

# PRISONERS DEFENDERS™

WE REPORT [THE LIST](#) OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN CUBA VERIFIED IN DECEMBER

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**955 POLITICAL PRISONERS IN CUBA DURING 2021  
842 REMAINED IMPRISONED AS AT 31 DEC  
700 ARE IMPRISONED FOR 11J**

## 1. VERIFIED POLITICAL PRISONERS IN CUBA

In the year 2021, 955 political prisoners in Cuba have been included in the Prisoners Defenders [list](#). January 2021 began with 138 political prisoners. Between then and the end of December 2021, 817 new political prisoners were added to the list during the whole of 2021, leaving 842 political prisoners at the moment.

But this is only a fraction, between 40% and 50% of the real figures, whose full verification is simply unattainable by any organisation.

## POLITICAL PRISONERS CURRENTLY UNDERGOING SENTENCES AND INDICTMENTS

Prisoners Defenders, from among the 1,500 to 2,000 cases of measures of limitation of liberty under indictments or sentences applied to the demonstrators arrested in thousands since 11j, has been able to establish a list of 842 cases of political convicts and convicts in this past December. [\(SEE\)](#).

Of these 842 cases:

- 700 cases analysed belong to the repression of 11J and 15N in Cuba, still less than 40% of the total generated by the repressive wave, as it is impossible to know the number of cases among the population.
- 26 minors were prosecuted (14, 15, 16 and 17 years of age at the time of detention).
- 50% of them, 13 minors, are charged with sedition charges.
- In total, 132 verified political prisoners have been prosecuted on the charge of Sedition.
- 387 prisoners have already been sentenced, 137 of them with sentences of more than 10 years, 35%.
- 107 women are political prisoners of the Cuban regime.

## ARE THERE UP TO 13,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS AND CONVICTS IN CUBA?

We recognise in Prisoners Defenders, during the month of December 2021, 842 political prisoners ([see list](#)), but we also recognise, as we do every month, the [11,000 other young civilians who do not belong to opposition organisations, 8,400 of them convicted and 2,538 condemned](#), with average sentences of 2 years and 10 months in prison, through "pre-criminal" sentences, i.e. without a crime (as the Penal Code indicates in its article 76.1 for these 11,000 convictions), as the Penal Code contemplates that they would be people prone to commit crimes in the future "because of the observed behaviour in manifest contradiction to the norms of socialist morality" (Art. 72 of the Penal Code). Thus, they are sentenced to 1 to 4 years in prison. This is how the Cuban state survives, destroying society and its foundations: the youth.

The 842 political prisoners verified for their exercise of their fundamental rights are divided into **Convicts of Conscience**, **Condemned of Conscience** and **Other Political Prisoners**. The classification of these prisoners is as follows:

- **545 Convicts of Conscience**, who are prisoners deprived of their liberty solely for reasons of conscience, i.e. the strict exercise of their most fundamental human rights, on charges that are either completely and demonstrably false and fabricated, or of a non-criminal nature and absolutely related to thought. This month we reported 83 new convicts of conscience.
- **205 Condemned of conscience**, who suffer prosecutor's orders or judicial sentences of forced labour at home, measures of limitation of freedom, probation under threat, and other limitations to freedom, including those under final sentence without execution, and which the regime, moreover, is in the habit of revoking and inserting in prison if the activist does not cease his pro-democratic activity, as we have seen month after month for years.
- **92 Other Political Prisoners**, not falling into the above categories, but identified as political prisoners behind bars. Those on this list cannot be defended as Convicts of Conscience. Either violence has been present in their cases in some way, or they have committed punishable offences in addition to their political imprisonment. There are also quite a number of cases where it is not possible for us to fully verify the fabrication of their alleged offence. However, in all of them the political overtones, the lack of access to effective defence, and the excessive harshness of the sentences make them political and defensible cases, in some cases to adapt the sentences to what was done and in others for the right to have access to an effective defence that would possibly free them from any charges.

