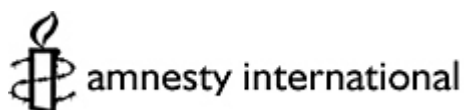


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## Amnesty International Annual Report 2011 - Cuba

Head of state and government: **Raúl Castro Ruz**

Death penalty: **retentionist**

Population: **11.2 million**

Life expectancy: **79 years**

Under-5 mortality (m/f): **9/6 per 1,000**

Adult literacy: **99.8 per cent**

Forty-three prisoners of conscience were released throughout the year. The rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly continued to be restricted and scores of critics of one-party government were harassed. The US embargo against Cuba remained in force.

### Background

Prisoner of conscience Orlando Zapata Tamayo died on 23 February following a prolonged hunger strike. He was one of 75 people arrested during a crackdown by the authorities in March 2003, and was serving a 36-year prison term at the time of his death. A few months later, between July and December, the Cuban government released 41 prisoners of conscience following an agreement with the Spanish government and dialogue with the Catholic Church. All of those released, except one, left Cuba with their relatives.

In October the Council of the EU decided to maintain its Common Position on Cuba for another year. This calls on the Cuban government to improve respect for human rights.

The visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on torture was postponed on at least two further occasions during 2010. The Cuban authorities had extended an invitation to the Special Rapporteur to visit the country in 2009.

Cuba had not ratified the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by the end of the year, despite having given an undertaking to do so at the UN Human Rights Council in February 2009.

In October, Raúl Castro announced the next Congress of Cuba's Communist Party for April 2011, the first to take place in 16 years.

### **Freedom of expression – dissidents and journalists**

All media remained under state control, impeding Cubans' free access to independent sources of information. Content on and access to the internet continued to be monitored and, on occasion, blocked. Police and state security officials continued to intimidate and harass independent journalists, scores of whom were arrested and imprisoned only to be released days or weeks later without charge or trial. Many of the detainees reported that they were put under pressure to stop taking part in dissident activities, such as anti-government demonstrations, or sending reports to foreign media outlets.

- Calixto Ramón Martínez, a journalist for the independent news agency Hablemos Press, was arrested on 23 April as he tried to cover a private function in Havana in honour of Orlando Zapata Tamayo. Calixto Ramón Martínez was released the following day, but rearrested moments later. He was detained at a police station for seven days and then transferred to Valle Grande, a maximum security prison on the outskirts of Havana. He was released on 14 May and threatened with charges of "contempt of authority" and "aggression". State security officials also asked him to stop his reporting activities.

### **Prisoners of conscience**

Eleven prisoners of conscience from the group of the 75 arrested in March 2003, remained in prison at the end of 2010.

- Darsi Ferrer, who had been arrested in July 2009, was finally brought to trial on 22 June 2010. He was sentenced to one year's imprisonment and three months' "correctional work" outside the prison after being found guilty of receiving "illegally obtained goods" and "violence or intimidation against a state official". He was immediately released as he had already been held in prison for almost a year. Amnesty International considered Darsi Ferrer to be a prisoner of conscience held on politically motivated charges brought by the state in reprisal for his human rights activism.

### **Arbitrary detention**

Dissidents continued to be arbitrarily detained in order to prevent them from exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

- On 15 February, Rolando Rodríguez Lobaina, José Cano Fuentes and other members of the Eastern Democratic Alliance were arrested by state security officials in Guantánamo and held in detention to prevent them from taking part in the Alliance's anniversary celebrations. They were released without charge four days later.
- On 12 August, state security officials detained Néstor Rodríguez Lobaina, his brother Rolando, and three other members of the organization Youth for Democracy at Néstor Rodríguez' house in the town of Baracoa, Guantánamo Province. The five were protesting at the arrest of two other members of the organization at the time. The two initial detainees were released on 16 August without charges while Néstor Rodríguez Lobaina and the four others were released after nearly three weeks in detention and warned that they would be charged with "public disorder". However, no formal charges had been filed against the five men by the end of the year.

### **Death penalty**

In December, the People's Supreme Court commuted the death sentences of Salvadoran

nationals Raúl Ernesto Cruz León and Otto René Rodríguez Llerena to 30 years in prison. They were both convicted of terrorism charges in 1999. On 28 December, Humberto Eladio Real Suárez, a Cuban national sentenced to death in 1996 for the killing of a police officer in 1994, had his sentence commuted to 30 years in prison. By the end of 2010, no prisoners remained on death row.

### **Freedom of movement**

- Guillermo Fariñas, a psychologist, independent journalist and political dissident, was forbidden from travelling to Strasbourg in December to collect the 2010 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought awarded by the European Parliament. He was the third Cuban dissident awarded the prize since 2002 who had been prevented by the authorities from travelling outside Cuba. Guillermo Fariñas went on hunger strike for more than four months. He ended the protest in July when the Cuban government announced the release of prisoners of conscience.

### **US embargo against Cuba**

The US embargo continued to affect the economic, social and cultural development of the Cuban people and in particular the most vulnerable groups.

According to the UN Population Fund, treatments for children and young people with bone cancer and for patients suffering from cancer of the retina were not readily available because they were commercialized under US patents. The embargo also affected the procurement of antiretroviral drugs used to treat children with HIV/AIDS. Under the terms of the US embargo, medical equipment and medicines manufactured under US patents cannot be sold to the Cuban government.

In September, US President Barack Obama renewed the extension of economic and financial sanctions against Cuba as provided for in the Trading With the Enemy Act. In August, he relaxed travel restrictions on academic, religious and cultural groups under the "people-to-people" policy. For the 19th consecutive year, a resolution calling on the USA to end its embargo against Cuba was adopted by an overwhelming majority (187 votes to two) in the UN General Assembly.

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