

To the attention of High Commissioner of Human Rights,

Dear Madam/Sir,

José Martí Association for Friendship with Cuba is a Turkish NGO with a mission of strengthening friendship and solidarity relations between Turkish and Cuban people. The association has more than 1000 supporters from all over the country. It has two branches at two major cities of Turkey.

We have already informed that you initiated an assessment procedure about Cuba in the scope of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism. Since the review procedure is open to views of NGOs according to the Council Resolution 5/1 Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council, we would like to share our consideration with you.

As a part of our mission, our association regularly examines the social, economic and political conditions under which Cuban people live. In addition to the literal information, time to time, we are organizing special trips to Cuba to know Cuban reality better. To illustrate, we have already organized visits of occupational delegates of physicians, lawyers, economists and teachers and they conducted a series of meeting with Cuban bodies.

As a result of all these efforts, we believe that we are adequate to talk about human rights conditions in Cuba. This is why we are sending this letter to you.

First of all, we believe that everyone should respect Cuban peoples' right to self-determination and sovereignty. However, just from the beginning of the Cuban Revolution, successive US governments maintain systematic aggressive policies including a wide range of instruments from supporting terrorist organizations against Cuba to imposing economic, commercial and financial blockade. Indeed, US governments systematically try to change the regime of Cuban Republic adopted by Cuban people by their own free will. This aggressive intervention policy causes *extraordinary* conditions in which Cuban people have to live and these conditions make further economic and social development of Cuba extremely difficult.

Despite all these difficulties, Cuba has achieved to establish an equitable and free society. The level of human development in Cuba can be examined at world reports of various UN institutions including UNDP, UNESCO and WHO.

We believe that respect to human rights of citizens underlies the all these achievements. Because human rights is not an overwhelming rhetoric at Cuba as it is most of the countries. On the contrary, it is concretely guaranteed by various social services and political opportunities.

Cuba is a fine example of participatory democracy. Cuban people are one of the mostly organised people in the world. Every public sphere is governed basically by related people's self organisation. The Cuban Constitution guarantees the participation of these massive organisations to the decision making process. Cuban workers are not legally obliged to be member of a trade-union, but every worker has a right to vote in general assembly of these unions regardless of whether or not s/he is a

member. Moreover, 98 percent of active population is a member of one of the 19 trade unions that are not subordinated by any governmental body. They are governed by “workers parliaments”. There are a lot of other kinds of self governing massive organisation like National Small Farmer’s Union, Cuba Women Federation, Federation of University Students, and Federation of High School Students.

Elections as the key mechanisms of a democracy base on these massive people’s organisations’ participation rather than big and expansive media campaigns funded by big bosses. An unprivileged worker can be proposed by her/his colleagues as candidate to be a member of municipal, provincial or national parliaments.

On the other hand, disinformation about the Cuban political system is the mostly applied argument to slander to Cuba by US and its followers hostile to Cuba. Communist Party of Cuba represents the unity of Cuban people. She just organizes leads and mobilises the society to common targets. It is not necessary to be a party member to nominate to electoral position. Moreover, the party does not support any of the candidates. The duty of the party is such encourage and support people’s participation to the decision making processes. According to the Constitution, she does not establish the government, does not intervene the decisions of the government.

By means of these participatory mechanisms, voter participation to national election is always very high. For example, at last national election conducted on 20 January 2008, voter participation rate was 96,89 percent that is one of the highest ratio in the world.

Furthermore, human rights in Cuba are supported by high quality, universal, free and egalitarian education, social security, public health services. Working is also another guaranteed human right at Cuba.

Dear Madam/Sir,

Cuba, as an independent, sovereign and welfare society constitutes an important example for our people. The social, cultural, political and economic developments that Cuba have already achieved and are still achieving are encouraging us for a better social and political order.

As Turkish friends of Cuba, we will appreciate that if you take into account our opinions on issue during your review study.

Sincerely yours,

Tezcan E. Abay

Chairperson

José Martí Association for Friendship with Cuba