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## SISTER OF DISAPPEARED US CITIZEN PINS HOPES ON BIDEN'S VISIT TO CHILE

Friday, 27 March 2009 [PDF](#) [PRINT](#) [EMAIL](#)

During Progressive Government Conference Held In V

When U.S. Vice President Biden meets Chilean President Michelle Bachelet at the upcoming Progressive Governance Conference in Viña del Mar on March 27, Olga Weisfeiler hopes that he will press Chile's government to change its attitude towards the investigation into her brother Boris' disappearance 24 years ago.



Boris Weisfeiler in 1965.  
Photo courtesy of Weisfeiler.com

Boris Weisfeiler was the sole US citizen to disappear - along with 1,100 Chileans - during Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship.

"I hope that Vice President Biden will inquire about what's going on with the case, how slow the process is and why the FBI hasn't been allowed to investigate," Ms. Weisfeiler told The Santiago Times. She has written Biden a letter (published in today's feature section of the ST) urging him to press the Chilean government to officially acknowledge the case as a human rights violation.

Boris Weisfeiler disappeared whilst hiking near the Chile-Argentina border in January 1985. Following a brief investigation, Pinochet-era authorities concluded that the 43-year-old mathematics professor and experienced hiker had drowned in the Ñuble River.

Olga Weisfeiler had the investigation reopened in 2000, following the publication of newly declassified US documents. Since then, she has traveled frequently to Chile searching for answers and trying to apply pressure to Chile's government and judicial system. In June 2006, she met with President Bachelet in Washington D.C.

The declassified documents outline a set of events very different from the ones described during the original investigation, and suggest that Pinochet's soldiers arrested Weisfeiler - on the assumption that he was a spy - and that they took him to a notorious German settlement, Colonia Dignidad, which was then ruled by an ex-Nazi pedophile, Paul Schäfer.

Amnesty International estimates that Schäfer permitted the torture and execution of more than 400 of Pinochet's opponents on the colony's territory. According to some of the declassified documents, Weisfeiler was tortured there and might even have survived some years in captivity. Still, Ms. Weisfeiler says: "I'm not sure if he died there, or when he died, or even if he died. I am still seeking answers." There is no record of his death.

According to Weisfeiler, the reason Chile's Government is still refusing to accept state responsibility for her brother's disappearance is that the 1990-93 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Rettig) report - an investigation into deaths and disappearances under the Pinochet regime - did not classify the Weisfeiler case as a human rights violation.

She says that, when the U.S. Embassy submitted to the Commission information on the Weisfeiler disappearance (1990), important details were deemed classified, and therefore omitted. "Using this basic information, the Commission concluded that there wasn't enough evidence to classify the case as a human rights case," she says. "But the documents that the US declassified in 2000 do contain enough information to classify it as a human rights case."

Despite the amount of time the investigation has been underway, Ms Weisfeiler has found some key Chilean officials still unprepared for the case. "I recently found out that there are U.S. documents that still haven't been translated into Spanish for the investigating official, Judge Zepeda," she said. "These documents could hold the key to what happened to my brother. So, I think I know much more of the details than the investigating judge. I don't believe much in Chile's justice system."

After 24 years, Olga Weisfeiler said she will not give up easily. She maintains that the U.S. Embassy in Chile is being very helpful, but that "the major problem is the Chilean government and its reluctance to clear up the issue."

Summing up the suffering and frustration she has had to endure for more than two decades, she says: "This (the disappearance) has been the focus of my life since it happened - it is mental torture. And the worst thing is that I don't even know what happened to my brother."

By Cathal Sheerin ( [editor@santiagotimes.cl](mailto:editor@santiagotimes.cl) )

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