



**Associação dos Jovens Pan-Africanistas Revolucionários da Guiné-Bissau**  
**AJOPAR**

The Association of Young Pan-Africanist Revolutionaries of Guinea-Bissau, (**AJOPAR**) contribution to the Universal periodic review (**UPR**) of the Human Rights Council on **Cuba**

### Identification

The Association of Young Pan-Africanist Revolutionaries of Guinea-Bissau, abbreviated as “AJOPAR”, is a non-profit organization whose main objective is the total Unification and Liberation of Africa with scientific socialism. It was founded on 4 May 2002 in Bissau, Guinea-Bissau by students and youth.

It is non-partisan, democratic, revolutionary organization with principles of collective leadership, democratic centralism, criticism and self-criticism.

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This submission addresses various aspects of Cuba's situation relevant to this 4<sup>th</sup> cycle of the universal periodic review “UPR” and reflects the experiences that AJOPAR has had directly with the Cuban People and their protection of human rights in general.

1. AJOPAR has worked with Cubans in Cuba, in Guinea-Bissau, and various parts of Africa, Europe and North America.
2. During our visits to Cuba we visited hospitals, schools, universities, health clinics, senior centers, orphanages, urban and rural neighborhoods in Santa Clara, Pinar del Rio, Havana, Guinia de Miranda, Hanabanilla, and others.
3. Our members learned that as basic human rights citizens in Cuba have the rights to housing, free and universal education, free medical care from the cradle to the grave, dignified work and retirement and equal participation in political and economic power.
4. In all our trips to Cuba we have met with children and youth. We learned that even if there is only one child in a community, she or he has a right to school free of charge (i.e. - without school fees) and nursery school, through primary, secondary and university.
5. We noted the humanist relationship between the elements of security and defense with the population. We never witnessed or heard about police brutality.
6. The health and safety of children is of the utmost importance in Cuban society. The rights of the child are fully respected and carried out. On a visit to school for children who had committed crimes, for example, we learned that there is no juvenile justice system in Cuba. Children under the age of 18 cannot be arrested. If they are caught breaking the law, their family members are contacted and social services and the Committees in Defense of the Revolution (CDR) become involved. It is a family- and community-based approach to dealing with children whose actions are harmful to the society.
7. We learned that the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) was established in 1960 and since then has almost 90% of Cuban women over 14 years of age. It is not government supported or financed.
8. Some of the FMC's most important achievements have been supporting the mass education of women, incorporating women into the workforce, and pushing for legislation and social reform for gender equality. During the great literacy campaign in 1960-1961, over 100,000 volunteer “people's teachers” reached out to 700,000 people, over half of whom were women, and contributed to Cuba having the second-highest national literacy rate in the world.

9. Due to the labor shortage created by the mass exile from Cuba during the early years of the Revolution, the FMC also created several programs in both urban and rural areas, to train women to enter the workforce. In cities, one program taught sewing skills to rural women, who then returned home and taught others in their communities. In agricultural community, locally-run night classes in literacy and farming were implemented. In the realm of legal and social support for women, The FMC played a pivotal role in passing the Family Code in 1975 and recently in 2022, which ensures equal property and social rights for women in the home. Finally, the FMC publishes two magazines that serve as important communication portals between the leadership and members of the FMC.
10. Women and the FMC have also had important influences on Cubans' health status and their health care system. Public health and nursing were two of the first professions where women participated. In recent times, there have been as many female medical students, doctors, general practitioners, and hospital directors as there are male counterparts. The FMC was highly effective in supporting the government's campaigns to improve vaccination rates and educate the public on health and hygiene topics. Information also flows upwards from the grassroots level to FMC and central leadership in the form of health debates, in which communities of women come together periodically and discuss important health topics in their lives.
11. Another major accomplishment of FMC's is helping to pass maternity leave laws in 1974. Under these laws, pregnant women are guaranteed three months of paid leave. The FMC also helped to establish maternity homes, so that virtually all women delivered their babies under the care of trained attendants, most of whom were FMC volunteers.
12. More than half of the Deputies in the National People's Assembly are women.

## **Conclusion**

13. We in AJOPAR believe the few examples given above are a reflection of the attention to basic human rights by Cuban Citizens and its authorities. We believe that this is a concept that was addressed by the idea put forward by one of Cuba's historic leaders, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, when he said that the Cuban society is creating "the new man."
14. We have found that most Cubans feel totally free to express their feelings, opinions, and beliefs, whether they relate to the results of colonialism and imperialism, the US blockade, or the mistakes of the Cuban government itself. Indeed, each of us who has traveled to Cuba has had open conversations with Cubans who disagree with decisions of their government, including some who are entirely opposed to the revolutionary process that has been underway since 1959. In our collective experience, we have not met any Cuban who did not feel comfortable sharing their opinions, which suggests that what we often hear in Western media about the restrictions on Cubans' freedom of speech (including political speech) is simply not true. Importantly, the ability of Cubans to express dislike or frustration with something is not a vote against their own sovereignty,

but rather it is an expression of their defense against that which holds them back, and an expression of the building and strengthening of their own sovereignty.

