

Bosch vows to begin hunger strike to protest continued imprisonment

5-18-90-3B

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Frustrated at his continued imprisonment, jailed anti-Castro militant Orlando Bosch intends to launch a seven-day hunger strike aimed at pressuring the U.S. government into either releasing him from prison or deporting him to another country.

Family members said Bosch will begin his strike on Sunday, the 88th anniversary of Cuba's independence from Spain and six months after he gave up his battle to stay in the United States.

"If you're going to deport him, deport him, don't leave him in jail here," Myriam Bosch, his daughter, pleaded Thursday at a Little Havana press conference.

If nothing is done within 30 or 60 days of Sunday, "I will declare myself on a hunger strike for an indefinite period, until . . . death," Bosch said in a written statement released to reporters.

Bosch, 62, has been at the Metropolitan Correctional Center since Feb. 16, 1988, when he flew to Miami from Venezuela after spending 11 years in jail there. Bosch had been charged with, but never convicted of, masterminding the 1976 bombing of a Cuban jetliner that killed 73 people.

Last year, the U.S. Justice Department denied Bosch's request for political asylum and ruled that he should be excluded from the United States on the grounds that he presents a national security risk.

U.S. Department of Justice spokesman Dan Eramian said Thursday it was up to the State Department to find a country willing

to take Bosch: "We're waiting to hear."

A State Department official who requested anonymity said, "We're still trying to find a country to take him in. Clearly, we're making every effort."

Supporting Bosch Thursday was his wife, Adriana, daughters Myriam and Lourdes, as well as leaders of the anti-Castro groups

Cuban Patriotic Council and the Cuban Municipalities in Exile.

"This situation is desperate," said Myriam Bosch, who said her father is in precarious health and risks his life in a hunger strike. "What else can he do? I think he'd rather die than be stuck in jail and play this little game they're playing with him, by keeping him in limbo here."