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**Cuba Solidarity Campaign UK, Submission to the Universal Periodic Review,  
Cuba, May 2013**

**Cover page**

The Cuba Solidarity Campaign (CSC) is the British organisation for the defence of Cuba and its peoples' right to self-determination and national sovereignty.

The Cuba Solidarity Campaign is the British organisation for solidarity with Cuba. Our central offices are in London. We have 30 regional groups throughout the UK. We have 4,500 individual members and over 500 affiliated organisations including almost every Trade Union in the UK, representing around 6 million Trade Union members. CSC holds an Annual General Meeting which elects an Executive Committee of 36 members each year which coordinates the Campaign's work.

CSC is a broad based organisation open to all. It is a not for profit voluntary organisation. CSC works closely with the All Party Parliamentary Group on Cuba and holds regular information meetings with the representatives of the British Government and Foreign Office. CSC publishes a quarterly magazine, Cuba Si, which is sent to all members and friends.

[www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk](http://www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk)

Rob Miller  
Director

October 5<sup>th</sup> 2012

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1. Despite the fact that Cuba has faced an aggressive blockade over many decades it has, in stark contrast to this inhuman assault on its own sovereignty and basic right to self-determination, steadfastly remained committed to promoting the welfare of its people and ensuring that their human rights are promoted.
2. The blockade carried out by successive Administrations of the United States of America has been repudiated by the overwhelmingly majority of member states of the United Nations at numerous General Assemblies. Notwithstanding this gross violation of the rights of the Cuban people, Cuba has not engaged in any form of retaliatory action and has repeatedly declared itself prepared to enter into discussions without any pre-conditions to seek to resolve this injustice.
3. The consequences of the blockade impact on the general capacity of the country to develop economically but are also felt in a very direct personal manner because the blockade has the consequence of preventing the Cuban people with a variety of medical conditions from accessing medicines and essential equipment critical to their well-being.
4. The impact of this unjust and inhuman process gravely damages the ability of educators and health care professionals from obtaining materials essential to their work. The form of this blockade, with justification, may be described as genocidal according to the terms defined in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted in 1948.
5. Groundless though this blockade is, it is in addition a form of collective punishment, and as such is in contravention of the IV Geneva Convention. It is no exaggeration to say that viewed in a scenario of armed conflict such an act would be deemed a War Crime and be subject to scrutiny at the highest level by appropriate international bodies.
6. The imposition of such an unwarranted policy is a gross infringement of the rights of the Cuban nation and of every individual citizen of the country. The United States of America's blockade of Cuba is in violation of both the letter and the spirit of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.<sup>1</sup>

The *Declaration* clearly states:

**Article 28.**

*Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.*

7. In contrast to the treatment Cuba has had to endure it has at all times placed the well-being of the people of the island as a matter of paramount concern and, in

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>

addition to its commitment to the rights of the citizens of the island, it has maintained a willingness to participate in discussions on questions of human rights with the appropriate UN Agencies. Cuba responded to the Universal Periodic Review of 2009 by accepting a high number of its recommendations.

8. Cuba is a state party to a number of international policies including:
  - the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
  - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women;
  - Convention on the Rights of the Child;
  - Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the Sale of Children , Child Prostitution and Child Pornography;
  - Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Participation of Children in Armed Conflict;
  - International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid;
  - UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education;
  - Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
  - International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries.

Cuba is firmly committed to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and has already done so in numerous fields. According to the Millennium Development Goals Tracker information Cuba has achieved the goals in respect of:

- Universal Primary Education;
- The promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women;
- The reduction of child mortality.

Cuba is identified as on track and very likely to achieve the goals covering:

- The eradication of extreme poverty and hunger;
- The improvement of maternal health and
- The combating of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Again according to the Tracker Cuba, with some changes, is likely to achieve the remaining goals:

- The ensuring of environmental sustainability
- The Development of a global partnership for Development.