THE FULL LIST CAN BE  
FOUND AT THIS LINK

## 2. LETTERS FROM PRISON: THOUSANDS LANGUISH IN PRISON, MILLIONS SUFFER OUTSIDE

In this report, we have tried to reflect just a sample of the chronicles that prisoners send us from prison to relatives and NGOs. We have chosen three letters from among the many that have reached us, so that readers can get an idea of what tens of thousands of relatives who have relatives in political prison in Cuba go through on a daily basis:

Mailene Noguera Santiesteban, Yessica Coímbra Noriega and the twins, whose names are almost the same, Lisdany and Lisdiany Rodríguez Isaac.

### **MAILENE NOGUERA SANTIESTEBAN ([LINK TO LETTER](#))**

On 17 July 2021, several State Security agents forcibly detained Mailene Noguera Santiesteban at her home. Mailene is accused of Public Disorder, Propagation of Epidemics and Contempt for peacefully demonstrating 6 days earlier, on 11 July 2021, in Mayabeque, Cuba.

That same day, already detained in the former prison for HIV-AIDS cases in Güines (Mayabeque), Mailene witnessed several officers beating Manuel Velázquez Licea with sticks and kicks until he was bleeding, as she recounts in the handwritten manuscript sent to us by a political prisoner.

After this episode, Mailene says that she was "dragged by the hair" by three officers on the floor until they began to verbally assault her on the floor of her cell, using words such as "filthy, lousy", "where is the money and the clothes that the Americans sent you?" At the time, Mailene was half-naked, as she and her husband were arrested at home in the early hours of the morning while they were asleep, leaving the police their youngest son, aged 8, alone in the house.

Mailene witnessed how "the [11] political] detainees arrived like dragged dogs, the men and women brutally mistreated, handcuffed like the worst criminal, treated like human waste against the wall", while the officers shouted, among other threats, at the detainees: "don't you dare move or I'll break your teeth, you worm dog".

They "were beaten up a lot for not repeating what they wanted. I could only say 'Homeland and Life'," Mailene adds. Noguera Santiesteban affirms that they practised physical and psychological torture on underage girls, "with a gun to their heads, and with tweezers they pulled out false nails and tongue piercings".

### **Institutionalised racism in prisons**

She even witnessed how a mother (Maira Coímbra) and her daughter (Yessica Coímbra) were imprisoned in separate cells, while the officers shouted at them if "they didn't look too black to be protesting in the streets, that black people are not wanted anywhere in the world, and Cuba would be no exception". The testimony in Mailene's letter fully coincides with what is narrated in another letter, obtained by another means, from the woman herself, Yessica Coímbra, as we shall see.

### **YESSICA COIMBRA ([LINK TO LETTER](#))**

Yessica Coímbra, whom Mailene names in her letter, is a 26-year-old Cuban woman who lives in Mayabeque and is in the Prison "Mujeres de Occidente, El Guatao", facing an 8 year sentence for the crimes of Continuous Public Disorder, Continuous Disrespect, Theft and Contempt, after demonstrating peacefully on 11 July in Nueva Paz, Mayabeque. Her family has sent us Yessica's testimony of how events have unfolded since 11 July:

Yessica and her friends were in the Reparto Vegas Park (Nueva Paz, Mayabeque) when the arrests began: "two buses arrived with government workers, while we were discussing with them, behind a very large flag a group of black berets and policemen in civilian clothes were hiding", Yessica recounts. From that moment on, they began to beat adults and children indiscriminately with "big sticks". "Many demonstrators like me, who were just asking for an improvement, were injured, they beat us mercilessly."

Minutes later, the same officers went to Yessica's home where they met with her son: Enrique Miguel Tablada Coímbra, 8 years old, from whom they forcibly took his mobile phone "in case he was recording", and told the minor to call an adult. The little boy was so shocked that night that he suffered tachycardia.

The next day, 12 July, Yessica was transferred to the former prison for HIV-AIDS cases in Güines (Mayabeque): "there were 12 of us in the bus and they took 2 or 3 guards per prisoner; they threw the men against the bars and told them to shout 'long live the revolution', and if they didn't, they beat them until they bled, and they also beat the women, and even the boys and girls between 17 and 19 years of age", Yessica tells us in her letter.

