

# **ACFS**



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**Submission by the Perth Branch of the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society, ACFS to the working group of the Council of Human Rights**

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Geneva

Excellency

We submit the following contribution to the analysis of Cuba by the working group of the Council of Human Rights.

At this moment as the world faces an environmental and economic crisis Cuba with great humility continues to be an inspiration to other nations in areas of healthcare, education, scientific and technical research, culture and sports.

The Cuban people continue to exercise the right to self-determination. During the 1990's Cuba faced the crisis of resource shortages post the fall of the Soviet bloc with no loss of its important achievements since the revolution in life expectancy, birth survival rates or provision of education to its peoples. This was only possible because the Cuban people actively participate in the effective system of democracy they designed, approved of and control. It is through this democracy and the concern in Cuba for human rights that the people were able to face food shortages and hardship without loss of lives and in a spirit of peace.

Currently in at least 14 different countries there are food riots and starvation as resource shortages and a rise in costs lashes the global community. Cuba was the first country to raise concerns about the impact on food supplies from the use of cereal crops as biofuels; it was the first country to promote the right to food. It was through Cuba's initiative that the 7<sup>th</sup> special session on food security was called by the Human Rights Council.

Cuba also continues to strive to facilitate attention to issues of the rights of people in the struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance and to encourage frank and open dialogue on human rights matters.

Cuba has made great progress towards the elimination of discrimination against women. Women in Cuba have equal constitutional rights as men in economic, political, cultural and social fields, as well as in the family. 49.5% of all graduates are women. Women currently hold 35% of the parliamentary seats in the Cuban National Assembly and rank 6<sup>th</sup> in the world.

Cuba has a vast record of participation internationally in developing countries and when natural disasters have struck. There are currently around 37,000 Cuban cooperation workers in 108 nations of Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia who share in Cuba's achievements in areas like healthcare and education.

*Elizabeth Hulm, Myrna Tokinson, Len Howle & Vinnie Molina  
Executive Committee 2008/9*

In recent years Cuba has extended its human rights concerns to the care of the environment in which the people live and the access to a safe environment for future generations. The programs for renewable, non polluting energy generation, the safe production of food, the conservation of wetlands and forests, the protection of threatened species to name a few exemplify the altruistic commitment Cuba asserts for the human rights of its people, the peoples of the world and the peoples of the future.

In relation to the right to organize and with respect to ILO conventions, Cuban workers choose to join their trade union organizations and they enjoy great levels of membership despite membership not being compulsory.

We do not agree with the inhumane US blockade on Cuba as this has a direct impact on the Cuban people, their well being and violates the human rights of all citizens of the Republic of Cuba.

It is with highest regard and admiration that we make this submission to the council for consideration.

Yours truly,

Vinnie Molina  
Branch President  
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