



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

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Dear Senator Kennedy:

This is in response to your letter of November 29, written on behalf of your constituent, Olga Weisfeiler. Ms. Weisfeiler had written to you regarding her brother, Boris Weisfeiler, who disappeared while hiking in southern Chile in January 1985. The Department of State shares your concern regarding the fate of Professor Weisfeiler, and has worked since 1985 to determine what happened to him.

Our Embassy in Santiago pursued various leads in the aftermath of Professor Weisfeiler's disappearance, including visits to the site and interviews with potential witnesses. The investigation was complicated by conflicting evidence regarding Professor Weisfeiler's fate; Chilean police averred at the time that he died by drowning in a local river, while other evidence suggests he may have been tortured and killed at Colonia Dignidad, a notorious German immigrant enclave with links to the Chilean military. All that can be said with any certainty is that Professor Weisfeiler disappeared and that his ultimate fate remains unknown.

In January, 2000, the Chilean judiciary re-opened an investigation into Professor Weisfeiler's case. In October, the investigation was transferred to Judge Juan Guzman, a Santiago Appeals Court judge responsible for investigating many prominent human rights cases from the Pinochet era. A special search and release of declassified U.S. Government documents pertaining to the Weisfeiler case was made on June 30 in the context of the NSC-directed Chile Declassification Project, and copies of those documents were provided to Ms. Weisfeiler, the Chilean Foreign Ministry and Judge Guzman. In addition, the U.S. Embassy in Santiago provided Judge Guzman with other information which remains classified but was provided on a confidential basis to the Chilean authorities in response to their request for U.S. judicial assistance in connection with the criminal investigation of Professor Weisfeiler's disappearance. In the view of Ms. Weisfeiler's Chilean attorney, the documents provided have aided his efforts to reconstruct events that occurred fifteen years ago.

The Honorable
Edward Kennedy,
United States Senate.

In addition to the above, the U.S. Government formally requested in March, 2000 that the Government of Chile provide as full an accounting as possible of Professor Weisfeiler's case and suggested that it conduct a document search so as to provide any information that might prove helpful to resolving this case.

Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Harold Hongju Koh and Ambassador to Chile John O'Leary have met with Ms. Weisfeiler to discuss the case; the most recent meeting between Ambassador O'Leary and Ms. Weisfeiler took place December 6, 2000 at the Ambassador's residence in Santiago. The Department of State and our Embassy in Santiago will continue to closely monitor the case, and support the renewed investigation of Professor Weisfeiler's disappearance.

We trust this information will be useful in responding to your constituent. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have additional questions or believe that we may be of further assistance in this or any other matter.

Sincerely,



Barbara Larkin
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

Enclosures: correspondence returned