*"My mother was detained after the police threatened my child, I spent 7 or 8 days without knowing if my mother was alive or dead. Two men and a woman beat me on my arms and pushed my head against the table for not saying what they wanted.*

#### The "Shakira": torture with the name of a memorable artist

An officer was then sent to spray Yessica's eyes with a "spray", put her in "shakiras" (handcuffs that immobilise hands and feet) and beat her, not to speak. The "shakira" torture is very popular among prison guards in Cuba and we have described it before. It is practised on thousands of prisoners in Cuba, especially political prisoners. After handcuffing their hands and feet, they beat them. The guards mock the situation and have likened the movements of the prisoners to Shakira's dances.

What Yessica did not know was that in a nearby cell was her 56-year-old mother, who was ill with various pathologies, listening to her daughter being tortured. We discovered this by cross-referencing both letters, Yessica's and Mailene Noguera Santiesteban's.

#### **LISDIANY RODRÍGUEZ ISAAC ([LINK TO LETTER](#))**

Lisdiany Rodríguez Isaac faces a 10-year prison sentence for demonstrating on 11 July 2021 in Villa Clara, Cuba, on charges of Public Disorder, Propagation of Epidemics, Disrespect, Assault and Instigation to commit a crime. She is 23 years old and is incarcerated in the Guamajal Women's Prison in Santa Clara.

In her letter from prison, she writes: "I am in prison for taking part in the great and historic demonstration on 11 July 2021. My [twin] sister and I have been in prison for 4 months and one day".

When she was arrested on 17 July, Lisdiany left her 3-year-old daughter in the care of the child's grandmother, Lisdiany's mother, but her mother, Lisdiany's grandmother, was arrested on 15 November, leaving the child completely unprotected.

*"It's not enough for them to keep my sister and me in prison, with a 10-year sentence... the only thing I want is for them to stop harassing and threatening my mother, and if that doesn't happen, they force me to make protests, such as hunger strikes and even sew my mouth shut, because I feel terribly afraid and cornered."*

### 3. SOLIDARITY OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN 2021 AND THE REFLECTION OF PRISONERS DEFENDERS

The European Parliament has shown great solidarity with the people of Cuba this year 2021. It has passed 3 resolutions with unprecedented level of detail on the repression of a totalitarian regime that has not hesitated to take away the innocent and apolitical children from almost 2,000 mothers, not a few of them previously "revolutionary". These resolutions contained provisions condemning the repression, and others mandating the European Commission and the EEAS to seek alternative action. Among the repression denounced were the slavery practices of the more than 50,000 Cuban workers abroad on behalf of the state or Cuban companies, the pre-criminal sentencing of more than 11,000 young Cubans, and a long list of heinous human rights violations.

The repression headings, both on 16 December and 16 September, have been voted in favour by all Socialists, Greens, Liberals, Christian Democrats and Conservatives - the whole chamber. The resolutions, including the "internal" political provisions, were passed by very large majorities, but when the separate votes were taken on the repression headings, more than 600 MEPs (the whole chamber with marginal exceptions) spoke out strongly against repression in Cuba. This was most evident in the last resolution, where Socialists and Greens joined the whole chamber in voting against the regime's repression, and hundreds abstained when it came to internal policy issues. Hundreds of them did not vote against because the EU's Cuba policy is proving a failure even for European interests. What they disagree on is how to change this reality.

Special mention should be made of the cases defended by the European Parliament on 16 December as mere examples of repression in Cuba: [José Daniel Ferrer](#), [Lady in White Aymara Nieto](#), [Maykel Castillo Pérez](#) (winner of two Grammy Awards for "Patria y Vida"), [Luis Robles Elizástegui](#), [Félix Navarro Rodríguez](#), [Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara](#), [Reverend Lorenzo Rosales Fajardo](#), [Andy Dunier García Lorenzo](#), and [Yunior García Aguilera](#), as an exponent of a brave and prepared youth who have to literally flee the country in order to survive the repression of thought, expression and demonstration, as well as the systematic violation of all human rights.

#### One step further

However, the lukewarm action of the EEAS, the funds and legitimacy granted to the Cuban Government at the expense of the misappropriation of funds for Civil Society while the funds have gone to the Cuban Government, the cornering of Civil Society by the EU Embassy in Cuba - which since the signing of the ADPC has never organised a public meeting with civil society in Cuba, but only with State Cuban organizations - and the argument of confrontation with the United States of which Mr. Josep Borrell is a champion when it comes to Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua, continue to provoke the indignation of a majority of the European Parliament, which has condemned this behaviour in great detail.

