



THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO THE
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C.

October 18, 2013

Mr. Emilo I. Icaza
Executive Secretary
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
Organization of American States
Washington, DC 20006

Re: 149th Period of Sessions: United States' Request for Postponement

Dear Mr. Icaza:

I have the honor to address you concerning the 149th Period of Sessions, in which the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) has requested the United States' participation in four hearings and one working meeting on October 28 (hearings) and October 30 (working meeting).

As you are aware, on Friday, September 27 the Commission informed the United States that it would hold hearings on certain matters. However, because the U.S. federal government was forced to shut down on October 1, the Department of State was unable to begin preparations for those hearings. In particular, travel was curtailed, and many of the specific government agencies with expertise in the matters to be raised in the hearings did not have staff to assist in preparations. Thus, on October 8, the United States sent a communication to the IACHR requesting a postponement of all U.S. hearings and working meetings until the February 2014 sessions due to the government shutdown. Please be aware that the United States sent a similar request to the Human Rights Committee in Geneva seeking postponement of the U.S. oral presentation to the Committee on its periodic report on implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This latter request was granted.

On October 16, the U.S. Congress reached an agreement to re-open the government and government agencies re-opened on October 17. However, due to length of the shutdown and proximity to the hearing dates, the United States will not have sufficient time to adequately prepare testimony for the hearings and working meetings. For instance, many of the experts from other agencies, who are returning to work after more than two weeks of furlough, are not able at this late stage to identify witnesses, prepare testimony, gather documentation, and do the work necessary to fully respond to the issues to be raised. Going forward at this point would be a disservice to the petitioners, NGOs, and other participants and observers, who expect and deserve strong participation on the part of the United States Government.

As you know, the United States takes the cases of the IACHR seriously and works consistently with the Commission to address its findings and recommendations. We strongly support the IACHR and participate robustly in all hearings and working meetings. Authorizing a postponement of the U.S. hearings until February will allow us to secure the high level of participation and ensure the adequacy of preparations which the Commission and petitioners deserve.

If, however, the IACHR plans to move ahead as scheduled we request the IACHR publicly disseminate this letter to petitioners and interested members of civil society. We also ask that you post this letter on your website. We want to ensure that all affected parties understand the reasons that have limited our participation during the current period of IACHR sessions.

Please accept renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

Sincerely,



Carmen Lomellin
Ambassador