



<https://cubasolidarityforum.ie/about-us/>

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1. The Cuba Solidarity Forum Ireland (CSFI) was first established in early 2021. It is formed by Irish people in order to strengthen the bonds between Cuba and Ireland to offer the Cuban people our support and solidarity whenever and wherever it is possible to do.
2. Cuba Solidarity Forum Ireland consists of a group of concerned friends and comrades from civil society across our country, who wish to highlight the multiple the multiple restrictions and limitations of human rights due to the imposition of the brutal 63-year blockade imposed on the Cuban people by the US government. Likewise, denounce the intolerable suffering by the Cuban people in all aspects of their lives, which this situation has inflicted on them. Most of our group have travelled to Cuba and witnessed these injustices with their own eyes, despite the travel limitations which the United States

has tried to impose, so we can assure you that we are not relying on hearsay.

3. Last month (February 2023) marked 120 years since the imposition of the illegal U.S. military base currently holding prisoners from various countries, for decades without trial in a regime of indescribable inhumane treatment, we join with the Cuban people and the rest of the humanitarian world in the campaign for the return of this occupied territory in Guantanamo to Cuba, but all these pleas have been conveniently ignored.

4. The hypocritical campaign to include Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism is a travesty of worldwide logic. Cuba has been the the international provider of medical assistance to heal the sick; working in poverty-ridden favelas in South America and the Caribbean countries, sending their Henry Reeves Medical Brigade to work in areas where human disasters occur, and in West Africa during the Ebola outbreak. More recently, lest we forget, when the first European outbreak of COVID 19 was confirmed in Bergamo, Italy, the H.R. Medical Brigade were the first to answer the emergency call for more medical staff to help Italy, and later this dedicated group went on to assist 39 other countries across 4 continents with the pandemic, in their quiet and unassuming way, proof in anybody's opinion that Cuba's commitment and dedication certainly is not to terrorism but rather to humanity.

5. During the pandemic, not satisfied with the continuous suffering of the Cuban people with the genocidal blockade, the Trump administration, in its final days, added another 243 sanctions to it,

which destroyed any attempt the previous Obama administration had made in the spirit of moving forward with its Cuban neighbours. This action had a crippling effect on the island and still has to this day. It really was a return to the April 1960 blockade announcement when the Kennedy administration declared, "The U.S. should deny money and supplies to bring about hunger and desperation and overthrow the Cuban government".

6. However, the Cuban people struggled and made sacrifices beyond belief, water was rationed, food and electricity also; they bided their time in the hope that Biden would be elected and being a Democrat he would return to continue what the Obama administration had started ... they waited and waited ...but it seems that the Democrats and the Republicans have morphed into the same and nothing has improved. The restrictions under the blockade as it is today, is completely damaging the wellbeing of the entire island and the people are distraught. It is also noteworthy, that a small group people of the new generations whose parents, and grandparents made tremendous sacrifices in their attempt to preserve their autonomy and independence, but the new media savvy consumer generation do not have that same loyalty and tenacity, or forbearance, and are unable to comprehend the values of their ancestors, so there have been some violent clashes and protests against the government, resulting in some demonstrators being jailed, as they would have been in any other country. The Cuban President Miguel Diaz Canel went to the areas most affected by the violence and spoke to the aggrieved people and assured them that the government were doing their best to remedy the situation, but were extremely restricted by the recent Trump sanctions; most understood and things calmed for a while. Unfortunately, the Floridian-Cuban group attempted to incite hatred via social media

towards the Cuban government, criticising their treatment of the protesters, and this sparked further disquiet. Finally, the reasonable majority took to the streets in their thousands to support their President, and peace has been restored for now.

7. Since the Helms Burton Act (called after two Republicans Senator Jesse Helms and Rep.Dan Burton) was enacted into law by President Bill Clinton in 1996, although continuously suspended over a period of two decades, it always held the threat over the Cuban government, and this played havoc with the Cuban's ability to trade on world markets, and has made the importation of food, fuel, medical supplies and other essential commodities impossible, as it was clearly an economic embargo on non-U.S. companies being barred from access to the U.S. markets if they trade with Cuba. Shipping involved in delivery of goods to Cuba would be barred from entering any U.S. ports for a period of six months. It would also impose sanctions on international financial institutions (hefty fines) who had dealings with Cuba. It also includes provision for lawsuits for compensation to U.S. nationals whose land had been confiscated by the Cuban government. In 2019, however U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo lifted the suspension on the Helms Burton Act further penalising and complicating the livelihoods of the Cuban nation.

8. In June 2021 CSFI wrote to The European Commissioner* for Financial Services in Brussels regarding the issue of the Helms Burton Act, raising our concerns that normal interaction between the people of Ireland and the people of Cuba is being illegally impeded by the action of the U.S. government enforcing a worldwide economic and humanitarian blockade of the people of Cuba, pointing out to her (Mairéad Mc Guinness)* that under Irish and EU Law,

Irish citizens are entitled to engage in commercial, educational, cultural, sporting and humanitarian exchanges with their counterparts in Cuba, and emphasising as part of the normal rules of such exchanges, Irish organisations and individuals are entitled to remit payments to or receive payments from, their Cuban counterparts, depending on the nature of the exchange. While these rights exist on paper, they cannot be exercised because of the illegal U.S. embargo on Cuba, the effect of the Helms Burton Act, and the Trump administration's valedictory edict returning Cuba to the U.S. list of State Sponsored Terrorism, which I have pointed out already, is definitely not the case. It was pointed out to Mairéad Mc Guinness that she had the express responsibility of "Securing Europe's resilience to extra territorial sanctions by third countries, including by the correct enforcement of sanctions imposed by the EU". We then requested her in her capacity as EU Commissioner to ensure that all banks and other financial institutions operating within the EU are entitled to maintain normal banking relations with financial institutions in Cuba, without fear of any retribution or penalty from the U.S. government. We reminded her that Ireland and the EU have a long and consistent history of opposing the U.S. embargo on Cuba, but in this case, the EU is not being consistent to its stated position, due to its constant failure to defend and uphold our rights to engage in normal exchange with Cuba. It is abundantly clear that the EU has no resilience to the extraterritorial sanctions of the U.S. CSFI received a paltry reply from the European Commissioner advising us that there was nothing she could do...needless to tell you we did not challenge her decision..., as it was clear she had made up her mind not to intervene on our behalf.

9. There's a sinister sense of mockery, now that the situation is deteriorating in Cuba on a daily basis, to the extent that the hospitals in Cuba are bereft of basic medical supplies and medicine

in general, the country which kept on giving to others, is now at a standstill, and it is entirely due to the genocidal U.S. blockade, and we find ourselves asking what right does any one country have to enforce such life-threatening conditions on another people.

10. Finally, while I'm sure the Cuban people are always heartened by the annual huge majority United Nations vote they obtain, as do we here in Ireland, but unfortunately, votes don't feed people, provide them with food, electricity, or water, medicine, the equipment or means to rebuild their homes following tornadoes or typhoons or simply basic human necessities. This is the undeserved constant reality of the Cuban people, which we believe, only the UNHCR's intervention can remedy. Ireland is a colonised island in the Atlantic, just like Cuba is in the Caribbean, we understand what it is to live beside our coloniser from what we have suffered over the centuries, so this is the reason we are sincerely hoping the U.N. will go that extra kilometre and foster honest dialogue, to help and encourage resolution of this inhumane and intolerable treatment of the brave and resilient people of Cuba.

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