

International Group for Corporate Social Responsibility in Cuba

# **ANNUAL REPORT OF LABOR VIOLATIONS COMMITTED BY THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT**

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## INTRODUCTION

In the majority of countries with a democratic culture the unionization, freedom of association and the right of collective bargaining are basic fundamental rights guaranteed by law and protected by the State. In Cuba these rights and many others including the freedom of expression, the diffusion of thought, the right to participate in the political process, the right to due process according to international standards, the freedom of information and access to the internet, public demonstrations and the right to strike have all been criminalized by the Cuban government.

One of the characteristics of totalitarian governments is the centralization and total control of the economy, society and ideology. Using the deceitful terminology of a “government for the workers” in Cuba, the system has enthroned and perfected itself. In the course of the first few months of 2009, a return to old “hard line” repressive methods is evident in response to the European Union’s demand for the respect of human rights and the changes generated by the government of the United States easing travel and remittance restrictions. Raul Castro’s government has toughened up its actions against civil society, and as part of this, the independent unions are especially targeted, making sure to seal any cracks in the opening towards the fundamental freedoms that correspond to the Cuban people.

In Cuba, freedom of association does not exist because democracy does not exist. The international rights known as the Freedom of Association and the Right of Collective Bargaining are trampled upon. Anti-union practices are the norm, as is the discrimination of union positions that do not coincide with the Communist Party. Layoffs of workers and family members is increasing, they are being dismissed for the sole reason of attempting to create unions independent of the State structures. Committed to resolving the economic and food crisis created by the State, self-employed entrepreneurs are constantly harassed and impeded from doing so by the government, who on its part is committed to not sacrificing one iota of its power. Cuban democrats are persecuted, attacked and imprisoned.

The repressive mode of temporary detention for questioning, humiliation and threats, typical of recent years, gained a chilling nuance this year when the State Security Department detained four independent trade unionists and took physical samples for DNA analysis and an alleged “bank odor”.

Also, this year the self-employed have suffered a relentless harassment as a direct consequence of the new regulations issued by the government last November against alleged “deviations, illegality and corruption” but in reality the perfect justification for a fierce operation against the private initiative.

The report presented here offers just a small sampling of the reality faced by the Cuban worker, helpless against a patron State corrupt and totalitarian, and by any Cuban who decides to live and labor in freedom, even within that large prison that is Cuba.

## REPRESSION AGAINST INDEPENDENT UNIONISTS

### Unionists in Prison

At this time, five independent trade unionists remain in prison, arrested during the infamous Repressive Wave of March 2003 and convicted in summary trials to long sentences. **Nelson Molinet Espino**, Secretary General of the Confederation of Democratic Workers of Cuba; **Miguel Galván Gutiérrez**, independent reporter and subdirector of the National Center for Labor and Union Training; **Alfredo Felipe Fuentes**, labor director of the Unitary Council of Cuban Workers; **Iván Hernández Carrillo**, National Executive Board Member of the CONIC; and **Héctor Raúl Valle**, member of the Confederation of Democratic Workers of Cuba.

Last year **Nelson Molinet Espino** spent 83 days in a punishment cell, deprived of all his possessions, religious services, telephone calls and correspondence. The labor leader, in detention at the Kilo 51/2 prison of Pinar del Rio, had simply requested a transfer to a prison in Havana, closer to home where his family lives, and where his ailing father –incapable of taking long trips due to his illness- would visit him. Later, Nelson denounced that a jailer –who systematically denies him his hour of sunlight- informed him that he would be killed at any moment.

**Iván Hernández Carrillo**, held at the men's prison of Guamajal in Santa Clara, has been denouncing since early last year the aggressions and tactics of the penal authorities against his person. They have been using common prisoners to constantly assault him and threaten his life.

Fearing for his safety, after physical attacks and death threats, Hernández Carrillo has conducted several hunger strikes. As a result of the last strike, ended in April 2009, Hernández Carrillo was transferred from a unit with 34 highly dangerous common criminals to an isolated single a single –which lacks the most basic human conditions, but still far from the prisoners that continue to threaten his life. His mother, the Lady in White Asuncion Carillo, has tirelessly denounced on many occasions the terrible conditions her son suffers.

At this time, the unionist is in poor health due to the inhuman conditions he has suffered on his way through several prisons in the country. Last June he was awarded by the National Endowment for Democracy with the 2009 Freedom Award, which has led to further harassment and abuses against him.

**Miguel Galván Gutiérrez** continues reporting from the prison of Guanajay about the terrible living conditions of the prisoners. His mother passed away last October, unable to see her son.

**Héctor Raúl Valle Hernández** held at the maximum security prison of Guanajay, went on a hunger strike on June 25<sup>th</sup> demanding specialized medical attention, as well as access to a set amount of sunlight. For over three years his doctors have been unsuccessfully ordering a series of tests to asses the chronic gastritis that is causing him severe pain. As a result of the dismal attention Valle Hernández has received during the past five years as a prisoner, his health has continued to deteriorate. The labor leader has continued reporting from prison.

### Harassment of Independent Unionists

In its efforts to stifle the independent trade union movement, the Cuban government commits all sorts of abuses against its members. Imprisonment, physical attacks, lay-offs, intimidation, detentions, house arrests, surveillance, violation of privacy, and so forth, are common, affecting not only activists, but by extension their family and friends.

