



June 9, 2011

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

rights to free speech, peaceful assembly, and freedom from police violence and abuse in Puerto Rico. Currently, a Department of Justice investigation of the Puerto Rico Police Department is underway for a pattern and practice of police misconduct. As you prepare for your historic trip to Puerto Rico, we think that it is important for you to be aware of the serious allegations of human rights abuses against the citizens of Puerto Rico. The severity and scope of police abuse documented by the ACLU are on a level that would not be tolerated in the fifty states. I am writing today to urge you to raise these urgent issues with the leadership of Puerto Rico and to make you aware that we understand that the Puerto Rican government is endeavoring to thwart this most necessary DOJ investigation.

We would also like you to be aware that the ACLU is planning to take out a full page advertisement in one of the leading newspapers using the occasion of your important visit to highlight the need for systemic reform and oversight of policing practices on the island.

The Puerto Rico Police Department is the second largest police force in the country, second only to the NYPD. Based on evidence documented by the ACLU, this police department has engaged in a level of brutality against U.S. citizens and acted with such a level of impunity, that it shocks the conscience. Since 2004, the ACLU of Puerto Rico has documented numerous incidents of serious police misconduct in Puerto Rico. These incidents have increased both in their frequency and intensity since 2008, at which time the Department of Justice opened an investigation in response to our complaints. Most recently, the national office of the ACLU conducted fact-finding research in Puerto Rico in March-May 2011, and convened a high-level delegation that conducted a two-day fact-finding mission in May 2011 to research the rise in police brutality in the Commonwealth. This

attached our preliminary findings to this letter. The ACLU will issue a final report documenting our findings in September 2011.

In contrast to recent non-violent protests in Wisconsin, the Puerto Rican police have cracked down violently on protestors in the U.S. territory in blatant violation of their constitutional and human rights. The ACLU has documented numerous incidents in which individuals protesting at the University of Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rican Capitol building steps, the Supreme Court, and other locations during the past two years have been subjected to beatings by police armed with night sticks, tear gas, and pepper spray. Heavily armed riot squad teams have seriously restricted

serious gaps in the existing oversight and disciplinary mechanisms for police who use excessive force.

The federal government must intervene to ensure constitutional and human rights in Puerto Rico. I urge you to discuss with the Puerto Rican government leaders the need to prioritize b