



International Action Center

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Information, activism & resistance to U.S. militarism, war & corporate greed, linking with struggles against racism & oppression within the United States

Since our founding in 1992, with Ramsey Clark and many anti-war and community activists opposing the first war on Iraq, we have been at the forefront against U.S. maneuvers to re-colonize countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and in the Caribbean. We organize demonstrations, direct actions, picket lines, community forums, speak-outs, war-crimes tribunals; we publish books and produce videos, traveling throughout the country and the world.

Introduction

1. The following submission in relation to Cuba, made by the International Action Center, addresses three aspects of civil and political rights pertinent to this third cycle of the universal periodic review: elections and participation of the population in the government; labor rights; and equality and dignity in rights regardless of race, color, sex, etc.
2. Besides these three points, the world is well aware of Cuba's adherence to high standards of human rights to education, health care, and security. According to the Human Development Report 2016, Cuba is among the countries recognized for High Human Development. This ranking is especially noteworthy when considering that for more than 55 years the United States, the geographically closest and most powerful economy in the world, has economically, commercially and financially blockaded Cuba. This blockade continues even though, under pressure from regional and international bodies such as the annual United Nations General Assembly, which voted overwhelmingly to oppose the unilateral, extraterritorial measures the United States imposed, the United States agreed to formally reestablish diplomatic relations with the Republic of Cuba. Indeed, the blockade has intensified. It has been our experience that U.S. financial institutions block even minor financial transactions that mention Cuba, which transforms these institutions into enforcers of U.S. government regulations. For example, a \$50 contribution for the travel expenses for an October trip to Cuba that complies with OFAC regulations was withheld by VENMO for two weeks because the memo line mentioned "Cuba trip."
3. The United States continues to budget to fund "regime change" programs aimed against Cuba. In well-reported public pronouncements, the U.S. executive has made clear his intention to violate the Cuban people's right to choose their own form of government, democracy, independence and self-determination.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 21: Elections and participation in government

4. The government of Cuba gets its authority through the will of the Cuban people. It has been our personal observation that multi-candidate elections are held regularly in Cuba. The pictures and biographies of the candidates are posted at the polling place. The elections are free from outside interference and financial manipulation.

5. The Cuban people express their will in more than elections. Through extensive consultations in neighborhood and work place meetings, they discuss and amend new laws or changes in existing laws, taking part directly in the government of their country.
6. All Cubans are registered to vote automatically on their 16th birthday. As an organization headquartered in the United States, we find that many people in our country are denied the right to vote or are discouraged from voting by changes in voting or extensive registration requirements. By intent, these measures disenfranchise sectors of the U.S. population; they have similarities to the literacy tests and poll taxes that as recently as the 1960s were used in the southern U.S. states to prevent people of African descent from voting.
7. In Cuba, union leaders are among the deputies of the National Assembly of Peoples Power putting the needs and the voice of important sectors of Cuban workers in the national leadership. The Federation of Cuban Women, the association of small farmers, the leaders of youth organizations are also represented in Cuba's National Assembly.

Article 23: Labor Rights

8. Cuba has an independent, self-organized, self-funded union organization Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC). Economic sectors including health care, education and hotel/tourism among others are separate unions within the CTC.
9. With the increase of tourism and use of contracted management companies from capitalist countries for Cuban tourism facilities, the Cuban hotel and tourism union is in a position with which labor activists in the U.S. are familiar. These companies exist to maximize profit, which becomes a factor in on the job relationships between management and workers. Union recognition is critical to insuring that Cuba's labor laws are followed. In Cuba, unlike in the U.S., the union has the right to expel managers, even managers of foreign companies – and does it. Managers do not have the right to increase workload from what is established across facilities.

