



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection

Janusz KOCHANOWSKI

RPO-605915-I/09/KJ

Warsaw,

09/01/09

Mr Victor Ashe
Ambassador of the United States
of America In Poland
Al. Ujazdowskie 29/30
00-540 Warsaw

Dear Ambassador

As Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection, I have been receiving letters concerning a ruthless treatment of Polish citizens by the US immigrant services. These complaints have been confirmed by articles appearing in Polish press, for instance "Ameryka wita kajdankami" (America Welcomes with Handcuffs) published in *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 14 December 2008 or "Newark i O'Hara najgorsze dla Polakow" (Newark and O'Hara the Worst for Poles) published in *Dziennik* on 22 December 2008. You will find attached the copies of these articles.

The gravest accusation regarding behaviour of the American immigration services concerns: handcuffing, placing detained Poles in prison (where they are held in dark cells) without presenting a formal charge. There have also appeared cases when the arrested were hindered from taking medicines or contacting relatives. It has become a sort of a rule not to inform Polish consular services about the cases of detention because a person who did not go through the passport control remains outside the territory of the USA, and, consequently, immigrant authorities have no obligation of informing the Polish consulate. These detentions very often concern elderly people. The effect of such detentions in many cases involves deportation to Poland, without presenting charges and, obviously, without refunding the costs incurred by the deportees.

The content of the letters I have received, as well as of the press articles mentioned, must indeed seem disturbing. In the described cases we can observe violation of the human dignity and of fundamental civil rights included in international declarations and conventions concerning respect for civil rights and freedoms. The described behaviour of the US immigrant services casts a shadow over the good mutual relations between the Republic of Poland and the USA.

Taking all of this into consideration, I have sent a similar letter to Mr Radoslaw Sikorski, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, asking him to take appropriate measures.

*Yours sincerely,
Janusz Kochanowski*