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Cuba Fact Sheet

Florida Center for Survivors of Torture

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FLORIDA CENTER FOR SURVIVORS OF TORTURE

Inspiring Hope and Understanding

CUBA

TIMELINE

1895-98 – Cuba fights a second war of independence from Spain as the US declares war on Spain.

1898 – Spain defeats the US and relinquishes all control of Cuba to the US.

1902 – Cuba gains independence. Yet, the US retains the right to intervene.

1940 – Cuba establishes a constitution and elects Batista president as a self-proclaimed “progressive socialist”.

1944 – Batista is voted out of office.

Apr 30, 1948 – The Organization of American States, which included 21 states including Cuba adopts the charter of the OAS.

1952 – Batista regains power in a coup d’état.

1959 – Castro takes over Havana and ousts Batista. The new Cuban government annexes US properties and redistributes land.

1960-61 – US imposes an embargo on Cuba and breaks diplomatic relations.

1961 – US bombs Cuban air force bases. Castro proclaims Cuba a socialist state. US unsuccessfully attempts to start an uprising at the Bay of Pigs.

1962 – OAS suspends Cuba’s membership. US makes travel and financial transactions with Cuba illegal.

Oct. 1962 – US sets up a blockade of Cuba and forces the USSR to remove missiles in exchange for a US promise not to invade.

1972 – Cuba grants full membership in the Soviet run Council for Mutual Economic Assistance.

1980 – Approximately 125,000 Cubans flee to the US.

1994 – US and Cuba sign an agreement allowing 20,000 Cubans into the US each year in exchange for Cuba curbing the exodus of Cuban refugees.

1996 – Cuba shoots down two US aircraft piloted by Cuban exiles resulting in the permanence of the US trade embargo.

1998 – US allows Cuban Americans to send money to their relatives in Cuba.

2000 – US Congress allows the sale of food and medicine to Cuba.

2002 – US flies prisoners into Guantanamo Bay for interrogation.

- UN Human Rights Commission criticizes Cuba’s human rights record.



- Criticisms of Cuba lead to an amendment of the Cuban constitution, which makes the socialist system permanent.

2003 – 75 dissidents are given excessive prison sentences and three people attempting to reach the US are executed. Cuba’s crackdown leads the EU to cancel an official visit and freeze diplomatic relations.

2004 – UN Human Rights Commission condemns Cuba over its human rights record.

2005 – Diplomacy is renewed with the EU.

2006 – Castro blocks US mission building’s displays of human rights messages with a monument.

2008 – Raul Castro, Fidel’s brother is appointed president after Fidel announces his retirement. Private ownership bans are lifted and plans for salary equality are abandoned.

2009 – US lifts Bush Administration restrictions on Cuban-Americans sending money and visiting Cuba.

-OAS votes to lift ban on Cuban membership, but Cuba claims no desire to rejoin OAS.

-Reporters Without Borders ranks Cuba 170 out of 175 in the Press Freedom Index. At least 22 journalists remain in prison.

2010 – Cuba ratifies the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

- After a hunger strike, political prisoner Orlando Zapata Tamayo dies. After a visit by Archbishop Jaime Ortega, wives and mothers of political prisoners are allowed to demonstrate.

* For research purposes please contact FCST for references



Cuba

TORTURE METHODS

FORCED INTERROGATIONS in inhumane and dangerous conditions have occurred in which access is denied to legal counsel and family.

BEATINGS including physical abuse, harassment, and humiliation of dissidents have included twisting arms, hitting on the backs of legs, and throwing people down stairs. The use of wooden bats, stones, and metal rods wrapped in newspaper by "Rapid Response Brigades" (state agents) have been used to coerce and intimidate.

RESTRICTION OF FOOD AND WATER has been used as torture by giving prisoners insufficient and contaminated food and water which, leads to parasites, malnutrition and other medical conditions.

SEXUAL HUMILIATION has included forcing prisoners to commit degrading acts, stripping prisoners of clothing and forcing them to parade around in front of other prisoners.

THREATS AND HUMILIATION have been used as a tool of violent verbal coercion by security officials and groups of civilians tied to the state. Threats of assault, rape, and death have been used against dissidents and their family members, including minor children. Dissidents have been told by state agents that they were to face a firing squad in order to solicit confessions.

REPUDIATION has occurred with public protests in front of homes of dissidents and often results in physical violence toward the inhabitants. Public protests are often facilitated by the state.

CELL ISOLATION usually subjects political prisoners to solitary confinement in either total darkness or permanent bright lights. In addition, near to complete isolation of dissidents from their communities, friends, and families occurs.

INADEQUATE MEDICAL CARE and routine denial of treatment for serious medical problems as punishment for previous "counter-revolutionary" activities and other dissent results in the exacerbation of existing medical conditions and the creation of new medical conditions.

CURRENT SITUATION

GOVERNMENT: Since Fidel Castro passed control to Raul Castro in 2006, Cuba has continued to enforce political conformity using criminal prosecutions, long-and-short-term detention, harassment, denial of employment, and travel restrictions. Raul Castro has kept the legal and institutional structures firmly in place that criminalize and deny the right to dissent or strike and restrict freedom of movement.

HUMAN RIGHTS: Independent observers have been denied the right to check the human rights record of Cuba. Human Rights groups are denied legal status and the government employs harassment, beatings, and imprisonment to punish groups who attempt to document abuses. The government relies on arbitrary detention to harass and intimidate individuals exercising their fundamental rights. The detentions are often used to prevent individuals from participating in anything viewed as critical of the government. No charges justify the detentions, but security officials warn detainees of longer arrests if they continue to participate in activities deemed critical of the government.

JOURNALISM: Journalists working for independent and alternative news agencies continue to face harassment and intimidation in the form of short-term detention and monitoring by security officers. A small number of independent journalists manage to write articles for foreign websites or maintain independent blogs, but they must publish their work from home computers, save information on memory sticks, and upload articles and posts through illegal internet connections because of the government maintained media monopoly. Yet, recently Cubans have been allowed to buy mobile phones and computers for personal use.

INTERNATIONAL LAW: Cuba ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1995, yet has not taken enough steps to assure compliance with it. Furthermore, Cuba has failed to ratify the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.