

DON J. PEASE
13TH DISTRICT, OHIO

1641 LONGWORTH BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-3401

COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICY
AND TRADE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

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TECHNOLOGY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND
TECHNOLOGY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

January 14, 1981

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT:
BILL GOOLD

DISTRICT OFFICE:
ROBERT RULLI
1936 COOPER-FOSTER PARK ROAD, LORAIN
(216) 282-5003

PART-TIME OFFICES:
MRS. DOROTHY LITMAN
157 COLUMBUS AVENUE, SANDUSKY
(419) 625-7193

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, MEDINA
(216) 725-6120

MUNICIPAL BUILDING, BARBERTON
(216) 848-1001

The Honorable Patricia M. Derian
Assistant Secretary for Human
Rights and Humanitarian Affairs
Department of State
Washington, D. C.

Dear Pat:

In recent years, both the Congress and the Presidency have upheld the increased observance of human rights by all countries as a principal goal of American foreign policy. Sections 116 and 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, in particular attempt to delineate the relationship between American security and development assistance and human rights conditions.

Given our mutual interest in affirming the importance of human rights considerations to the allocation of American foreign assistance and the conduct of American foreign policy, I am concerned that our human rights commitments not be abandoned by the Reagan Administration. I am asking for your immediate help to prepare for this possibility. Specifically, I wonder if you can provide me a legal memorandum detailing the interpretation of Section 502B and other human rights statutes your office has applied in policy implementation. Such a memorandum will be vital to those of us in the Congress who will be striving to continue efforts to promote international observance of human rights. We both know that State Department counsel in the Carter Administration and the Reagan Administration can deduce very different meaning from the same statutory language.

I very much appreciated the briefing you provided in Congressman Bonker's office the other day as well as the summary you sent me summarizing existing statutes. I will be grateful if you can supply a definitive legal memorandum interpreting each of those laws. Thank you again for your assistance. You have been an inspiration to a very worthwhile cause. Best wishes in your future endeavors.

Sincerely yours,

Don J. Pease
Member of Congress

DP:gcw