



3 July 2007

Ministerio da Administracio Interna
Rui Pereira
Praca do Comercio
1149-015 LISBOA
PORTUGAL

Dear Minister,

(by post and fax)

I write to you as the Chairman of the International Council of Police Representative Associations (ICPRA). This is an international group of Police Association leaders representing national Police Associations in Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark, USA, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Included in this group are most of the major national Police Associations in the English-speaking world (www.icpra.org)

One of our primary goals is to ensure that policing has the confidence of the communities we serve and we believe that Police Officers throughout the world should have the right to democratically associate and to advocate for better working conditions. We also subscribe to the well rehearsed academic arguments which suggest that by democratising police representative organizations, Governments, Police Chiefs and, as importantly, the public enjoy direct benefits from this productive engagement in democratic principles.

We hope you understand that police officers need a guardian and an advocate to allow them to carry out their public service responsibly, safely and with sufficient reward.

All of our Police Associations have undergone considerable struggles to gain the right to associate and organize police officers, as often such development is viewed with suspicion and resistance. However and invariably the people who have gained most from such rights being achieved have been the public of these countries.

Indeed, the right to bargain collectively for and on behalf of police officers has led to a police industrial relations atmosphere which is largely without dispute. We therefore ask that you recognize the value of this in ensuring that police officers are not greatly distracted from their difficult and often dangerous work on behalf of the communities they serve.



Inextricably linked with these fundamental rights is the liberation of police officer representatives as agents for positive change in the cultural and functional policing environment. The value of having processes in place which allow police officers to intelligently engage “from the bottom up” should therefore be encouraged.

It is our experience that there is much to value from allowing police officers to organize and the product of this goes far beyond the employer/ employee relationship and becomes evident in how we, as democratically empowered police officers, engage more positively and responsively to the communities we police for and with.

We note, with some concern that disciplinary sanctions have been commenced against police union organizers, and we ask you to reflect on the knowledge that as each of our associations was formed, and similar disciplinary actions were implemented, this resulted in poor relationships between the authorities and the overwhelming majority of police officers, whether directly affected or not.

As you can imagine, this ultimately proves extremely detrimental to the good functioning of the service. While, we fully understand and acknowledge the right of your Government to take whatever action it wishes and in no way seek to question your sovereignty. We conclude on behalf of the over 1 million police officers we represent worldwide, to ask that you take a longer term view of the current impasse and seek not to embed feelings of discontent by continuing the disciplinary process.

This organization would be very pleased to assist in any role designed to achieve an appropriate solution where you deemed that appropriate.

Yours sincerely

Greg O'Connor
Chairman
ICPRA

Cc Armando Ferreira, President, SINAPOL