



The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations:

By Email: uprsubmissions@ohchr.org

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Resolution from the Executive of ACFS WA branch on the situation of Human Rights in Cuba

As the world faces an environmental and economic crisis Cuba has not faltered in its attention both to its own people and to many others globally in areas of healthcare, education, scientific and technical research, culture and sports.

Every year the Australia-Cuba Friendship Societies promote, among Australians, work-study brigades to Cuba with the message go, have a look and come back and tell people whatever you think about what you have seen in Cuba. What we have seen over 30 years is people returning from Cuba and joining our society wanting to share their experience with others. Many are overwhelmed having seen for the first time a government that works on a democratic system with the principle of “government of the people, by the people and for the people”.

The Cuban revolution laid the foundations of a democratic, fair, inclusive, equitable and compassionate society. Today the Cuban government continues to work with the Cuban people to make further advances and progress. This can be seen in the legal system that includes the right to life, liberty and inviolability and integrity of the person; the right to work with rest and leisure and to social security; the right to inviolability of the home and confidentiality of correspondence; 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 to be forced to testify.

It is even more evident in the daily lives of Cuba’s people in the strong participation in democratic processes with highly contested elections, voting participation over 95%; high life expectancy; low infant mortality; high participation in education to the highest levels. The Cuban people are active participants in the shaping Cuban society with many grass-roots and community-based organizations contributing to the internal discussion. It is only with the broadest social consensus that important decisions are taken. In this way Cuba builds and consolidates the principle of equality for all Cubans. Cuba strives to facilitate attention on issues of the rights of people in the struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance and to encourage frank and open dialogue on human rights matters. Cuba continues to make great progress towards the elimination of discrimination against gender, sexuality and race.

No-one is forgotten in this pursuit for a better world. The revolutionary government has made great advances in penitentiary law and regulations and applying 95 Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners; including adoption and enhancement of a graduated system; classification of the prison population in order to ensure better treatment for groups and individuals (based on legal situation, gender, age, nationality, personal characteristics, level of risk, etc.); Buildings of premises suitable for prison facilities (group and individual cells with air, light, ventilation, sanitary facilities and showers); Voluntary participation in socially useful work, paid in accordance with national pay scales and with workplace health and safety guarantees; Financial help to prisoners’ families and social security for prisoners; Introduction of an education subsystem in prisons for general and technical schooling. But even more importantly is the provision for the guarantee of work for all ex-prisoners to facilitate their

progressive integration back into society; this is truly reflective of a system that understands people and respects their rights.

Cuba has shown itself to be a force of true internationalism in the world, a defender of sovereignty for all people. Cuba is party to many international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the participation of children in armed conflict; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention against Discrimination in Education; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries; and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons From Enforced Disappearance.

Cuba has a vast record of participation internationally in developing countries and when natural disasters have struck. There are currently around 37,000 Cuban cooperation workers in 108 nations of Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Australasia who share in Cuba's achievements in areas like healthcare and education.

Cuba itself is subjected to a persistent campaign of defamation from the government of the United States. The US supports individuals to collaborate in conspiracies against Cuba with the intent of destabilizing the country; this is an abuse of the official UN mechanisms for human rights issues.

In Cuba there is no provision for the use of torture under any circumstances, so it is an offence and source of great sadness for the peoples of Cuba that these practices are carried out in territory illegally occupied by the United States naval base in Guantánamo Bay.

Cuba has been subjected for almost 50 years to many forms of hostility and aggression by the United States, principally through the latter's imposition of an economic, trade and financial embargo, which constitutes an act of genocide under article II (c) of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The US continues with this hostility despite International condemnation and resolutions to cease the blockade in the UN General Assembly being supported by a large majority.

Despite the hostilities it has faced Cuba leads the world in sustainable development. Attention to the environmental programs for renewable, non polluting energy generation, the safe production of food, the conservation of wetlands and forests, the protection of threatened species to name a few exemplifies the altruistic commitment Cuba asserts for the human rights of its people, the peoples of the world and the peoples of the future.

It is with the highest regard and admiration that we make this submission in support of the Cuban government and peoples. We commend the Cuban government for the ongoing advancements for enjoyment of political freedom, social justice, individual and collective well-being and human solidarity.

Signed



Elizabeth Hulm
WA Branch Secretary