



Cuba - Country of Concern: latest update, 30 June 2014

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The overall human rights situation remains unchanged, with no real improvement on freedom of expression or association, and the continued use of short-term detentions to restrict the activities of human rights defenders.

Five prisoners of conscience are still in detention: three of them are brothers who have been in pre-trial detention in Cuba since late 2012; they have now been tried and are due for sentencing. Amnesty International believes they are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression. Opposition activists claim that there are up to 100 political prisoners.

Monitoring groups have reported around 5,000 detentions in 2014 already, compared to a total of 6,500 in 2013. Human rights activists have continued to suffer physical attacks, threats and harassment of family members. Among the activists detained were members of Damas de Blanco (Ladies in White, an activist group made up of female relatives of ex-political prisoners), including its leader Berta Soler, and Angel Moya who was reportedly detained twice and brutally beaten. Roberto de Jesús Guerra Pérez (Hablemos Press founder) was detained for several hours after his trip to US and Mexico; he has been receiving threatening telephone calls and he believes these are attempts by the Cuban authorities to dissuade him from continuing his activities as a journalist. Alcibíades Guerra Marín was sentenced to one year in prison for shouting "down with Fidel"; he has been on hunger strike.

In the last three months, the Cuban government's economic reform programme has continued, and is generating some new economic freedoms. Progress has continued on the new Mariel Special Development Zone and on introducing a new investment law. A delegation from the Cuban government visited several European countries to try to encourage more foreign direct investment.

The Cuban government recently published a new labour code and introduced a scheme offering residency visas for investors in Cuban property. The government has also eased the regulation of its largest state-run companies so that major enterprises in certain sectors are now able to operate outside state control.

The Cuban government made Good Friday an official national holiday this year, after having restored the holiday as an "exceptional" measure when Pope Benedict XVI visited the island in 2012.

In the [2014 Press Freedom Index by Freedom House](#), Cuba remained the worst performer in the region and ranked among the world's eight worst-rated countries.

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