

AUSTRALIA – CUBA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY
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To: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations
Email: UPRsubmissions@ohchr.org

Universal Periodic Review – Support for the Socialist Republic of Cuba

Dear United Nations Colleague,

We write in support of the reports presented by the Socialist Republic of Cuba for the Universal Periodic Review, regarding the human rights record of Cuba.

The Australia – Cuba Friendship Society in Melbourne is a volunteer organisation whose members work to promote and encourage friendship with the people of Cuba through cultural exchanges and study of the reality of life in Cuba. Every year we collaborate to send groups of Australians and New Zealanders on work study brigades to Cuba. Over a thousand people have participated in these exchange trips and they have returned home full of admiration and respect for the efforts of the government of Cuba to respect the rights and fulfil the needs of its people.

We believe that Cuba has a proud human rights record and has worked consistently to ensure that every Cuban citizen enjoys wide-ranging civil, political, cultural, economic and social rights.

Cuba has a long record of important achievements for its people in the areas of universal healthcare, access to education, strong support and pathways for the unemployed, housing, political rights, scientific and technical research, culture and sports.

Cuba is a democratic, fair, inclusive, equitable and compassionate society.

Cuba has demonstrated its commitment to universal human rights for its citizens through its work in a huge range of social issues. It can be seen in the Cuban legal system which guarantees the right to life, liberty and the inviolability of the person; the right to work with rest and leisure and to social security; the right to inviolability of the home; the right not to be tried or convicted except by a competent court under laws that existed prior to the offence and with the procedure and guarantees established by law; the right to a defence and the right not to be subjected to violence or coercion of any kind.

The Cuban people participate fully in democratic processes with highly contested elections and voting participation over 95%. Cubans enjoy high life expectancy; low infant mortality and participation in education to the highest levels. The people of Cuba participate actively in shaping Cuban society.

Cuba defends the rights of its people in the struggle against racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance and encourages frank and open dialogue on human rights matters.

Our members also respect and support Cuba's extensive medical and humanitarian aid to other areas of the world which have suffered disasters, epidemics or other serious challenges to the welfare of their citizens. Over the last fifty years Cuba has sent thousands of physicians, surgeons, nurses and other healthcare workers to operate clinics and train local people in disaster areas. We also admire the very successful Cuban adult education and literacy support program, implemented around the world. Many of the world's poorest people have learned to read in classes run by Cuban teachers.

The policy of hostility, blockade and aggression sustained by many United States administrations against Cuba has been a serious obstacle to the full enjoyment of human rights and the basic freedoms of all Cubans, including their rights to life, peace, free self-determination and development. The most serious aspect of this policy is that it violates the most elementary rights of the Cuban people.

Cuba has always maintained a high level of cooperation with United Nations human rights procedures and we strongly support Cuba's submissions to the Universal Periodic Review, regarding the human rights record of Cuba.

Yours sincerely,

Maree Dellora

President

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