Now that the world is polarised, that polarisation is more globalised than ever, and that Europe has a huge weakness on all its borders, both because of fraudulently created migration crises and threats to use military force on such boundaries, it seems illogical that the anachronistic and unaware anti-Americanist ideology of one politician, Mr. Josep Borrell, or even several, should put at risk the European security of the future and friendship with a nation, it is impossible to forget, that sent hundreds of thousands of its sons to die to save Europe from dictatorships, and then financed the reconstruction of the nations and lands of Europe, and which is now the only military retaining wall the democratic world has.

The departure of forcibly expatriated dissidents is often used by European politicians as victories in the guise of gestures of solidarity, when in reality they are the mortgage of the future of an entire people. In 2010, Cuba's expulsion from the Group of 75 was not just a release from prison of a group of dissidents. Meanwhile, they arrived in Spain and did not even have mattresses to sleep on. The current president of Prisoners Defenders lived through that ill-fated operation where the important thing was the political gesture, but the victims were abandoned once they served the real purpose of President Zapatero's operation, and private funds were then raised for the needs of those who left prison to sink into destitution. Zapatero used that release, in reality, to clean up the image of a totalitarian regime and bring about the current dialogue and cooperation agreement. This same recipe will be used today, as there are no new cooks in Europe's political ovens. All those involved wash their political images at the expense of some of the hostages that every decade the Cuban government creates in their thousands.

Europe fought against the barbarity of the terrorism of ETA, and also negotiated with the gang in parallel, but never stopped calling it a criminal and terrorist gang.

Governments must negotiate for the victims relentlessly, but not morally mortgage themselves, as only by using firmness in principles, in demonstrations and in the strongest condemnation of repression can such negotiation bear real fruit and not mirages to return to square one decade after decade.

When one renounces ethical and moral principles, uses the excuse of reactive repression to avoid calling a spade a spade, while in reality is protecting one's own interests, where financial leverage with the regime increases every year until debt forgiveness becomes necessary in order to maintain a few paltry hotels (ultra-capitalist, by the way), swaps benefiting the regime are permitted, the ordeal for the Cuban people is perpetuated.

When our natural allies, the democracies, are insulted by demonstrations aimed at making them guilty of violent, ruthless, systematic repression by the Cuban state against its citizens, we do Europe and its political credibility a disservice. If the detractors of the embargo do not mention the appalling human rights violations in Cuba when the embargo is voted on in the United Nations, neither is it decent in the face of execrable violations and crimes against humanity to bring up the embargo in order to place it on a level of culpability for crimes against humanity that a government commits against its people. These are two different issues, and both would disappear if human rights were respected in Cuba.

#### **ABOUT PRISONERS DEFENDERS**

(Prisoners Defenders International Network) is an institution rooted in the deepest humanism, whose mission is human rights reporting, legal action and pro-democratic advocacy. Among the organisations that adopt our reports and explicitly refer to us are the European Parliament, the Human Rights Documentation Service of the European Parliament, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations, the United States Congress, the United States Department of State, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and many other organisations, governments and institutions, as well as media outlets such as ABC, Le Monde, Le Point, Le Figaro, New York Times or Washington Post, among hundreds of newspapers and publications. For its part, Cuban Prisoners Defenders, a section dedicated exclusively to Cuba, is part of the Prisoners Defenders International Network, a legally registered association based in Madrid, Spain.

#### **REQUEST FOR REPORTS**

Organisations wishing to receive Prisoners Defenders' work (lists of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, legal studies of political prisoners, legal studies on Cuba, studies on repression and prisons in Cuba, etc.) and who do not yet receive them regularly, can contact Prisoners Defenders at [info@prisonersdefenders.org](mailto:info@prisonersdefenders.org) or by telephone/WhatsApp on **+34 647564741**. Disambiguation: Prisoners Defenders generates its contents and reports in Spanish, and subsequently translates them into other languages for the sole purpose of facilitating reading, but in the event of any need for nuance or disambiguation, the reports generated in Spanish will prevail and will be official in the name of this entity, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

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