

Sri Lanka National Committee for Solidarity with Cuba

Country Report on CUBA Universal Periodical Review- February 2009

Much concern has been expressed on the human rights situation in Cuba by interested parties. However, much of it is part of the anti-Cuban political campaign orchestrated by the United States of America in various international forums, including the Human Rights Council of the United Nations. Hence, we give below a report on the true situation of human rights as it is found in Cuba today.

In the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, it was stated that human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and that all categories of human rights must be attended to in a just and equitable manner, on equal grounds and granting each the same weight.

We find that Cuba has given equal recognition to all categories of human rights in accordance with the level of social development it has reached. We believe that economic and social rights are as important as political rights.

Cuba has assured equal access to education and health to all citizens and has achieved significant successes in these two vital spheres. In Cuba infant mortality is now 5.3 per 1000 live births, a remarkable achievement for a developing country. Life expectancy has improved to 77.5 years. There is a doctor for every 160 persons. Education is free from the kindergarten to the University, right up to the doctoral level. It has attained almost universal literacy.

Right to life is guaranteed. There has not been a single instance of disappearance or involuntary removal of persons. Nor were there extra-judicial killings or kangaroo courts. All this was despite an uninterrupted series of criminal terrorist attacks and sabotage by mercenary forces instigated by Washington.

Nobody is discriminated on account of race, colour or gender. The Cuban Constitution concedes equal rights and duties for all citizens and discrimination is proscribed and penalized by law. The Penal Code, the Social Security Law, the Family Code, the Youth and Childhood Code and other laws complement and establish guarantees in the exercise of all human rights, including civil and political rights.

Cuba has a unique system of elections and democratic representative institutions that guarantee civil and political rights of all citizens. It is the first country in the world that gave universal suffrage to all over 16 years of age. All those elected can be recalled by the voters at any time during their term in office. No representative is above the law or their voters. What is significant is that the most important laws, those that may affect the population as a whole or those that may be of concern to them or to workers and their

families are discussed with them and consultations are held all across the country in factories, peasant cooperatives, schools, in the neighborhoods, bodies and institutions before a law is analyzed, debated and passed in parliament.

All attributes of democracy such as the freedom of association, freedom of press, equality before the law are guaranteed in Cuba. For example, the Labour Code establishes the guarantees necessary for unrestricted union activity to exist in every workplace in the country and for the workers and their representatives to participate fully in the process of making decisions which most affect their many interests.

There has never been suppression of a demonstration by workers, peasants, students, or other citizens. No policeman or soldier has ever been set against the people to neither beat or repress them, nor have water trucks, tear gas, or rubber bullets have been used as is often found in the so called free democracies in the West and elsewhere.

You do not see children begging, homeless, or abandoned in the streets. All men and women, all citizens, receive social protection through retirement, pensions, and social security.

There are numerous civil society organizations and NGOs operating independently in Cuba. Some of them are international NGOs.

In Cuba people charged with crimes are duly indicted before a Court of Law and if found guilty punished in according to law. Prisoners are not tortured or ill treated. It is no secret that even 1200 invaders who were taken prisoner during the Bay of Pigs invasion were well treated in prison until they were exchanged for food and medicine.

The revolution has done much for the elimination of gender inequality and emancipation women. The Cuban Family Code recognizes the equal responsibility of men and women to contribute to the maintenance of the household and proclaims equal rights to work, study and leisure. Cuban women play a significant role in the economy as well as in the social and political life of the society. In 2006, women constituted 46 % of the workforce in the state civil sector. Among technicians/professionals there were 61% women. The corresponding ratio among researchers was 48.9 percent. While 63.3% of the undergraduates were women, there were 56 women among every hundred doctors. In general, women constituted 52.3% of healthcare workers. There were 71 % women among district attorneys while 36% parliamentarians were also women.

Cuba's human rights record is impeccable. It cannot be judged by extraneous standards as some in the West attempt to do. In analyzing the cases of so-called political activists being incarcerated there is heavy documentation provided by the Cuban Government to show that they have been tried and punished *according to law* on charges that are criminal and not political.

