



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

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The overall human rights situation has remained unchanged in the last three months, with no real improvement on freedom of expression or association. The Cuban government continued to use short-term detentions to intimidate activists. There have been frequent reports of physical attacks, threats and harassment of family members.

The Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation (CCDHRN) reported 1,695 such incidents during this reporting period. These figures are, however, impossible to verify. Among the short-term detainees were José Daniel Ferrer García and Jorge Luis García Pérez (aka "Antúnez"), who also had their homes vandalised; and Roberto de Jesús Guerra Pérez, Hablemos Press Director, who was brutally attacked by a plain-clothes agent.

The five prisoners of conscience named by Amnesty International in August 2013 are still in detention. The sentencing of three of these prisoners, originally scheduled for 1 July, was postponed with no further information. Opposition activists claim that there are up to 100 political prisoners.

Independent unionist Vladimir Bacallao Morera, who is in very poor health, received parole after a hundred days on hunger strike to demand his own release.

Although the new migration law has improved the right of freedom of movement, some Cubans - usually opposition activists who have been released on bail - are still prevented from travelling. Carlos Amel Oliva Torres, member of Unión Patriótica de Cuba, was not allowed to travel to Chile following an invitation he had received from a youth organisation there.

There was some positive news for freedom of religion as the Cuban government announced it will allow a new Catholic church to be constructed, following the destruction of an older building by Hurricane Sandy in Santiago de Cuba in 2012. However, in areas where religion and politics intersect, the Cuban government has continued to interfere. Around 100 Damas de Blanco (Ladies in White, an activist group made up of female relatives of ex-political prisoners) were detained on 13 July, following their normal Sunday march commemorating the 20th anniversary of the death of 37 Cubans who drowned while trying to flee Cuba.

In the last three months, the Cuban government's economic reform programme has continued, including further developments of the new Mariel Special Economic Development Zone and progress on monetary reform. These reforms are generating a number of new economic freedoms.

