

# *State Troopers' Fraternal Association of New Jersey, Inc.*

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December 22, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

We at the State Troopers Fraternal Association of New Jersey represent the interests of approximately 8,000 NJ Troopers since our founding in 1921, which includes active, retired, deceased, and the Sixty-Seven NJ State Troopers who paid the ultimate price of being killed in the line of duty.

There is no doubt that the Castro regime has a long history of repression, despotism and brutality that has forced countless Cubans to seek refuge in the U.S. in search of a better life. We do not share your view that restoring diplomatic relations without a clear commitment from the Cuban government of the steps they will take to reverse decades of human rights violations will result in a better and more just Cuba for its people. However, despite our profound disagreement with this decision, we believe there is an opportunity for Cuba and its government to show the American people and the citizens of the State of New Jersey, it is serious about change.

The Cuban government has been providing safe haven to convicted murderer Joanne Chesimard, a woman designated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as a domestic terrorist, and the first woman ever placed on the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorist List.

In New Jersey, Joanne Chesimard is notorious for her role in the cold-blooded execution-style killing of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster, Badge #2608, and seriously wounding New Jersey State Trooper James Harper, Badge #2108. On May 2, 1973, Chesimard, Clark Squire and Zayd Shakur were pulled over on the New Jersey Turnpike by Troopers Foerster and Harper for a motor vehicle violation. Chesimard and both men in the car were armed with semi-automatic handguns, and possessed fictitious identification. During the motor vehicle stop, Chesimard initiated a gun battle, wounding Trooper Harper. In the shootout that followed, Chesimard's weapon was used to shoot Trooper Foerster in the abdomen and then, as he lay incapacitated on the ground, Trooper Foerster's own weapon was used against him and he was brutally executed with two bullets to the head.

Chesimard was convicted in 1977 of first-degree murder and a number of other charges stemming from this horrific incident and sentenced to life in prison. Chesimard, aided and abetted by armed accomplices,

escaped from a NJ prison in 1979 and has been a fugitive from justice ever since. It is believed that she moved to Cuba in 1984 and has, since that time, lived freely there, attending government functions and being provided with housing, food, transportation and security by the Cuban government.

A long history of bipartisan support exists for the need to bring this convicted murderer back to the United States so she can be made to serve the prison time she was sentenced to more than thirty-seven years ago. A few important points to consider:

- In 1998, the US. House of Representatives passed Concurrent Resolution 254 by a vote of 371-0 requesting that the Cuban government return Chesimard to the United States;
- In 1998, the US. Senate passed Concurrent Resolution 254 by unanimous consent requesting that the Cuban government return Chesimard to the United States;
- In 2005, the Department of Justice approved an increase in the reward for Chesimard's capture to \$1 million; and
- In 2013, the Federal Bureau of Investigation placed Chesimard on its Most Wanted Terrorist List, designated her as a "domestic terrorist" and increased the reward for her capture to \$2 million.

Cuba's provision of safe harbor to Chesimard by providing political asylum to a convicted cop killer, and her ability to elude justice, is an affront to every resident of our state, our country, and in particular, the men and women of the New Jersey State Police, who have tirelessly tried to bring this killer back to justice.

We urge you to demand the immediate return of Chesimard before any further consideration of restoration of diplomatic relations with the Cuban government. In addition, there certainly can be no review of Cuba's designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism until Joanne Chesimard, a person designated by the FBI as a domestic terrorist, is returned to the United States.

If, as you assert, Cuba is serious about embracing democratic principles then this action would be an essential first step. We ask you to use this opportunity to engage with the Cuban government to get this resolved, as we are very disappointed that returning a convicted killer of a State Trooper was not already demanded and accomplished in the context of the steps you announced regarding this despotic dictatorship.

The family of her victims, like so many of those who have, and continue to suffer under the Castro regime, deserve this basic human decency before further steps towards Cuba are taken by the U.S.

Sincerely,



Christopher J. Burgos, President  
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