This year, the level of intimidation against trade unionists markedly increased when four independent trade unionists were summoned to the Guanabo police station, accused of commemorating July 13 and of having participated in the documentary *Under the Cuban sky: the worker and their rights*, produced in exile.

**María Elena Mir Marrero, Justo J. Sanchez, Daniel Sabatier and Oliva Hanoi** were questioned by agents the first lieutenant of the local police Amaury Suárez and the officer of the 21<sup>st</sup> State Security Department “Rene”, who threatened them with being prosecuted for their activities.

In a chilling escalation of psychological threats, the officers proceeded to take their fingerprints, mug shots, fingernail samples for DNA, and gave them a cloth that they were to keep around their private parts for 30 minutes and which later was placed inside a sealed jar, destined –according to the officers- to a newly created “odor bank”.

During the interrogations, agents warned them that activities that could jeopardize the work of the CTC were not going to be allowed, and that the other unionists who participated in the documentary –such as **Carmelo Díaz Fernández, Jorge Olivera Castillo, Victor Manuel Dominguez and Emilio Jerez-** will face the same fate.

The repressive authorities of the island are especially active during national holidays and dates significant to the opposition, attempting to inhibit all commemorative events and activities. These events include: May 1<sup>st</sup>, the International Workers Day; January 28<sup>th</sup>, Jose Martí’s birthday; February 24<sup>th</sup>, the start of the Cuba’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Independence War against Spain and the commemoration of the downing of the Brothers to the Rescue planes; and March 18<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of the wave of repression of March 2003. During these days the repressive forces of the Island harass, detain, intimidate, threaten and closely watch members of the Cuban opposition and independent trade unionists in particular, trying to prevent their participation in these activities.

In their attempts to dissuade oppositionist participation, the authorities not only use physical violence on the individual, but they also pursue, intimidate, and threaten family and acquaintances of the oppositionist.

On April 30<sup>th</sup> 2009, **Carmelo Díaz Fernández**, President of the Confederation of Independent Cuban Workers (on health parole from a fifteen year prison sentence) was summoned to appear at the State Security Department’s Section 21 and threatened to be returned to prison by State Security Agent “Jose Luis” if he did not stop fomenting independent unions. **Víctor Manuel Domínguez**, Director of the CONIC’s National Labor Training Center, and **Reinaldo Cosano Alén**, Director of the Sindical Press Agency, were also included in the threat of imprisonment for – according to the agents- the “next” wave of repression. At the end of the citation Carmelo was warned against offering training seminars or participating in any events related to the International Workers Day.

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, **Díaz Fernández** was confronted in his home by three State Security agents who cautioned him to renounce the presidency of the Confederation and stop his “subversive” activities or his freedom would be revoked and he would be denied authorization to exit the country. In September of last year, he received another such visit by three State Security agents attacking him with the same threats wanting to stop the public inauguration of his organization; this time they said they couldn’t “predict the reaction of the population” (this is terminology used for the violent Rapid Response Brigades, all under government orders). On September 15<sup>th</sup>, he was detained in a jail cell for more than twelve hours.

On the morning of May 1, **Reinaldo Cosano Alén** informed of the presence of two members of the Rapid Response Brigades in the proximity of his home. Since then, Cosano Alén has been intimidated on various occasions. On January 27<sup>th</sup> he was visited by State Security agent “Angel Luis” who warned him against participating in any activities on the following day in commemoration of Jose Martí’s birthday. On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, State Security agents “Alexei” and “Angel Luis” cited Cosano to show up at the National Revolutionary Police headquarters at Guanabo warning him not to partake in any activities on the following day; as he, along with Mari Elena Mir, would be under strict surveillance. On March 16<sup>th</sup>, the same agents warned him against participating in any events or to not even attempt leaving his home on March 18<sup>th</sup>. On the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup>, Cosano’s house was completely surrounded and under surveillance by persons dressed as civilians.

**José Felix Rodríguez**, a delegate from Pinar del Rio, **Carlos R. Reyes** a delegate from Cienfuegos and **Orlando Monet**, the Secretary General of the Independent Entrepreneurs Trade Union in Havana, denounced being visited in their homes by State Security agents and the police to warn them against participating in events related to the International Workers Day.

On January 27<sup>th</sup>, **José Felix Rodríguez** was visited by two members of the municipal PCC, who threatened that they would not allow him to participate in any activities the following day. On the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup> his home was surrounded and under surveillance. When he left his home he was stopped, asked for his identification, and prevented from placing a floral bouquet at the bust of Jose Marti. On February 23<sup>rd</sup> he was detained for over five hours at the Provincial Delegation Headquarters of the National Revolutionary Police. On March 3<sup>rd</sup> he was detained under the accusation of fomenting public conversations “not in accordance with the revolutionary practice.” It should be noted that the conversation referred to concerns the destitution of fourteen Ministers, and that the information had been afforded to the public by Cuban information organs. During this detention, Jose was interrogated by State Security Major Buene. Afterwards, Jose was kept in a cell from 9am to 5:30pm without receiving any food. On March 16<sup>th</sup>, the sixth anniversary of the repressive 2003 Black Spring, his home was under close watch and the political police showed up and threatened him, prohibiting him to leave his home.

**Oswaldo Antonio Castillo**, CONIC delegate from Matanzas, received a threatening visit in his home by a State Security agent warning him that his movements were “under control” and he was placed under house arrest, to impede his participation in any commemorative activities of the International Workers Day. It was in this same manner that the provincial delegates **Raudel Avila** of Santiago de Cuba and **Roberto Jeans Márquez** of Guantanamo were warned and kept under house arrest by the repressive forces that same day. The homes of **María Elena Mir**, Secretary General of the CONIC, and **Lázaro Ricardo Pérez** of the Isle of Youth were also under heavy police surveillance that day.

