

The Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy (ASCE) is a private, independent, nonpolitical academic organization dedicated to the production and dissemination of information, knowledge and understanding about all aspects of the Cuban economy. This mission is accomplished by the free and independent contributions of researchers and other professionals interested in the welfare of the Cuban people. ASCE is an institutional member of the American Economic Association and the US allied Social Sciences Association.

Notwithstanding its non-political character, ASCE cannot remain indifferent or silent to the imprisonment and inhumane mistreatment of its colleagues by the Cuban Government. ASCE strongly considers that there cannot be economic justice or economic development in Cuba in the face of patent economic and political repression and that there cannot be economic well-being for the Cuban people when priceless bodies and minds are impeded in their unalienable right to freedom of thought, expression, and association. Therefore, ASCE is gravely concerned about the imprisonment in a facility far away from his home and the lack of appropriate medical treatment of Mr. Oscar Espinosa Chepe in spite of his age and life threatening illnesses.

Mr. Espinosa-Chepe, a 62 year old independent economist and journalist, continues to serve a twenty-year prison sentence. He was arrested during a massive crackdown by the Cuban Government in March 2003, during which at least 75 dissidents were detained. He was subsequently tried on April 3, 2003 in case number 351/03. He was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment, according to provisions of Articles 7 and 11 of Law 88, the national security legislation that criminalizes peaceful dissent, because of his activities "against the integrity and sovereignty of the State". ASCE considers Mr. Espinosa-Chepe a prisoner of conscience who has been imprisoned solely for the peaceful expression of his dissenting economic analysis and views

Mr. Espinosa-Chepe suffers from a chronic liver condition, a thoracic hernia, persistent hypertension, and weight loss. His wife, Miriam Leiva, and his niece, Dr. Ileana Prieto-Espinosa, both of whom had provided medical treatment to him for years, have visited him in prison and reported that he is experiencing symptoms of acute liver failure and life threatening conditions.

Mr. Espinosa-Chepe was a former employee of the National Bank of Cuba and also worked for the Government as economic counselor for the Cuban Embassy in Belgrade. Later he became an independent economist and journalist, reporting on economic and other matters. He spent more than a decade peacefully attempting to exercise his profession as an economist and journalist independent from the Government based on his basic rights to freedom of expression and dissent. He was imprisoned on previous occasions.

ASCE respectfully urges you to request the Cuban Government in bringing about the immediate and unconditional release of Mr. Espinosa and to provide him immediate and appropriate medical attention. ASCE thanks you in advance for your swift intervention in this awful situation.

Sincerely,

**Beatriz Casals
President**

**Rolando H. Castañeda
Secretary**