

INTRODUCTION

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations on which the Periodic Review stands, establishes the principle that all people have the right to self-determination and national sovereignty. The National Network on Cuba concurs that all peoples and nations have a right to determine their own destiny in a climate free of fear, disinformation and economic or military reprisals by other countries.
2. In this 4th Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review stakeholder's submittal, we will demonstrate from our experience and observations that Cuba has made significant steps and, in some cases, leaps in advancing human rights since the last UN Periodic Review in 2018, furthering its already notable human rights achievements since its 1959 revolution.
3. This submittal will respond to Article V. Priorities and Obstacles in Cuba's Report in the 3rd cycle on pages 15 and 16.

ARTICLE V. CUBA'S PRIORITIES IN THE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS

V. 151 (b) Strengthening the legal and institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human right and to continue expanding social justice, (d) Continue improving the Cuban political system, upholding the values of Cuban society and national unity and to promote the strengthening of its democracy.

4. In 2019 a revised Constitution was approved in a public referendum and in 2022 Cuba's new Families Code was adopted. Both updated documents were drafted and revised through widespread discussion and amendment in neighborhood, workplace and mass organization meetings resulting in multiple revisions to incorporate amendments.
5. These significant updates to Cuba's guiding documents are examples of the Cuban people exercising their right to participate in their own governance through a lengthy process shaping the documents through extensive and repeated consultation and editing by the population as a whole in community, special interest mass organization and workplace meeting. It is an example of democracy without the interference of political parties and agendas contrary to the needs of the people.
6. The Families Code is a sweeping update to the previously ground breaking 1975 Family Code to reflect modern social realities.

7. Melinda Butterfield a transwoman and parent of two teenage daughters represented NNOC member organization Mujeres en Lucha / Women in Struggle in a briefing on the new law two days after it passed. The new code was an exhilarating advance in what Butterfield called a “code of freedom” that protects all forms of families with no discrimination. The new law positively impacted the rights of children, the elderly, people with disabilities, gender equality, equality of rights in adoption and technologically assisted methods like in vitro fertilization, the duty to contribute to the family and value of domestic labor, for example. Butterfield will lead a delegation from the U.S. to Cuba to further examine these ground breaking provisions in response to the hunger of people from the U.S. to learn from Cuba’s experience.ⁱ
8. Seventy-four percent of Cuba’s electorate voted with over two-thirds saying yes to the modernized code.
9. Calla Walsh one of the co-chairs of the National Network on Cuba learned about Cuba’s democratic election processes at a polling place during Cuba’s November 27, 2022, election for the Municipal Assemblies of People’s Power. She found that community or mass organizations like the Committees to Defend the Revolution, the Federation of Cuban Women or the Cuban Workers Central Union nominate the candidates instead of political parties. On this election day the ballot listed three women who competed to represent the La Corbata community. Candidate qualifications and community contributions were posted outside so voters could choose. Nearly 70 percent of the electorate voted. If no candidate receives more than fifty percent of the votes cast, a second round between the two top vote getters is held the following Sunday.ⁱⁱ
10. We have observed public education campaigns in murals, public events, and television ads like Me IncluYO por Escuelas sin Homofobia ni Transfobia that made bullying based on gender, ability, or skin color unacceptable to Cuban society.
11. In the public consultation on the 2019 Constitution, we observed lack of consensus focused on gay marriage with publicly posted leaflets with male and female images supporting heteronormative views of marriage. We observed that the issue of marriage was removed from the constitution to allow for more discussion and education leading to the revision and upgrading of the 1975 Family Code achieving more unity through expanding rights and freedom for all.

V. 151 (c) Promoting and protecting all human rights for all.

12. The basic human rights to health care, education (UN HR Declaration Article 26), employment, housing, culture (UN HR Declaration Article 27), sports and security are guaranteed in the new Cuban Constitution adopted in 2019. The new Families Code is a shining example of the expansion of rights and inclusion achieved by Cuba, particularly for women, children, elders, lgbtqi2s+ and people with disability envisioned in UN HR Declaration Articles 22 and 25.
13. We have observed and it is commented upon often by many Cuba travelers, the obvious lack of Cuban repressive apparatus that is so noticeable in daily lives elsewhere. Police are absent and, if seen, are most often unarmed, even at the airport where in many countries the military with long guns and dogs remembered for their use attacking U.S. civil rights demonstrators during the 1960s ominously patrol the terminals.
14. We have noted that climate change poses a grave danger to human life and have learned through travel to Cuba about the emergency plans that protect life and resources from climate disasters. In addition, Cuba has taken aggressive steps to protect the Cuban population by developing a 100-year plan, Tarea Vida
15. The right to health and longevity is a most basic human right. It is well known that Cuba's health statistics and outcomes approach the levels of the capitalist developed nations notwithstanding it is still developing to overcome centuries of colonial and neo-colonial exploitation. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged all governments, but particularly Cuba, obstructed from necessary commerce by the unilateral economic warfare by the U.S. government that controls global trade through SWIFT and the U.S. dollar.
16. We observed how Cuba battled the pandemic through the daily broadcasts and daily reports from the Ministry of Public Health painfully detailing every infection, the condition and death of each person in each of Cuba's fifteen provinces. In 2020, the total fatalities from the first identification of the virus to December 27 was only 143 deaths.ⁱⁱⁱ
17. Wracked with widespread death in poor cities like Detroit or the south Bronx with majority Black, Latinx, Indigenous or immigrant populations we watched as Cuba mobilized immune-stimulants like Interferon Alpha 2-b, nasalferon, homeopathic measures and public health calls for masking, improved sanitary habits and social distancing. We did not see efforts mobilized in our communities. We hoped for Cuban doctors to come. The deaths in Detroit were so

devastating and pervasive the City of Detroit declared a city wide mourning six months into the pandemic displaying enlarged photos of the dead in a public park with funeral processions for bereaved family members. Fifteen hundred people died in a city of 700,000.