On January 28<sup>th</sup> **Castillo** has successfully placed a floral offering at the bust of Jose Marti despite being followed by the police. On February 24<sup>th</sup> his home was surrounded by the Rapid Response Brigades all day long. CONIC’s provincial delegate had previously denounced that political police agents had been at his house on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of that month and had sternly warned him, that he would not be permitted to participate in any commemorative events and that he was not allowed to travel out of his locality until after February 24<sup>th</sup> had passed.

**Raudel Avila**, CONIC’s provincial delegate and member of the Youth Movement for Democracy, was visited on January 26<sup>th</sup> by two State Security agents who threatened him because of his work as a journalist and his participation in the CONIC. On February 23<sup>rd</sup> he was detained and once again warned not to participate in upcoming activities due to his critical reporting that he does over foreign radio stations. Raudel was detained again during the morning hours of March 18<sup>th</sup> at the provincial police unit. He was interrogated by “Dorky”, a Major and Head of Confrontations for the province. The Major made reference to a letter sent by the CONIC to Raul Castro requesting the unconditional freedom of the victims of March 2003. The Major warned Avila that the next time he would be taken to the tribunals directly.

Last November, **Avila** had been picked up at his home and taken to the “Confrontation Unit” of the political police of Palma Soriano, where he was kept there for over four hours. He was officially warned by the local Head of that Sector of the National Revolutionary Police and he was declared a Person of Police Interest. He was also threatened with the law of “pre-crime social dangerousness” –a “crime” used in Cuba to prosecute peaceful oppositionists and to associate them with common criminals, established in the Cuban penal Code as “Persons considered to be in a dangerous state are all those with the particular proclivity to commit crimes as demonstrated by any observable conduct that is in clear contradiction with the moral norms of socialism”.

**Maria Elena Mir** has denounced other acts of repressions against her person. On January 6<sup>th</sup> (Three King’s Day) she was constantly checked by individuals dressed as civilians (from the Rapid Response Brigades), with the intention of stopping the activist from handing out gifts and

books to the neighborhood children. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of January she was visited by State Security agents "Alexei" and "Otto", who communicated that she was under strict surveillance and that they would not allow her to take part in any activities nor leave her house. On the morning of February 23<sup>rd</sup> she was detained and submitted to interrogation. On March 16<sup>th</sup> she was visited by State Security agents "Alexei" and "Angel Luis", who warned her that she would not be permitted to participate in any activities on the 18<sup>th</sup> and they communicated that she "best stay still" because the dossier they had on her "was good for a 20 year prison term".

**Lázaro Ricardo Pérez** reported that a couple of days after January 6<sup>th</sup> political police agents Angel Gonzalez and "Esteban" came to his home and communicated that they were aware of his work as a journalist and the denunciations he has written. They were also aware of the children's activity that took place in his home and that they would not permit such events anymore. They said they knew he had given gifts and books that María Elena Mir had delivered from Havana, donated by the CONIC. He was also informed that he was being put under surveillance. On February 20 he was summoned to appear at the Provincial Police Unit to be warned and threatened regarding February 24<sup>th</sup>. On the 24<sup>th</sup> he was detained from 9 to 11am. On March 18<sup>th</sup> he was able to evade the surveillance teams and realize an activity in commemoration of the Black Spring of 2003. On March 19<sup>th</sup> the same two agents visited his home threatening and intimidating him.

In Nueva Gerona, Isle of Youth two members of the "William Le Sante" Independent Union **José Vladimir Arana Rosas**, Director of the Independent Potters Cooperative, and **Sergio Santacruz Oviedo** were both detained by State Security agents on February 24<sup>th</sup>.

On the Isle of Youth on February 19<sup>th</sup> **Lázaro Ricardo González Pérez**, CONIC delegate from Pinar del Rio, was cited to appear at the State Security Department where he was told that he would not be permitted to participate in any events on the 24<sup>th</sup> and that if he did so he would be prosecuted.

In that same municipality **Angel Rafael Pagés, Ramón Salazar Infante, Raisa Campanioni** and **Raydel Pérez Diéguez**, members of the "William Le Sante" Independent Union, were contacted in their homes on February 21<sup>st</sup> by State Security agents, who informed them that they were banned from commemorating February 24<sup>th</sup>.

Two other board members of the CONIC, **Emilio Jerez**, and **Antonio Rizo Rizo**, secretary general and executive board member of the Independent Light Industrial Workers Union (SITIL) respectively, were both visited during the early morning hours by officials from the State Security Department warning that they would not tolerate any activities commemorating the incidents that occurred on February 24<sup>th</sup> and that they could be prosecuted.

**Emilio Jerez** had been previously visited at his home on January 15<sup>th</sup> by State Security agent Otto. On February 26<sup>th</sup>, while on his way to the American Interest Section Office, he was chased by a motorcycle. On March 7<sup>th</sup> someone identifying himself as "Fernando" left an ominous message with his elderly grandmother that he would be back around to see him. On March 18<sup>th</sup> his home was under a close watch for over eight hours. Emilio has denounced that since June 2008 members of the police has been approaching him on a daily basis, demanding to see his identification. It is clear to the activist that the authorities are looking to aggravate him and provoke a confrontation.

