

# **Durbin, Nelson, Rubio, Menendez, Cruz, Merkley introduce resolution honoring late Cuban dissident Oswaldo Payá**

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WASHINGTON – Ahead of the fifth anniversary of Oswaldo Payá’s death, U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Bill Nelson (D-FL), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Ted Cruz (R-TX), and Jeff Merkley (D-OR) introduced a bipartisan resolution honoring the legacy of the Cuban dissident and calling for an impartial investigation into the circumstances surrounding his death. Payá, an outspoken activist for free speech, democracy, and human rights, died in a car crash on July 22, 2012. While the Castro

regime maintains Payá's death was an accident, Payá's family and the driver involved in the crash claim another car forced them off the road.

**“Oswaldo Payá was a courageous voice for justice and democracy in Cuba, and his death was a tragic blow to the dissident movement on the island. I’m proud to introduce this resolution honoring his life and legacy and calling for a transparent and independent investigation into his death,” said Durbin. “I continue to stand with the Payá family and the people of Cuba in demanding peaceful democratic reform and the release of all political prisoners.”**

**“Oswaldo Payá was a committed advocate for the freedom of the Cuban people, and his work and legacy must never be forgotten,” said Nelson.**

**“In 2012, Cuban dissident Oswaldo Payá was murdered by the Castro regime, which attempted to disguise the assassination as a car crash,” said Rubio. “For decades the Castros have systematically murdered, imprisoned, and brutalized their political opponents, and Oswaldo was no exception. He was a brave advocate for freedom and human rights, and if the Cuban government has nothing to hide it should allow an independent investigation into his death to proceed so that his family can receive closure.”**

**“Five years after the tragic accident that took Oswaldo Paya’s life, and in a demonstration of the twisted nature of the Castro regime, we still have not gotten to the bottom of what actually happened to the most visible face and leader of Cuba’s peaceful opposition movement,” said Menendez. “We cannot allow innocent members of the international community to be brutalized and victimized by a regime so they can hide the truth. That is why I am proud to join my colleagues in this effort to undertake a full and independent investigation of the suspicious circumstances surrounding Oswaldo Paya’s tragic death, and vow to continue looking for ways to hold the Castro regime accountable for their brutality and repression that has deprived the Cuban people of the basic human rights we so proudly proclaim to support around the world.”**

**"Oswaldo Paya dedicated his life to promoting democratic freedoms and human rights in Cuba. His legacy will never be forgotten and continues to inspire dissidents to this day – in Cuba and in other countries under tyrannical rule, like Venezuela. We must send a powerful statement to Raul Castro that here in the United States of America, we stand with freedom fighters like Oswaldo Paya, who worked to bring hope and liberty to an oppressed nation and make a better Cuba, free of communist rule,"said Cruz.**

**“Oswaldo Payá’s courageous pursuit of freedom and justice left a legacy that inspires those fighting for human rights and democratic values,” Merkley said. “I’m joining my colleagues in honoring that legacy by demanding a full, transparent investigation into his death.”**

An early critic of the Castro regime, Oswaldo Payá founded the Christian Liberation Movement (MLC) in 1988 to promote democracy and civil liberties through non-violent resistance. A decade later, the organization established the Varela Project, which sought to advance democratic reforms by exploiting a provision in the Cuban Constitution allowing the public to introduce legislation. In 2003, the Cuban government arrested 25 members of the Project and 40 members of the MLC, drawing international condemnation and sparking the creation of the Ladies in White movement. Payá, his family, and collaborators endured years of harassment by authorities for their efforts to improve the lives of the Cuban people.

In recent years, Senator Durbin has also called on the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States to investigate Payá’s death. And in 2013, Senator Durbin met with Payá’s daughter, Rosa María.