18. Cuba developed five effective anti-COVID vaccines with which some of our members have been vaccinated.
19. Our Network launched a Saving Lives Campaign with counterparts in Canada to lower the U.S. blockade barriers preventing medical collaboration to fight the pandemic in our countries and allow Cuba to get the materials needed to provide medical care for Cubans and raw materials to produce their vaccines.^{iv}
20. Together our Networks purchased 8 million syringes to circumvent the U.S. economic stranglehold on Cuba's ability to purchase necessities thereby speeding up Cuba's massive vaccination campaign that has defeated the virus.
21. Lives could have been saved through collaboration with Cuba. One of the NNOC member organizations had offered this experience. A noted Cuban composer and pianist lives in Minnesota. On March 28, 2020, the corona virus sent him to intensive care. Consultation with a Cuban medical team on the island and a U.S. doctor who had just returned from Cuba provided a life-saving plan that succeeded. Today, Ignacio (Nachito) Herrera speaks emotionally about the need for international medical collaboration to save lives.^v
22. In November 2021 a delegation led by IFCO/Pastors for Peace visited the Camilo Cienfuegos Empresa Industria Electronica factory where the exchange between U.S. labor organizers and workers in the factory centered on experiences during the pandemic. Cuban workers maintained their income and security through the pandemic even though some workers had to stay home with children while schools were closed, and learning moved to televisions and at times component shortages prevented production.

V. 151 (f) To continue expanding access to information and culture for everyone.

23. We have witnessed the ubiquity of cell phones with internet access and increased availability of news and information from Cuba online. As in the United States, work from home was often possible in Cuba, too. We have enjoyed Cuba's in person concerts broadcast from Cuba virtually. It is corporations like Zoom and Microsoft that bend to the U.S. blockade preventing free communication.

V. 151 (g) To continue calling for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States Government against Cuba, censured almost unanimously by States members of the United Nations. The embargo violates the human rights of all the Cuban people and is qualified as an act of genocide under the 1948 Geneva Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide;

24. We concur with Cuba that the U.S. action violates the UN declaration of human rights that violates the rights of all the Cuban people and is qualified as an act of genocide under the 1948 Geneva Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.
- a. We watched the vote and international debate on the annual resolution submitted by Cuba to the United Nations General Assembly. For thirty years the General Assembly has overwhelmingly voted in favor of the U.S. ending the unilateral coercive economic measures against Cuba.
 - b. We participated in demonstrations in New York City in conjunction with the debate on the resolution submitted by Cuba and attended the votes in person prior to the pandemic.
 - c. In 2021 the National Network on Cuba compiled, printed, and sent to the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations the resolutions from elected U.S. authorities like City Councils, County Commissions, School Boards and labor unions and bodies. To date there are 79 such resolutions including major U.S. cities like Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, Cleveland, and Boston representing more than 44 million constituents. See attached list as of March 31, 2023.
 - d. Since July of 2020 public events have been held monthly initiated and led by Cuban-Americans calling for the end of the U.S. coercive economic measures to build bridges of love between the people.

CONCLUSION

25. One of the main objectives of the United Nations Periodic Human Rights Review is to encourage, develop and advance by self-reflection and peer review what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights preamble calls “the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family.”
26. Our personal and collective experience in Cuba over decades has shown us that Cuba makes every effort to ensure that all Cubans have access to and enjoy full human rights and dignity, not merely in writing. Cuban rights and freedom constantly evolve and expand.

27. The major obstacle to fully delivering these human rights is the undeniable intentionally harmful, coercive economic measures implemented by the United States against the people of Cuba. This policy was set out in US State Department memos as early as April 6, 1960,^{vi} and echoed currently by U.S. elected officials introducing legislation to deny “oxygen” to the Cuban people ^{vii} by cruelly codifying Cuba’s State Sponsor of Terrorism designation.
28. The actions of the United States violate the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, international law and moral standards blocking Cuba’s right to self-determination, national sovereignty, and human development. The U.S. measures against Cuba have been overwhelmingly rejected by the United Nations General Assembly annually since 1992.

ⁱ <https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/2022/10/03/new-york-cuban-diplomats-present-new-code-of-freedom-for-families/>

ⁱⁱ <https://geopoliticaeconomy.com/2022/12/02/cuba-elections-democracy/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://salud.msp.gob.cu/parte-de-cierre-del-dia-27-de-diciembre-a-las-12-de-la-noche/>

^{iv} <https://nnoc.org/us-cuba-canada-collaboration-to-fight-covid-19/>

^v <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3294786960645377>

^{vi} <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v06/d499>

vii Video of Representative Maria Elvira Salazar saying that removing Cuba from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism would give “oxygen” to Cuba. <https://twitter.com/i/status/1639002724220928004>