

# **Friends of Cuba (Jamaica)**

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**SUBMISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS OHCHR UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW  
(SECOND CYCLE) OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CUBA, 16th SESSION, MAY/JUNE 2013**

The Friends of Cuba is a non-affiliated and independent grouping of members of the People's National Party in Jamaica. We were established in 1994 after several of our members attended the First World Encounter of Friendship with the Cuban People, held in November of that year in Havana, Cuba. The main purpose of the Friends of Cuba is to promote solidarity with the Cuban people and to provide information to members of our Party in particular and the Jamaican people in general, about the progress of our Cuban neighbours, particularly in the advancement of their social, cultural, economic and political lives.

We are indeed proud and grateful of the level of collaboration and support that the Cuban people, through their government have provided to the Jamaican people over the past forty years. Recently, there has been an increase in the number of health professionals and specialists working in Jamaica, teachers assigned and Cuba continues to provide tertiary scholarships, particular in the field of medicine, in spite of its own economic challenges.

We are aware that Cuba has been victim of a ferocious campaign to discredit its performance in human rights matters and of ignorance of the existence of the rule of law in the country. We further assert that the spreading unfounded accusations only results in obscuring Cuba's reality and performance in matters dealing with the promotion and protection of all human rights for all, and it is part of a well organized and funded political campaign that is alien to legitimate concerns over human rights.

The Friends of Cuba in reviewing articles 5 to 14 and also articles 18 to 21 of the International Declaration of Human Rights, based on both from what we have read from credible information about the country and more importantly, from what we have personally experienced from our many visits to Cuba and our numerous interactions with Cubans from all walks of life, is absolutely confident that the human rights and dignity of the Cuban people are not only being protected within the statutes of the Cuban Constitution and the country laws, but are also being advanced. This is so in spite of the global recession, Cuba's own economic challenges and the continued US trade and economic blockade.

We accept in full, as a factual, correct and truthful statement, that relating to the Freedom of Religion and Beliefs, of Expression, of Association and Peaceful Assembly and the Right to Participate in Public and Political Life, the following:

- *Cuba has been victim of a ferocious campaign to discredit its performance in human rights matters and of ignorance of the existence of the rule of law in the country. Spreading unfounded accusations only results in obscuring Cuba's reality and performance in matters dealing with the promotion and protection of all human rights for all, and it is part of a well organized and funded political campaign that is alien to legitimate concerns over human rights.*
- *As part of the hostile policy of the government of the United States, projects are implemented that are directed to promote campaigns discrediting Cuban authorities, with the aim of disrupting order, inciting violence and creating the image of a supposed climate of destabilization and unruliness in the country. These activities are financed by ultra-rightwing organizations in the city of Miami, backed by the US government, whose declared aim is the destruction of the established political and social system in Cuba.*
- *The so-called human rights defenders acting in Cuba are mercenaries in the service of the American government; their actions and purposes undermine and seek to destroy the internal juridical organization of Cuba (national laws) within whose framework all activities must be undertaken according to stipulations in Article 3 of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998. None of these qualify under the concept of human rights defenders as established in that Declaration.*
- *In Cuba, human rights defenders are protected, in equal conditions, according to the postulates of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Nobody in Cuba has been persecuted or penalized for peacefully exercising their rights, including those of expression, opinion and association, within the framework of the broad liberties guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic and its laws, completely compatible with international human rights instruments. Ethics has been an important protective shield for the Cuban Revolution in the face of a policy of aggression and hostility by the greatest power in the world.*
- *Discrimination for religious reasons does not exist. There are around 400 religions and religious institutions based on the credo of their membership; they carry out their activities with no interference whatsoever by the State. All religions have their churches and places of worship for their activities which regularly take place without any impediments.*

The Cuban people as a sovereign nation and proud independent peoples have determined the social, economic and political framework under which they wish to live and run their society and these rights are protected by the Cuban Constitution and laws.

- *Suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.*
- *Cuba has institutionalized a system of independent bodies, headed by the Supreme Court, acting collegially, composed according to their competency and with broad popular participation in the dealing of justice.*
- *The Cuban judicial system is based on the principle of absolute independence of judges individually and of the entire system of Courts in the function of dealing justice; the popular nature of justice; the elective nature of judges (both professional and lay judges); the absolute equality of all persons before the law; the presumption of innocence; all trials are public, except in cases excepted by law; all rulings of the courts may be appealed according to stipulations established by law in each case; every accused party has the right to legal defense.*

## **Conclusion**

In concluding, we submit to the UNHR that the quality of life and the freedoms of the Cuban people, is a source of pride to the vast majority of Cuban people and are being advanced in their interests, all this in spite of the unwarranted economic and political aggression of the world's superpower, the United State of America.

*Obstacles and Problems Preventing the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Cuba*

- *Among those obstacles are: The ongoing policy of hostility, blockade and aggressions by successive US administrations, the illegal occupation of a portion of national territory on which, at an US naval base, an international centre for torture and other lèse-humanité crimes is in operation; recruitment, financing and use of mercenaries and terrorists at the service of the anti-Cuban US policy which acts against the Cuban people, and the increase of US government funds and means destined to finance the so called "human rights defenders" in Cuba, among others.*
- *For the 2010 and 2011 fiscal years, the administration of President Obama earmarked 40 million dollars (20 million per fiscal year) through USAID and the State Department, for public operations directed to impose a "change of regime" in Cuba. Much more money has been channeled for its intelligence service undercover actions.*