

December 3, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Alan Gross. I am a 64-year-old U.S. citizen. December 3rd marks the fourth anniversary of my imprisonment in Cuba.

I came to Cuba on behalf of the United States, as a sub-contractor on an official United States Agency for International Development project to increase Internet access in small communities across Cuba. I carried out my role in the project in accordance with my contract. Yet on December 3, 2009, Cuban officials arrested me for those activities. A Cuban court concluded that what I had been sent to Cuba to do constituted an attempt to undermine the Cuban Government by distributing communications systems not under Government control. I was convicted of “acts against the independence or territorial integrity of the state.” My sentence is 15 years.

For four years, I have been confined 23 hours a day to a small cell with two fellow inmates. I spend my one hour outside each day in a tiny enclosed courtyard. I don’t sleep much, between my arthritis and the lights in my cell, which are kept on 24 hours a day. With the exception of a few phone calls and visits, I am completely isolated from the outside world.

I have lost almost everything in the last four years, most of all time with my family – my wife, Judy, and my daughters, Shira and Nina. I have had to ask my daughters not to visit because I cannot bear them seeing me like this, a shadow of my former self, surrounded by men with machine guns. If I do not survive imprisonment, I do not want this to be the last memory they have of me. The worst part of this experience has been missing so many holidays and family milestones. Last summer, Shira walked down the aisle at her wedding without me by her side. Nina has put parts of her life on hold awaiting my return. As a father yourself, you can imagine how painful this is.

My family has suffered tremendously these last four years. Shira battled breast cancer at just 26 years old, and my mother has been diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. My business and career have been destroyed, so I have been unable to support my family, and my wife had to sell our family home. Through all of these tragedies, I have been absent. I am powerless to help.

As I reflect on these last four years, I find myself asking the same question – why? Why am I still here? With the utmost respect, Mr. President, I fear that my government – the very government I was serving when I began this nightmare – has abandoned me. Officials in your administration have expressed sympathy and called for my unconditional release, and I very much appreciate that. But it has not brought me home.

It is clear to me, Mr. President, that only with your personal involvement can my release be secured. I know that your administration and prior administrations have taken extraordinary steps to obtain the release of other U.S. citizens imprisoned abroad – even citizens who were not arrested for their work

on behalf of their country. I ask that you also take action to secure my release, for my sake and for the sake of my family. But that is not all. There are countless Americans all over the world, some serving in uniform, others serving in diplomatic or civilian capacities, still others private citizens studying or traveling abroad, and they must not harbor any doubt that if they are taken captive in a foreign land, our government will move heaven and earth to secure their freedom.

I have worked in community development for nearly 30 years. I have carried out missions on behalf of my country with pride, even in the face of risks to my safety. I did so because I believed in my country, in my government. I still want to believe that my government values my life and my service, and that a U.S. passport means something. I refuse to accept that my country would leave me behind. Mr. President, please take whatever steps are necessary to bring me home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alan P. Gross". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Alan" is written with a large, open 'A'. The middle initial "P." is written in a smaller, more compact cursive. The last name "Gross" is written with a large, open 'G' and a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Alan Gross