

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations



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July 15, 2008

His Excellency Raul Castro
President
Republic of Cuba
Plaza de la Revolucion
Havana, CUBA

VIA FACSIMILE: 011-537-333-085

Dear Mr. President:

I write on behalf of the over 10 million working women and men of the United States represented by the AFL-CIO.

In 2003, your Government arrested and imprisoned scores of independent journalists, human rights advocates, and pro-democracy activists, condemning them to jail terms of up to 26 years. Among them were eight Cuban workers, who were convicted and incarcerated for simply trying to organize free and independent trade unions. At the time, I sent a letter to President Fidel Castro, denouncing these fundamental violations of internationally recognized labor and human rights, and demanding the immediate release of the unionists, as well as an end to the arrests, the imprisonment, and the attacks on journalists, human rights representatives, and other Cuban citizens seeking genuine democracy in your nation.

Although two of the unionists have been released, the following six still remain in detention: Alfredo Felipe Fuentes, Miguel Galvan, Ivan Hernandez Carrillo, Nelson Molinet Espino, Hector Raul Valle Fernandez, and Carmelo Diaz Fernandez (on medical leave).

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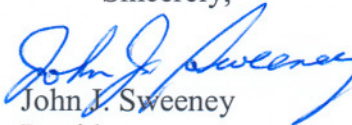
Despite the findings of the International Labor Organization (ILO) demanding an end to these fundamental violations of ILO Conventions 87 and 98, (both of which Cuba has ratified), protests from the global trade union movement, and my own letter to the Cuban President of five years ago, these six workers continue in prison or are being subjected to house arrest. Some of them are severely ill due to the harsh jail conditions and the lack of necessary medical attention. According to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (now the International Trade Union Confederation – ITUC), which registered its denunciation of this situation with your Government in July of 2003, the unionists were “kept in prisons under inhumane and degrading conditions, in walled-in cells filled with vermin and rats.” Five years later, nothing has changed for the six remaining.

As a member of the ILO, and having ratified Conventions 87 and 98, Cuba is obligated to immediately reverse this unconscionable situation in light of its commitments to guarantee freedom of association and collective bargaining rights. Accordingly, the AFL-CIO calls on your Government to immediately:

- 1- Release the six trade unionists mentioned, as well as all other persons jailed or otherwise detained for their efforts to exercise freedom of association, freedom of expression, and collective bargaining rights in Cuba;
- 2- Guarantee the freedom of Cuban workers to form and join trade unions of their own choosing, as well as exercise their right to collective bargaining, without harassment, intimidation or imprisonment.

I look forward to your favorable response.

Sincerely,


John J. Sweeney
President

JJS/jhl