Cuban children became orphans.

It is hard to hear the word orphan! But it is even harder to find out that this absurd and inhuman condition resulting from the separation of children from their mother was wrongfully caused, due to an attack directed to a part of Cuba in the midst of the civilized Europe. The attack also threatened the life of several children, the children of the diplomats who were returning from school in that moment, only by chance were they saved from a certain death.

Many times during almost 38 years of suffering, I have wondered how my life might have been if I could have shared it with my mom. A few years ago I told a Cuban writer that I think I would have been different, perhaps more happy, and less responsible. Not that I do not like being responsible. During the few years that we shared my mother taught me to be responsible. But I was too young when that happened, how could I after such a monstrosity be able to feel carefree or even happy, as the rest of my fellow students? A teenager that lost her mother at the age

of twelve destroyed by a bomb in an unknown country that she only knew by references and postcards, could never again be like other girls.

It is hard for children that don't have their mother close by, to be deprived from sharing the joy you experience when finishing primary, secondary, college and graduate studies. It is hard for a girl to be deprived from sharing with her mother the preparations for her 15th birthday or her marriage, to be denied from seeing her joy when the granddaughters were born, or just to be without maternal support when she has to undergo surgery.

Together with my brothers I have experienced all these mixed emotions for 38 years.

My mom, demanding and loving mother, exemplary daughter, austere, gentle and respectful, loyal friend and great neighbor, was always characterized by a high sense of responsibility and companionship. She detected the presence of the explosive device and realizing the danger that her peers were facing, alerted them calmly and launched herself inside in order to perform the required safety measures, but was then surprised by the explosion. The two floors belonging to the Cuban Embassy suffered extensive damage and several neighboring apartments also received considerable damage.

This was not an accidental action, it was another step taken within the so-called war against Cuba "around the world", conceived and organized by known terrorists, with the consent of the US government. Its purpose was to attack Cuban embassies and trade offices abroad, as well as airlines and representations that maintained relations with the island of Cuba. In just two years, from 1974 to 1976, 165 terrorist acts took place against Cuban property and employees in 24 countries.

Choosing the Cuban Embassy in the capital of Portugal for placing a bomb was not accidental. There was an intent and premeditation to try to frighten the Cuban authorities, punishing for the presence of Cuban internationalists in Angola and the strong support given by Cuba to the cause of independence of other Portuguese colonies in Africa.

We, children of Cuba, know of sad events that bring us painful memories. Murderous hands have committed terrorist acts that have taken the lives of thousands of innocents, to punish us for deciding to be a free, sovereign and worthy people.

We cannot forget that in these 55 years, in the midst of a terrible and ruthless blockade, aggressions, mercenary invasions, pirate attacks, biological attacks, and sabotage have claimed the lives of 3748 Cubans while 2099 have become disabled, all victims of these acts of terrorism.

Just because we have the irrefutable need to defend ourselves from terrorist attacks, honest and worthy men have emerged, ready to ensure a better world, as Antonio, Fernando, Gerardo, Ramón and René, prisoners in US jails for over 15 years. They were condemned solely for struggling at the risk of their lives, against anti-Cuban terrorist groups operating freely in Miami.

The unjust imprisonment, the biased and unfair trial, the inhumane way they have been treated, the hostility toward family visits, are cruel evidence of the double standards of US policy in the so-called struggle against terrorism.

To prevent other children from suffering what Carlos, Jorge, Sonia, Amarilys and I felt on April 22nd, 1976, was the task of the Cuban Five, and that is reason enough for them to be released immediately.

The International Commission of Inquiry into the Case of the Five convokes us to continue fighting for justice and truth against terrorism. For that reason I wish to ask:

Mr Obama:

How many children have to continue growing up without parents because these men are unjustly imprisoned in the country that you rule?

How many mothers have to continue suffering the absence of their most precious possession, a son?

How many wives have to be deprived from sharing their love with those who have given everything for the good of many?

For how long will the family members and other Cubans have to wait for this lengthy and unjustified incarceration of three of their best children to end?

President Obama: you have in your hands the possibility to release these men. Use your powers; do not delay this decision any more. It is time for them to return to their homeland, with their families and with the 11 million Cubans who are waiting for them. Free the Five, NOW!