Carmelo Diaz Fernandez, president of the CTIC, denounced that Labor activist **Minaldo Ramon Salgado** was detained at his home on March 31<sup>st</sup> by State Security agents. He was taken to the police station # 2 on Dragones and Zanja, and later put on a bus and taken to an unknown destination. The Cuban Human Rights Council of Relators alerted the international community about the activist's situation. Minaldo Ramon Salgado was released two weeks later.

The Secretary General of the Syndicated Christian Union (CSC) and member of the CONIC **William Toledo Terrero** was visited by three political police officials last September who let him know that they would not be permitting the realization of any union activities, "provocative"

gatherings or denouncements. One of the agents said: "We know your path and those of Carmelo, so be advised".

Independent unionists **Lázaro González Adán** and his wife **Marilín Díaz Fernández**, both members of the CONIC, complained that since June 2008 they have been the objects of attacks by four different neighbors. The perpetrators have the consent of local authorities.

**José Carlos Ramos**, the 29 year old son of Rigoberto Ramos Cabeza (executive committee member of the "Angel Cofiño" Independent Union a subsidiary of the CONIC), was fined 500 Cuban pesos and had all of his merchandise decommissioned by the Police Lt. and Sector Chief. According to the victim, the only reason he was singled out was his father.

Last June **Yasmila Yeileneo Machado León** was fired from her job by the administrators of the Mambi State Market for "not being fitting." Ms. Machado León is a member of the Vicente García González Independent Union that is affiliated with the CONIC. She complained that she was let go because she is an independent unionist and oppositionist to the government.

In January **Andy Sáez del Monte**, Executive Board Member of the Central Christian Union, was threatened that if he continued his complaints concerning civil and labor violations, his barber's license would be revoked. Sáez del Monte was visited by the President of the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution and the local police chief, and they assured him that as long as he did not distance himself from the "counterrevolutionary" groups he would not be able to work. This is the second time the unionist has been threateningly warned.

In October, Law graduate **Mariela Cedeño Pérez** was fired from her job as a cashier at the Correo Tunas 2 post office for "not being fitting and trustworthy." A member of the Vicente García González Independent Union says she was fired because of her union membership and opposition to the government.

Last year, **Maira Pérez**, a 24 years old student and daughter of trade unionist Rogelio Pérez Torres, was the victim of a violent rape in the parking lot of the educational furniture factory in Havana. The police said they could not help for lack of eyewitnesses, despite the fact that the school's custodian manager witnessed the incident and was interrogated by police. Maira believes that her case was deliberately dropped because she is the daughter of an oppositionist.

On January 28<sup>th</sup> **Isidro Manuel Pérez Cruz**, member of the Vicente García González Independent Union, was arrested for protesting the detention of independent journalist **Iliana Nápoles Pérez**, who had denounced the burial of foods at the Manati landfill in Las Tunas. On January 20<sup>th</sup> Pérez Cruz has been detained as a result of celebrating the inauguration of mentioned independent union.

In August, **Andy Sava Del Monte**, activist member of the Independent Commerce and Gastronomical Trade Union, was summoned to the local police unit where he was served with a warning notice due to his activities as an oppositionist. His food vendor's permit was revoked by the National Tributary Office (ONAT), Cuba's tax authority.

That same month **Jerke Rodríguez Alvarez**, an activist at the same union, was also cited to appear at the local police station where he was served with the same warning notice. The ONAT also rescinded his food vendor's permit.

## **REPRESSION AGAINST INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS**

The constant harassment against the independent journalists, one of the professions most feared by the Cuban government, has been on the rise in the past few months. Physical attacks, temporary detentions, intimidations, threats, imprisonment, layoffs, are the government's devices against these persistent practitioners of freedom of expression. There are more than twenty imprisoned journalists who suffer daily the high cost of practicing their profession.

## Independent Journalists in Prison

*"While the event took place, I felt a total calm and a feeling of sorrow for those acting like an unbridled mob overcame me."* - Víctor Rolando Arroyo describing a beating in prison.

This year, independent journalist **Alberto Santiago Du Bouchet**, a reporter for *Havana Press*, became the newest jailed journalist in Cuba. He was sentenced this May to three years in prison for an alleged crime of "contempt". Two days earlier he had been arrested and sent to Melena II penitentiary awaiting trial, after arguing with a police officer in the town of Las Cañas, in Artemisa.

Alberto Santiago Du Bouchet has been arrested and served prison several times for criticizing the Cuban government.

**Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona**, sentenced to 26 years imprisonment during the 2003 wave of repression, is a prominent journalist and civic leader, greatly admired and loved by his community and specially hated by the authorities. Despite the scarcity of news concerning his situation, it was known last May that Victor has staged a hunger strike, protesting the lack of medical care and the terrible situation the prisoners at the Kilo 5 \_ penitentiary face daily (abuse, overcrowding, lack of water and food in good condition). Three weeks later the authorities were finally forced to move the journalist to the penal ward of the Abel Santamaria Hospital.

Last April his wife Elsa Gonzalez informed that the authorities were presenting Arroyo handcuffed to the family visit. Elsa also denounced that the intervals between visits has been lengthened to two months.

Victor Rolando, along with another five prisoners of conscience from that same repressive wave, has refused to dress in the common prisoner's uniform, leading to serious difficulties for the group.

