



The Australia Cuba Friendship Society, Sydney is pleased to be able to report our view on the state of human rights in Cuba.

The Sydney branch of the Australia Cuba Friendship Society has existed for over thirty five years and we aim to promote and encourage friendship, understanding, trade and other exchanges between the peoples of Australia and Cuba. A central aim of the activities of the society is to end the blockade of Cuba by the USA. We strongly oppose the blockade as an unprecedented, illogical and disproportionate act of economic warfare on a developing nation by its very large neighbour.

There are extraordinary achievements in Cuba within the realm of human rights. Over the past six decades, Cubans have come to enjoy a system of free universal education and health that is the envy of much of the world. Not content with simply bringing these fundamental human rights to their own people, tens of thousands of Cubans work in dozens of countries around the world bringing health and education services to those in need, generally at Cuba's expense. Moreover, many thousands of people from around the world come to Cuba to enjoy the benefit of a university education, most notably in Cuba's medical schools. Cuba provides a literacy program, Yo si Puedo (Yes I Can) around the world including in aboriginal communities in New South Wales, Australia. This is an example of the positive work performed by Cuba for the benefit of the peoples of the world, including citizens of rich, Western nations like Australia. Cuba is involved in these peaceful acts of international solidarity and aid despite the fact that it lives under the oppressive blockade imposed by the USA.

When you visit Cuba, you realise that all Cubans, regardless of race, sex, religious faith or political ideology, are housed, employed, well dressed and adequately fed which is a fulfilment of human rights that is, unfortunately, far from universal around the world. Too often, the fulfilment of such fundamental rights goes unnoticed by the well-off of the world. Cubans also have access to a lively cultural life which has become world famous. Social workers offer Cubans an array of individual services relating to nutritional advice, maternal needs, aged care and disability assistance. Cuba managed to fulfil its pledge concerning the UN Millennium Development Goals despite the great hardship that it experienced in the 1990's. The right to development is something that is still very elusive to so many nations. The World Wildlife Fund has declared that the only country in the world with "sustainable development" was Cuba! Finally, Cuba is a human rights advocate for the majority world. Its leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement has given Cuba a platform from which to emphasise issues such as the global food crisis which is being exacerbated by the treatment of food as simply another global commodity.

So, we would conclude that human rights in Cuba are deeply respected and that this respect radiates out to include all of the world's people who should all have the opportunity to access all the human rights described in the United Nations covenants

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