

Review prepared by the Mongol-Cuba Friendship Association for
Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human
Rights Council resolution 16/21

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1. BACKGROUND

Mongolia established diplomatic relations with Cuba on December 7, 1960. About four years later, the Mongolian and Cuban Friendship Association, a nonprofit organization was founded on November 24, 1964. It was founded to strengthen the relationship between two countries, provide more opportunities for Mongolian people to learn about Cuba, its culture, history and tradition and serve as an unofficial yet a friendly and important liaison between the people of two countries. Since its establishment, the organization organized many meaningful events celebrating the country's milestones in democracy, education, human rights, health and other areas of society. The organization leaders and staff also actively participate in events promoting the two countries' cooperation organized by the Cuban embassy in Mongolia and get updated on the latest developments of the country.

2. PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND QUALITY OF LIFE

The Cuban democratic system is based on the "People's government is for the people" principle. It is our belief, based on the information provided by the Embassy in Mongolia, and personal experience that the Government of Cuba guarantees basic human rights and freedom. Cuban 2011 National Assembly had adopted economic and social policy guidelines designed to update the country's economic model and improve the population's quality of life.¹ According to Ted Piccone, contributor for the Brookings Institute, the high homeownership rate on the island is supported by President Raúl Castro's economic reform agenda, which attempts to "preserve socialism while introducing new forms of market-based mechanisms". In addition to the ability to buy and sell property, Cuban citizens can now open small businesses, have cell phones, and form cooperatives both on and off of farms.²

3. Election system

The general population actively participates in the election process. The candidates for the Municipal and National Assemblies get nominated directly from the general population and criteria such as candidates' popularity, merit, patriotism or ethical values are taken into consideration rather than their support received from financial institutions or companies. Although it is known that various political parties have been active in the country since their

existence in 1992, they, along with the Communist Party of Cuba, are prohibited from campaigning in elections or public political speech.

4. Right to life, liberty and security of the person

The country abolished death penalty in 2003. Prisoners who were sentenced to death before 2003 now either have life or 30 years of imprisonment. Cuba has not still ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.³ According to the World Report 2017 of Human Rights Watch, detainees in Cuban prisons are often beaten, threatened, and held incommunicado for hours or days. The Ladies in White (Damas de Blanco)—a group founded by the wives, mothers, and daughters of political prisoners also, like the Cuban Commission on Human Rights, lacks official authorization and is therefore considered illegal by the government. Its members are routinely harassed, roughed up, and detained by either police or state security agents before or after they attend Sunday mass. Our organization urges Cuba to ratify the above-mentioned protocol in order to completely abolish torture and other cruel treatments of prisoners.

5. Freedom of religion

Under the Articles 8, 42 and 55 of the Constitution of Cuba, religious freedom is protected. During the existence of our organization, we have not heard that the Cuban government harassed or persecuted religious practitioners or interfered in their religious activities.

6. Protection of children

Between 2009 and 2011, the Ministry of Justice and the Centre for Youth Studies (CESJ), in cooperation with UNICEF, conducted the third national study intended to update the awareness of the child and adolescent population about their rights, as part of the project to disseminate the rights of children and adolescents in Cuba.⁴ The State provides free health care to children. The Revolutionary National Police General Division, the International Relations and Collaboration Division and the Minors Division of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Cuba, with the sponsorship of UNICEF held the “3rd International Conference on Minors Protection” in May 2017 which gathered professionals and technicians from many countries to promote the exchange of experience and allow specialists and researchers to strengthen collaboration bonds covering important topics such as prevention and protective environments for childhood and adolescence, role of the family, the school and the community; good practice in the protection of girls, boys and adolescences victims of offenses; prevention

and enforcement of minors' sexual abuse; attention to girls, boys and adolescences from the mental health care point of view; role of psychology in the treatment; minors' protection in the context of communications and the new technologies; prevention of violence and addictions in kids and adolescences, protective environment and strategy of training for specialists who take care of girls, boys and adolescences.

7. Freedom of speech, association and peaceful assembly

The Article 53 of the Constitution of Cuba guarantees freedom of speech and to publish. The State claims that all citizens have an equal right to express their opinions freely through media, such as radio, television and movies and printed publications since they are considered public property and serve as means of free expression of opinions, however, many outside international organizations view it differently. Under the Article 54, citizens have right to assemble. Any activities, gatherings organized by unions or associations do not encounter any interference from the government.

8. Rights to health and education

The Cuban government ensures universal access, free of charge to public health care and education at all levels without discrimination. Figures from the UN children's agency, UNICEF, show that Cuba's youth literacy rate stands at 100%, as does its adult literacy rate. Life expectancy in Cuba is 81 years for women and 77 for men according to The Guardian.⁵

References

¹ GE.13-10933, p. 3, para. 3

² Piccone, T. (2014, December 22). Brookings. On Cuba, Obama Goes Long and Castro Holds On. Retrieved from: <https://www.brookings.edu>

³ CCHDRN, p.3, para. 16.

⁴ GE. 13-10693, p. 4, para. 13

⁵ Carroll, R. (2007, September 12). The Guardian. First world results on a third world budget. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com>