Last April, the group was prevented from participating in a Mass officiated by Monsignor prison Jorge Enrique Serpa, bishop of Pinar del Rio, and even forbade the religious to talk to them later.

Last November his wife published a letter in which Victor describes a beating he received at the hands of common prisoners, a method frequently used by authorities to break down the political prisoners. Arroyo writes: "Could it be that we are headed towards a new and unrestrained path of events? I believe so. Nothing here occurs by chance, everything is premeditated and particularly in my case. While the event took place, I felt a total calm and a feeling of sorrow for those acting like an unbridled mob overcame me.""

The reporter and prisoner of conscience **Normando Hernández**, was sentenced to 25 years in prison in 2003, continues to be in a deplorable state of health and steadily deteriorating. Although Normando and his family have been denouncing his situation since the beginning of his ordeal, authorities steadfastly refuse to grant him early parole release for health reasons. Normando Hernández continues reporting from prison and his family, particularly his mother and wife, continue the campaign for his liberation.

In March the reporter spent one month at the Carlos J Finlay hospital. He subsequently declared that the last hospital visit had been a farce because none of the prescribed tests, analysis or treatments were ever performed. Normando is 39 years old and suffers from hypertension, malnutrition, intestinal parasites, and chronic diarrhea, among many other ailments.

In a note to a colleague in prison he writes: "I'd rather be turned into dust, rather die, than to endure the disgust of failing and smiling at the rotten regime that oppresses our people."

That colleague, **Jorge Alberto Liriano Linares**, who also continues his work from prison, was beaten this April and transferred to a punishment cell after authorities found statements and news reports written by him revealing the injustices within the penal system.

**Juan Carlos Herrera Acosta**, shortly after having completed a five-year prison sentence was condemned to another 20 years of prison in 2003. He has since referred to the past six years of his life as being under constant torture. Herrera Acosta has found it so unbearable that he has sewed his mouth shut on various occasions and he has carried out multiple hunger strikes in protest of the conditions in which he finds himself. Juan Carlos Herrera Acosta is in poor health with multiple ailments.

**José Luis García Paneque**, a doctor, journalist, and prisoner of conscience, is also in a delicate state of health. García Paneque was sentenced to 24 years in prison during the spring of 2003. Last March his family denounced the poor state of health in which they had found him during their last visit. Paneque has suffered severe mental torture since the beginning of his sentence. He is claustrophobic and the prison authorities exploit this well. His mental anguish is aggravated by the physical abuse, torture, beatings, and inhuman conditions in which he has to exist.

Journalist **Oscar Sánchez Madan** sentenced to 3 years imprisonment under the “pre-crime social dangerousness” law in April 2007. Sánchez Madan does not receive adequate medical attention in the Matanzas prison where he is a recluse. In December, Oscar was examined by a military doctor at the prison infirmary, and although several diseases affecting Oscar were identified, the doctor refused to administer or prescribe any medicine. Authorities have confiscated ten of Sánchez Madan’s letters, so he has stopped writing altogether; he has also been denied religious counseling.

**Jorge Alberto Liriano Linares** is one of the reporters serving prison sentences in Cuba. He has continued reporting from the prison. In April he was taken to a punishment cell after a search and seizure operation in his cell. Penal officers confiscated declarations, denunciations and news articles revealing the injustices that are committed on a daily basis within the penal system. The guards gave the prisoner of conscience a beating before plunging him into the punishment cell.

### **Harassment, Aggression and Intimidation**

The Information Bureau of the Comisión Martiana denounced the arbitrary arrests that occurred on May 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> this year against journalism students attending the course that Florida International University is imparting through the Interests Section of the United States in Havana. **Reinier Vera Martínez, Heriberto Liranza, Rafael Martínez, Mario Echevarría Driggs, Lisbán Hernández Sánchez, Lilvio Fernández Luis, Damián Sánchez Sáenz and Adolfo Pablo Borrazá Chaple** were detained and intimidated by the political police.

On May 29<sup>th</sup>, the journalist and student **Lora Lisbey Febles** was arrested by several officers of the political police outside his home on his way to the U.S. Interest Section for his last class session. Lisbey was interrogated for about four hours about the journalism course, its members, and when would be the day of graduation.

Another student from the same course, **David Aguila**, was seized while returning home from class, and interrogated by repressive agents in a park nearby.

Journalist **Hechevarria Mario Driggs** was detained on February 26<sup>th</sup>, interrogated and threatened with prison whether he continued attending classes. Besides the usual interrogation and accusations, the police gave him a chilling message to pass to his classmates: “State Security Department has prepared a nice surprise for graduation day.”

On the morning of July 7<sup>th</sup>, the facade of the apartment of independent journalist **Yesmy Elena Mena Zurbano** was covered with eggs thrown that night. Zurbano reported that many of her neighbors were sympathetic and found the act provocative and cowardly.

The local chief of police in the Pueblo Nuevo neighborhood in Central Havana arrested independent journalist **Julio Beltrán** this past July and threatened him with the “pre-crime social dangerousness” law, which carries a sentence of 4 years in prison. “You already have a file open and this is the last warning. We will not allow any more counter-revolutionary activities or that terrorists meet in your home,” the officer warned.

Last June, a paramilitary mob of about 18 people broke into the home of **Pedro Enrique Martínez Machado**, independent journalist collaborating with the Cuban Human Rights Council of Relators, and removed some posters with quotes from Cuban heroes he had on display inside his house.