10. The history of the united Cuban labor organization precedes the 1959 Cuban revolution and was established as the best vehicle to defend the rights of workers.
11. The U.S. propaganda appeal for “independent” unions in Cuba is really an attack on the rights of Cuban workers and an attempt to weaken the strong Cuban labor organization in the interest of the bosses and of capitalism in general. Just looking at the recent experience in the United States, from the attack on the Air Traffic Controllers in 1981 on, shows the bad faith of the U.S. government on this question.
12. In the U.S., federal and state governments support and encourage the so-called “right-to-work” laws and other measures that divide workers and weaken the ability of unions to advance the interest of workers in any bargaining unit. U.S. capitalists sponsor organizations that falsely attempt to represent themselves as unions but in reality destroy worker-oriented unions.
13. Much of what unions in the U.S. attempt to win from employers – and much of what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights calls for -- Cuban workers already won through the Cuban revolution. This includes the right to free health care, the right to free education through all levels, the right to sports and culture, the right to free time and vacations, the right to retirement, to participate in their government and control their lives, the right to enjoy the ground-breaking scientific development of medicines like Heberprot-P that prevents the horror of limb amputation, the right to social security in their lives through their unique socialist organization. What is more impressive is that this is all in a developing country in the process of overcoming centuries of colonialism, slavery and underdevelopment, that is still subjected to a brutal and far-reaching economic blockade.

Article 1 and Article 2:

Equality in dignity and rights, without distinction of race, color, sex etc.

14. The Cuban Constitution guarantees the above rights. Cuba is a paramount example of valuing human dignity and striving in every way to ensure the human dignity and development of all Cubans, not only in words but also in deeds and resources.
15. Cuba is also stellar in its recognition of, and effort to increase, human dignity in its internationalism. A U.S. citizen trained in medicine at Cuba’s Latin American School of Medicine served in Haiti to fight the Cholera epidemic and achieved excellent survival rates. In Washington DC Sept. 11 – 16, this doctor spoke about his experiences in Haiti. Young Cuban doctors who volunteered to fight Ebola in West Africa also described how

they worked to change the treatment protocol in the pediatric Ebola to use early intravenous fluids to reduce death rates significantly. To do this they risked their own health by using needles that could inadvertently pierce protective gloves and suits, thereby infecting the doctors.

16. Regarding how Cuban society treats people with disabilities, we know of the life of Jorge Enrique Jerez through German videographer Tobias Kriele and personal contact. Born with Cerebral Palsy, Jerez is now a university graduate and journalist. The tangible support for Jorge Jerez and his family is documented in Kriele's biographical video, *Power of the Weak*,¹ which illustrates Cuba's commitment to developing every human life.
17. No one in Cuba is denied the right to vote or be elected to government based on their skin color, gender, or gender identity. In the National Assembly of Peoples Power, as of Oct. 10, 2016, women represented 48% of all people employed in the civil state sector and 47% of those holding senior managerial positions. The presence of women at parliamentary level amounts to 48.86% and their representation in the Council of State has been increased to 45.2%.²
18. The current U.S. white supremacist capitalist power structure encourages oppression of people of African descent, Latinas/os, immigrants and Muslims. This oppression is reflected both in the overall rate of incarceration – with 2.3 million people or nearly 1% of the adult population behind bars – but in the fact that African Americans are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of whites. It is important to avoid imposing this framework when viewing Cuban society. Cuba's independence struggle is rooted in the abolition of slavery. In the U.S. that battle continues to be fought out.
19. Every Cuban, regardless of their skin tone, is guaranteed the same rights, including the right to vote, to represent their community, to be leaders in unions. Vestiges of individual racism are being confronted and addressed publicly. For example, in a recent incident where a private taxi driver disparaged a passenger based on her skin color and put her out of his taxi. This was reported and discussed in Trabajadores, July 2 as a violation of the Constitution.³

1. "The Power of the Weak" makes its US Film Tour debut. https://youtu.be/mJgdDo-hd_4

2. Cuba's Report to the United Nations 2016. <http://www.minrex.gob.cu/en/cuba-exposes-achievements-women-rights-united-nations>

3. Trabajadores, July 2, 2017. <http://www.trabajadores.cu/20170702/discriminada-color-piel/>