

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 6, 2023

Tania Reneaum Panszi
Executive Secretary
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
Organization of American States
1889 F Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Executive Secretary Panszi:

We write to request an update on the investigation into the suspicious and tragic death of Cuban political reformer, Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas, in 2012. In the more than 10 years since his car was fatally run off a Cuban highway, little if any progress has been made to hold those responsible accountable. We continue to believe, even without Cuban government cooperation, that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights is best suited to undertake this necessary investigation and accounting. We are troubled by persistent delays in this effort.

As the three attached letters demonstrate, we and various human right organizations have urged an investigation into Payá's death for many years. A Senate-passed resolution honoring the life of Payá called for the Cuban government "to allow an impartial, third-party investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas." In a Washington Post op-ed, the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights organization detailed irregularities in other investigations and how the Cuban government has "repeatedly denied [families of victims] their right to justice and their right to the truth," calling for further action from the Commission. While the Commission's first public hearing on Payá's death in December 2021 was a welcome, yet belated, first step, further progress needs to occur with greater urgency.

Payá's work, sustained threats against him, and key circumstances of the day he died are well-documented. The Commission has proven from past investigations, such as the 2019 High-Level Commission on Nicaragua, that it can conduct its critical work even if the state in question is uncooperative.¹ Investigations such as the one into Payá's death bring to light not only human rights issues of the past, but also help deter further acts of repression.

¹ Report of the OAS High-Level Commission on Nicaragua (Nov. 19, 2019), https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-105/19.

Members of the Organization of American States and the international community look to the Commission for protection, accountability, and justice. As such, please provide us an update without delay on ongoing and future efforts on the Payá case. We will continue to support the Commission's important work.

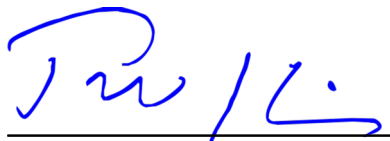
Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Ted Cruz
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator