



Dear Maykel,

I am writing these lines to you from Santiago de Chile, on a Friday afternoon. It is getting dark and I hear from my window the chanting of young people demonstrating in the streets of this city fighting for a dignified life, for better working conditions, for the right to health, for freedom of expression, for so many things that today simply do not exist for many in my country. I look out of the window and there I see the police and their shields, the police and their horses, the police and their water cannons.

It reminds me of the coup d'état in Chile 48 years ago, when I, like you today, was also imprisoned. I listen to yesterday when we sang softly in prison to encourage each other, and I listen to the songs of today that make me dream of freedom, and I think of you and your courageous and tireless rap, which is like that "ray that never ceases" of which the poet Miguel Hernandez spoke, who died in 1942 in a Francoist prison, after the end of the civil war in Spain. This tremendous poet, of whom you have probably heard, wrote "this ray neither ceases nor exhausts itself: / from myself it took its origin / and exercises in myself its fury".

When I was in prison, I never imagined that one day I would get out of it, much less that I would reach the 71 years that I am now, nor that on a day of nightfall and uproar, I would be writing you this letter to tell you that you are not alone, that your music is beautiful and is heard more and more strongly, that you do not cease, that we are waiting for your word made song.

*Mr. Maykel Osorbo*

*In the prison where you are*

*Cuba*

I am not interested in the ideology of the government that represses freedom of expression, it is simply unacceptable that this happens wherever it happens and as such I reject it and denounce it. And today I denounce it in your name and raise my voice as a cry to be engraved on stone and reach the conscience of those who keep you in prison. My cry is simple: you, my brother singer and poet, must be released.

And I also hope that you will hear my cry and with it you will be chasing away the fears of today, the uncertainties of tomorrow, the day-to-day fragility to which we are subjected by the arbitrariness

and arrogance of our jailers. I truly hope that this cry will help you not to cease in your creations, to continue trusting in your talent, to dream in the songs that your soul keeps today.

Do not lose your strength, dear Maykel, do not let the dark time of the cell extinguish the flame of your heart. Rest assured that we will continue to fight every day until we see you free and creating your music in the times to come.

I embrace you with that strength that only the incarcerated know what it is. I am referring to that strength that gives us the embrace of another fellow prisoner and that brings us that much needed affection and that sunlight that illuminates our hope.

Germán Rojas

President of PEN Chile