The achievement of these goals by Cuba is of course all the more remarkable given the impact of the United States of America blockade which impinges on their capacities to do so. The achievement of the economic goals in Target 1 are impaired by the blockade. One specific example is Target 8.E – access to affordable essential drugs which is inhibited because of the imposition by the Administration of the USA of fines on companies trading with Cuba and this includes pharmaceutical companies.

### **Cuba's ongoing commitment to Human Rights**

9. In the context of its respect for human rights and on the basis of existing methodology and principles, Cuba has extended appropriate safeguards to its citizens in the realms of land transfer, social security, employment, housing and all those areas which have been affected as a result of changed circumstances arising from changes which have been introduced in these fields in recent years by the Government of Cuba.

### **Equality**

10. Cuba has however taken steps beyond these measures to encourage practical steps to promote equality and eradicate discrimination between boys and girls, youth, senior citizens, the disabled, prison inmates, and other areas. The Cuban government has also adopted measures to fight against forms of discrimination based on prejudices due to sexual orientation and gender identity.

With women constituting more than 36% of its Members of Parliament, Cuba stands higher than many other nations in the world.<sup>2</sup>

### **Legal System and Capital Punishment**

11. In April of 2009, the Cuban Council of State decided to commute the death penalty and replace it with a 30-year sentence or life imprisonment for any inmates having received the death sentence. Today there is no longer anyone sentenced to the death penalty in Cuba.

12. The legal system in Cuba is based on respect for the independence of the legal process and the judiciary. The system is based on equality before the law and the presumption of innocence and all trials are public with, those accused having a right to a legal defence and the right of appeal.

### **Religious Freedom**

13. There are an estimated 400 religions and religious institutions in Cuba and all citizens are free to practice their religions without any form of interference by the state. In recent years two papal visits have taken place. The Cuban Bishops' Conference representing Catholic bishops has expressed its opposition to the blockade of the Cuba by the United States of America.

### **Employment Rights**

14. Cuba has ratified eighty eight Conventions of the International Labour Organisation and the rights of employees are embodied in the Labour Code and additional legislation. Steps are being taken to update these provisions in accordance with the changes to employments that have been introduced over the last few years.

### **Right to Education**

15. Cuba's record on Education has been acknowledged internationally at the highest professional levels including most notably the UNESCO. Cuba has shared its expertise in the field of the eradication of illiteracy with other countries worldwide. Despite the constraints that the country has in terms of available economic resources

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<sup>2</sup> Tracking the Millennium Development Goals :  
<http://www.mdgmonitor.org/map.cfm?goal=1&indicator=0&cd=>

Cuba has not only achieved but surpassed the Millennium Development Goals in the field of Education.

Cuba has been placed 14th in the Education for All Rating in the UNESCO Report on Lifelong Learning (2011). In the field of assisting other countries with literacy programmes, Cuba's ground-breaking *Yo, sí puedo* and its follow up programme *Ya puedo leer y escribir* together with *Yo, sí puedo seguir* had resulted by May 2012 in more than 6 million people worldwide benefiting.

#### **Cuba's internationalist responses – Health and natural disasters**

16. In addition to Cuba's sharing of its achievements in the field of the eradication of illiteracy, the country has sought to share its medical expertise, assisting and contributing to the development of medical programmes in numerous countries across the globe.

Cuba has demonstrated its humanitarianism in the rapidity with which it has offered its services to others faced with natural disasters most recently in Haiti. Its programme has however not merely sought to respond to tragic events but to contribute to leaving in place a sustainable methodology for coping with any future such disasters by the countries themselves. In the case of Haiti this has involved offering students from that country the opportunity to train as medical professionals.

17. Despite the adverse circumstances Cuba is confronted by as the result of the daily impact of the unjustifiable blockade by the United States of America, Cuba has continued to place a priority on achieving the highest standards for its people. Cuba has stood ready to engage in collaboration with the United Nations and its agencies to discuss all aspects tabled for its consideration in a spirit of mutual respect and acknowledgement of Cuban sovereignty.