On May 7<sup>th</sup> **Lisbán Hernández Sánchez**, a reporter for the Information Bureau of the Comisión Martiana was threatened by a State Security agent with a 4 years prison sentence under the law of “pre-crime social dangerousness”. According to Hernández Sánchez, the agent had been watching his home for some time before he arrived. The reporter refused to address the agent and demanded an official citation. The agent told him: “Your ‘social dangerousness’ dossier is complete, leave the opposition or you’ll spend 4 years in prison”.

Independent journalist **Aini Martín Valero** denounced that on May 10<sup>th</sup> agents of the political police visited her to question her about her frequent assistance to the meetings of the Liberal Unity Party of the Republic of Cuba. Aini Martín Valero replied by reminding them of her rights as a reporter to participate in places of interest to her work. The officials “suggested” her to distance herself from the organization and threatened her with 4 years in prison. They finished their visit reminding her that she had two underage children that could be harmed as a result of her activities.

In April, the independent reporter **Álvaro Yero Felipe** was repeatedly beaten by members of the Department of State Security. Yero Felipe was intercepted while on his way to an oppositionist event. Yero Felipe said he was taken by force to the outskirts of Lenin Park where one of the officials began beating him around the head and face. He broke his lip and fractured his nose. With a doctor’s certification of his injuries in hand, Álvaro filed a formal complaint with the State Council accusing the Cuban political police of the abuses he was subjected to.

The independent reporter **Olienny Valladares** was picked up and detained at his home in Havana on April 3<sup>rd</sup> to prevent his participation in an oppositionist activity. Once at the local police station he was informed that he was prohibited from leaving his home and that if he attempted to do so he would be taken to prison. They also opened up a “pre-crime social dangerousness” dossier and threatened him with 4 years of jail.

Last March **Roberto de Jesús Guerra Pérez**, Director of the Information Center Hablemos Press (CIHPRESS) and Vice-President of the Cuban Human Rights Council of Relators, was detained for several days. During this time he remained incommunicado and subjected to police interrogations.

Last December, journalist **Miguel Iturria Savón** received a visit from State Security agents in order to dissuade him from attending any events commemorating Human Rights Day, prohibited by Cuban authorities.

**Licet Zamora Carrandi**, reporter for the Cubanacan Press Agency, was visited by police on December 8<sup>th</sup>, who wanted to know what position she held within the press agency she worked for. Licet explained that she had decided to resume her work as an independent journalist. The authorities warned her that she was working with a “dangerous “counterrevolutionary” and provocateur” –alluding to the director of the agency **Guillermo Fariñas Hernández**. They said

this would bring her fatal consequences. She was also interrogated about her participation in the Central Oppositionist Coalition. Before leaving, the authorities threatened with charging her with crimes.

Days later **Guillermo Fariñas Hernández** was kidnapped for several hours by members of the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR). Fariñas was at the bus station on his way to the Embassy of Holland where he is offered access to the Internet. The officials threatened the journalist that they would not tolerate “destabilizing” protests. They also let him know that he could be sanctioned for the crime of “revealing state security secrets” because of his descriptions in his articles of the methods used by Cuba’s intelligence and counter intelligence.

Guillermo Fariñas Hernández has been in prison on three occasions. He has participated in more than 20 hunger strikes. The last hunger strike was in 2006, when he demanded free access to the Internet.

Last November, State Security agents arrested **Roberto de Jesús Guerra Pérez**, an independent reporter and director of the Information Center of the Corriente Martiana. Guerra Pérez was just leaving the American Interest section in Havana where he participated in a videoconference about the cultural project “Adolescents and Libraries”, sponsored by Arlington University.

The week before, his wife **Ismaris Salomón** had been detained leaving the U.S. Interest Section after having participated in journalism classes. The agents “Omar” and “Ricardo” threatened her with the pretext that she had proposed forming a women’s independent news agency that would be given the name of Rosa Berre, the founder of CubaNet.

Last November State Security agents from Cienfuegos, in conjunction with the TRASVAL (Goods Transportation) Agency, confiscated the aid sent from overseas to **Alejandro Tur Valladares** for its delivery to peaceful opposition groups. Tur Valladares is an independent reporter for the Jagua Press Agency.

The independent reporter **Iván Sañudo Pupo** was summoned to the local police station where he was interrogated for over two hours. During this time he was threatened with the possibility of being charged with “pre-crime social dangerousness” because didn’t have a job recognized by the authorities.

The Holguin Press reporter **Juan Carlos Reyes Ocaña** was arrested in September when he was publicly reclaiming the right of his son to receive an education. His son Juan Pablo Reyes Perez finished 9<sup>th</sup> grade with excellent academic results, but the Ministry of Education had refused to offer him a technical career.

The State Security Department keeps **Leticia Ramos Herreria**, a reporter for the Information Center of Cuban Human Rights Council of Relators, under a constant state of threat. She was recently arrested and locked up in a cell at a local police unit in Matanzas, where she was threatened with a 30 years prison sentence. She has also denounced that on occasions they cut off her electricity, limited her freedom of movement to Havana City, and defamed her by telling her neighbors that she is crazy.

## LAYOFFS AND POLITICAL LABOR DISCRIMINATION

On July 28<sup>th</sup>, Jehovah's Witness **Daniel Hernandez Rodriguez** was permanently separated from his job for refusing to join a brigade that collects monies from the appliances sold by the government to the people, given his religious belief. The dismissal had no explanation, just the typical epithet of “not suitable”. Hernandez Rodriguez explained that his work life has been difficult because his believes stop him from attending Party meetings and political activities.

