

## **Sri Lanka National Committee for Solidarity with Cuba**

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The Sri Lanka National Committee for Solidarity with Cuba is a voluntary civil society organization formed in February 2006. It is engaged in the study of developments in Cuba and promoting solidarity and friendship between the peoples of Sri Lanka and Cuba through various public actions such as lectures, publications, seminars and acts of solidarity.

## **UPR Submission – CUBA-October 2012**

1. Human rights situation in Cuba should not be assessed on the basis of abstract concepts. It should be done in the context of the specific path of development Cuba has taken and in relation to the internal political and economic situation and external influences bearing on it.
2. The prime factor determining nature of human rights in Cuba is the success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. It is only since then could Cuban people enjoy human rights, especially economic social rights and fundamental political freedoms.
3. At present fundamental changes are being made to improve the Cuban model of Socialist economic and political development. Over 8,900,000 citizens (out of a population of 11.2 million) have participated in this consultations and over 3 million suggestions by them were incorporated in the reform program.
4. Over the last 50 years Cuba developed under the siege of a cruel blockade imposed by the United States which even punishes third countries dealing with Cuba. The accumulated loss to the Cuban economy as a result of the blockade is over US \$ 1 trillion 66 billion according to conservative estimates. The blockade violates basic freedoms of the Cuban people through denial of access to vital necessities such as food and healthcare.
5. The United States government and its allies are conducting a continuous hostile campaign against Cuba and are funding anti-government elements with a view of effecting a regime change in Havana contrary to international law and diplomatic conduct. This creates an atmosphere which affects negatively on the human rights situation in the island. For example numerous acts of terrorism directed against persons and property endanger the enjoyment of people's liberties.
6. Despite these obstacles Cuba has achieved a high rate of human development. It has attained the 51<sup>st</sup> place among all nations and is placed 11<sup>th</sup> among developing nations.
7. Cuban people enjoy a large number of economic and social rights. This is a result of government policy. For example, 52 percent of the budgetary allocations in 2012 were for education, health and other social needs.
8. In Cuba the right to education is respected. Education is free up to University level. \Every year around 500,000 students enter the universities which number more than 60. This is in addition to other tertiary level education.
9. Cuban healthcare services also guarantee a decent life to the population as evidenced by the following facts: Infant mortality is under 5 for every 1000 live births, the lowest in the Americas together with Canada. Life expectancy is 78 years. Twenty six infectious diseases are eradicated or controlled in Cuba. The successful immunization campaigns conducted by health authorities have resulted in eradicating a large

number of preventable diseases including poliomyelitis, malaria, diphtheria, whooping cough, rubella, measles, yellow fever, cholera etc. Cuba is one of the three countries in the region where Dengue is not widespread as certified by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

10. Cuba allocated 800 million pesos from the state budget for 2012 for subsidizing low income persons and another 400 million pesos to protect the disabled and those who have lost employment due to ongoing labor reforms.
11. There is a comprehensive social security system operating in Cuba. It provides security at work, illness, accidents, occupational hazards, disability, old age and death. Workers are covered 100 percent with their families.
12. There are over 15,000 social workers employed to look after the elderly living alone and the disabled.
13. Cuba is on the way of achieving all Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It has already achieved some. For example, universal primary education (Goal 2) has been achieved. So is Gender equality and empowering women (Goal 3) though there is room for improvement. Reducing infant mortality (Goal 4) is also being successfully achieved as shown above.
14. The Cuban electoral system guarantees equality of opportunities for any citizen not only to vote but also get elected. There are no political parties contesting the elections and hence no heavily funded electoral campaigns that subvert the people's mandate. An example is the forthcoming elections to Municipal people's Power Assemblies. The nomination of candidates were done direct through mass meetings. There are 29,000 nominated candidates. There were over 50,000 meetings that elected them through open voting. One needs to get a minimum of 50 percent of the vote to get elected. Election is by universal suffrage and secret ballot.
15. A special feature of the Cuban electoral process is the constitutional guarantee of the right of recalling deputies during their term of office.
16. There is no torture practiced in Cuba and there is not a single instance of involuntary disappearances there, which even enemies of Cuba do not accuse it of.
17. At present Cuba is undergoing a fundamental reform process. One of the major tasks of the process is the creation of a new self-employment sector in the economy. This is done in order to make the economy more productive and to give an impetus to the personal initiative of individuals. This process is already underway. And more than 357,000 are in this sector at present. This is twice the number that was in 2010.
18. The opening of the self-employed sector is accompanied by necessary legislation and administrative regulations so as to ensure the rights of the self-employed. For example, the law on renting of houses and rooms has been modified by removing many earlier restrictions in order to facilitate the entrepreneurial work of the self-employed. They are also provided with special social security system for old age,

total disability, maternity or death.

19. Cuba respects religious freedom. There are some 400 religions and religious institutions in Cuba. It should be recalled that before the Revolution many of these religions were outlawed. While the Constitution of the State establishes the separation of State and religion it also guarantees citizens the freedom to practice any religion or not.
20. The right to food and food security is guaranteed to the population. Even during the worst periods the development of urban agriculture and the use of sustainable agriculture was promoted to ensure food security to the population. The current economic reforms also envisage measures to raise productivity in agriculture and to cultivate all arable land that is not productively used at present. They are also provided with social security.
21. The Cuban prison system has been much maligned by the West. Yet it is based on respect to the law of the land. There are no extra-judicial trials in Cuba. All court proceedings are open and according to the law. In the prisons Cuba attaches more importance to corrective measures. Prisoners are provided with adequate nutritious food, medicine and recreation facilities. There is a parole system to release well-behaved inmates expeditiously. Cuban Council of State pardoned 2,900 common prisoners for humanitarian reasons and family requests.
22. Cuba not only observes human rights. It helps to facilitate the observance of human rights in many countries by assisting them in healthcare, education, disaster relief and human resources training. For example the huge contribution made by Cuban medical personnel in Haiti is well acknowledged. Also more than 40,000 Africans have graduated from higher educational institutions in Cuba since 1959. At present there are 40,000 Cubans working in more than 70 countries and thousand foreign students are learning in Cuban Universities.