

MEMORANDUM

TO: LATCRIT

FROM: Talal Salaam

RE: Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, 19-27 Jan, 2006

DATE: March 1, 2006

Background

LatCrit has been working for the past five years at securing NGO consultative status with ECOSOC so that the members of the organization may participate actively, formally and substantively not only in international and regional conferences but also at UN meetings on matters relevant to LatCrit theories.

I have been asked, as a student working in the Farmworkers Legal Aid Clinic at Villanova University School of Law, to represent LatCrit at the January session for the Committee on NGOs. We had received some mail from the NGO office inviting us to the session and asking questions posed by delegations during their previous session on April 28, 2005.

With Beth's help, I drafted answers to the five questions and circulated them to Berta. The deadline for the response to the questions was January 15, 2006. Fortunately, the Committee staff permitted us to submit our late response which I did when I attended the session on January 24. I have attached the questions and answers that we submitted. Berta sent us her corrections to the clarifications but I had already handed the answers to the committee that morning.

Hearing, January 24

I attended the January 24 session on my own. Our case came up on the agenda later that afternoon and I used Berta's corrections to the clarifications to answer the question asked by Germany.

- Germany asked to clarify the definition of "Latin community". My answer: "Latcrit's definition of Latin community is demographically and geographically diverse and comprised of persons who have common issues of language, ancestry, self-determination, regardless of where located or of nationality, citizenship, or migration status." Germany's response: "We were one of the countries that had a question during the last session and we are satisfied with the answer that Latcrit has given, and we have no further questions Madame chairperson".
- Cuba did not ask me any questions but stated to the committee: "We were one of the countries that had question during the last session. We do not have any problem with this organization and we think they are doing a very good job. We do not have any comments at this time. We are still awaiting an answer from the capital."

Status

Even though Cuba hailed our organization for our good work, unfortunately there was no decision given on Latcrit's status at that time. The committee decided to postpone the decision till Cuba heard back from the capital. When I asked Meena Sur from the NGO Section/DESA that same day about our status, she said the Committee may choose to reopen our case on January 26 or 27 and it was pending until then. She promised to send me an email if there were more questions. The committee was planning to go over the quadrennial reports of the NGOs in consultative status on the 25th, and therefore there was no need for me to be there.

I called Meena on the 25th to check our status and see if there were any more questions. She said that the session on the 26th would be a half day and that there was no need for me to be there. Beth and I decided to attend on the 27th, the session's last day.

Hearing, January 27

During the session on January 27, Latcrit did not come up on the committee's agenda despite our prompting and inquiries with the staff. When asked why after the session was over, Meena said that the Committee did not find time to decide on LatCrit's status, and that a decision would be made during the next session which will take place May 10-19, 2006. Beth and I attempted to talk to the Cuban delegate during the session but he was busy and promised to pass by before the end of the session. He did not seem to want to talk to us and left in a hurry after the end of the session. We then approached the United States delegate, Mariano Ceinos-Cox. He offered to help us during the next session and he agreed to meet with us. When asked for his opinion on why Latcrit's application was not brought up, he suggested that we simplify our answers and use words that the committee can understand. He had also stated that Cuba had not really needed to check with the capital but that it was simply trying to buy time.

We asked Meena whether we could amend the five answers in time for the next session; she said we could do so in writing.

Correspondence with the NGO office

We received a letter from Meena on February 3, stating that we were deferred because the committee had not received our response to the questions. I called Meena to remind her that I had personally submitted the responses to the questions. She agreed to send a corrected version of the letter. In the corrected version, it stated that the committee was unable to review LatCrit's response to the questions due to time constraints and they decided to defer the consideration of LatCrit's application till the May session. Beth and I were not pleased with the fact that they deferred us again. When I spoke to Meena for clarifications, she explained that this occurred because of the time constraints and she was not privy to any information on whether a country had done anything to delay our status. The fact that we are deferred as opposed to pending is because that is the only term used in this situation. She explained that we were pending only during the

January session and now that the session is over and the committee was not able to take final vote on our application, we are deferred by default until May.

We recommend taking the following steps:

- Simplify the five answers and submit them to Meena.

- Figure out what the US delegation can do for Latcrit; maybe speak out in our favor during the next session. We need to send Mariano Ceinos-Cox a letter requesting his help and maybe go to New York to meet with him.

- Ask members of Latcrit outside the United States to lobby their representatives at the United Nations to stand up for Latcrit during the next session. The Committee members are Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, France, Germany, India, Iran, Peru, Pakistan, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sudan, Turkey, United States, and Zimbabwe.

Dates of next hearing:

May 10-19, 2006

It is impossible to predict the actual date(s) we will need to appear.

Some articles on the session:

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/ecosoc6185.doc.htm>

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/ecosoc6186.doc.htm>

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/ecosoc6187.doc.htm>

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/ecosoc6188.doc.htm>