Last May, member of the opposition **Irania Borrego Lopez** was expelled from his workplace in Medical Sciences, where she worked as Head of Human Resources. The director, Dr. Marisol Mendosa González, told her the State Security Department had directed her expulsion. Her husband **Nelson Alberto Ruiz**, also in the opposition, has also suffered a laid off. Both opponents are the sole economic support of a family with three children.

21 year old **Liliana Morfi Núñez**, member of Democratic Circles Municipal de Cuba, the Rosa Parks Women Movement, and the Cuban Foundation for Human Rights, has been routinely laid off because her ideas and human rights activities. Last April she was fired from the market *La Viajera*, where she worked as a clerk.

In April, the independent reporter **Yudelmis Fonseca Rondón** was fired from her job. The personnel manager informed her that she was let go by orders of the Director, and refused to give her the motives and supply her with the corresponding documentation.

In March **Damián Alejandro Pereda**, the 17 year old son of oppositionist **Ramón de Jesús Pereda**, was dismissed from his position at the *Alejo Carpentier* print shop after refusing to inform the political police on his father's oppositionist activities. The administration of the center claimed that he was not considered trustworthy because he was the son of a ex-political prisoner "counterrevolutionary", and was threatened with the "pre-crime social dangerousness" law. Damián worked as a janitor.

**Bella Zoila Pérez**, the 20 year old daughter of oppositionist **Rogelio Pérez Torres**, was sanctioned last March with two years of separation from the Ministry of Education for the simple act of having applied for a position with better salary. Bella was at that moment a third year University student working towards her Master in Education; she was working as a teacher. Bella Zoila complains that she is the victim of repression because she is the daughter of a member of the opposition.

Member of the "For A New Republic" movement **Luis Jesús Gutiérrez**, employed at the Company of Optical and Audiovisual Media, and **Agustín García**, an employee of the anti-mosquito campaign at the Ministry of Public Health, were both laid off last February for participating in a peaceful oppositionist march that wound its way through the streets of Santiago Las Vegas. The paper work and documentation of the cancellation of their labor contracts indicates that the workers were not trustworthy due to their political activities.

In January general medicine doctor **Carmen Hernández** was threatened by two State Security agents with being dismissed from her position and losing her license to practice if she continued to divulge news about the problems facing the medical center where she practices. She had also been previously warned against maintaining relationships with "counterrevolutionary" elements".

In December last year, the dissident **Jesús Verdecia Castillo** was expelled from the Agro-Industrial Complex (CAI) *Ifrain Alfonso* in Ranchuelo after only three days of covering a new post. Days before, during a meeting at the National Revolutionary Police Headquarters, Verdecia Castillo had been threatened with charges under the "pre-crime social dangerousness" law if he was not working. He was relieved from his position as Manufacturing Assistant General under the excuse that other employees had solicited the position.

That same month, the ex-political prisoner and peaceful oppositionist, **Angel Ramón Eireos Rodríguez** and his son were both dismissed from their place of employment on Farm #0816. Not only were they fired but the farm's director threatened to kill Angel Ramón Eireos Rodríguez himself.

In November, **Mayelin Garrido Reyes** was forced to resign from her place of employment where she worked as a prosecutor in charge of criminal proceedings. She was pressured to do so

because of her family ties with members of the opposition. Head Prosecutor Nelvis Mejías informed her that she was left without option, because the Ministry of the Interior had notified her that her in-laws were oppositionists.

In November of last year, functionaries of the Ministry of Labor in the municipality of Consolación del Sur once again denied employment to **Felipe Gil**, member of the oppositionist People's Party. The carpenter and mason declared that he had nowhere else to find work and denounced the incident as another ploy against oppositionists.

**Leonardo Echeverría Soto**, a cleaning assistant at the *La Ronda Market*, was dismissed last November for refusing to pay union dues and financially contribute to the Territorial Militia Troops as it is demanded of all workers on the Island. The market is managed by the Interior Commerce Ministry.

That same month **Juan Godoy Polanco**, a high voltage lineman at the Municipal Electricity Headquarters of Pinar del Rio, was dismissed because he refused to wear the uniform provided, protesting its poor quality.

Last October, after having been detained by State Security agents, **Mirelis Guerra Toyo** was laid off from the Primary School *Jesús Suárez Gayol* where she worked as a fourth grade teacher. Mirelis Guerra Toyo had participated in a meeting of the Cuban Foundation for Human Rights. The school's director offered her not to assemble an act of repudiation against Mirelis' person and revealed her that the dismissal would be registered under unjustified absences.

In September of 2008 human rights activist **Che Fernández Saldívar** was expelled from his position without an explanation or a replacement position in another automotive repair shop.

In September **Angel Luis Bernabeu Sosa** was notified that he would be losing his position as a result of unjustified absences. Bernabeu Sosa, a Program Editor, was on a vacation approved by his supervisor Lucia Chiong, the IT and Production Manager. Bernabeu Sosa brought complaint charges regarding the incident to the Municipal Prosecutors office; he has received no reply to date. Before these measures even occurred Bernabeu Sosa was already a victim of salary discrimination.

After the devastating passage of Hurricane Ike through Cuba, workers **Eyder Germán Graña** and **Raúl Toledo Hernández** were both threatened by the administration of the Provincial Livestock Market that they would be dismissed and put at the disposition of the labor tribunals if they kept complaining that the assistance received for those left homeless in Holguin was insufficient and poorly distributed.

Last September the administration of the Primary School *Raúl Grimau* in Pinar del Rio denied the solicitation for a teacher's position to **Juan Antonio Padrón Ruiz** under the pretense that he was a "counterrevolutionary" and the son of an ex-political prisoner **Omar Padrón**, who spent five years in prison for the crime of "enemy propaganda".

In August, **Raúl Torres Gómez de Cádiz Sierra** was dismissed from his job for "not having an appropriate conduct towards the Revolution" and for refusing to participate in the government's political and union activities, not paying union dues and belonging to an oppositionist organization (the Orthodox Cuban People's Party). The dismissal was signed by Abel Bruff Guilarte.

Authorities revoked the license of **José Guerra Soa**, a street blade sharpener, claiming his opposition to the government. The vendor is 70 years old and the only other means of income he has is a small and insufficient subsidized pension he receives as compensation for the land that was confiscated by the State 15 years ago.

**Raúl Valdés Suárez** had his gardener's license revoked, was fined with 500 pesos and a "social dangerousness" dossier opened up against his person. The authorities argued that he offered his home for "counterrevolutionary" meetings and that part of his earnings went to fund these activities.

In September of last year the Board of Directors of the CCS Bahia Honda, Pinar del Rio, of the National Association of Small Agricultural Farmers, agreed to punish the rural farmer **José López Álvarez**, revoking his permit to work the 11 hectares of land that he received for the cultivation of tubers and vegetables. The Board stated that part of the production (the part which corresponds to personal consumption) was destined to aid families of "counterrevolutionary" prisoners.

**Catalino Díaz Rivera**, self-employed and member of the opposition Cuban People's Party, had his shoe repairman permit revoked. The authorities argued that his participation in a "counterrevolutionary" organization disqualified him as a self-employed.

## THE SELF-EMPLOYED

*"Here everything is illegal, even if you have the license." - Street vendor*

### The State vs. People's Initiative

In November 2008, the government emitted new regulations allowing the implementation of a permanent operation to combat the black market and its manifestations, classified as "deviations, illegalities and corruption". Under these premises hundreds of citizens have been brought to trial and sentenced to somewhere between one and four years of imprisonment.

The entrepreneurial sector is very heterogeneous and offers the population at large a wide spectrum of services. A significant part of their activities is in response to accumulated demands, offering products and services at acceptable prices and superior quality than that offered by the State. The entrepreneurial sector is an important source of employment. It pays salaries greatly superior to those offered by the State and is a necessary source of additional income. Many consider it a valid alternative for work and salaries in a future decentralized free market economy. The entrepreneurial sector is without a doubt the basis of what will be the small and medium enterprises (SME's) in Cuba's economy.

Informal work on the Island cannot be reduced to a set of activities authorized by law, as there are a large number of people who are not registered as required by the State –a number presumably higher than those working within a legal framework. These lively Cubans constantly develop a diverse number of black-market activities that fill huge gaps of needed services the totalitarian government actively and purposely ignores. They are a dynamic, strong force, and a huge pressure on the system.

The Cuban entrepreneurial sector is the only place where those not affiliated with the government's official unions may work. This is a source of great concern for the government, as there are some 200,000 workers who do not depend on the State and who reject the pressures of the State apparatus to become affiliated with one of their official unions.

Although recently the government has publicly issued certain regulations to ease the licensing of the self-employed, mainly in the transport sector, it is also true that the controls have increased and licenses are only granted to workers who meet certain parameters, including "a known political and social conformity with the principles of the Revolution." That is, applicants are investigated in their place of residence to verify that they are politically trustworthy. Once received, a license can be easily—and often capriciously—revoked after agonizing state and fiscal inspections.

The members of the opposition, already banished from working within the State sector and who could at least work in the entrepreneurial sector, are either denied the necessary permits to get licensed or their current licenses are revoked, in an attempt to banish them from the private sector as well.

Private producers, private farmers, taxi drivers, *botores*, vendors who provide a myriad of services, are routinely harassed, repressed, abused, punished.

In the beginning of March 2009, a police sweep took place against **self-employed vendors** at a locality designated by the State exactly for this purpose, which left approximately eight persons arrested and four more having received excessive fines of 1,500 to 2,000 pesos. According to one of the victims, **Armando Carbonell**, this is the third such operative in less than one month conducted by the police in the Habanero municipality of Arroyo Naranjo. Carbonell said the security forces violently broke into the place, sending frightened vendors into a running frenzy. "People ran away scared, because here everything is illegal, even if you have the license."

Reports from the city of Yaguajay, in the province of Sancti Spiritus affirm that the repression against the population at large has increased. **Street vendors** are under siege by the police, who confiscate their merchandise and impose hefty fines. On occasion, the vendors are taken to the tribunals and sanctioned to prison terms. Local inspectors frequently fine individuals selling food out of their homes.

It was also known that **unemployed people** are being summoned to their local police station. Once there, they are given written formal warnings and threatened with imprisonment for not working within the State structure, despite the lack of State-run work centers in the city.

Last January, the peaceful oppositionist **Héctor Félix Labrada** was beaten in Palma Soriano by several policemen when he protested the eviction of the vendors from the agricultural market. In November, all the licenses for these vendors –responsible for providing food to the local population on a regular basis- had been revoked.

On January 10<sup>th</sup> in the municipality of Guanabacoa the National Revolutionary Police deployed a strong operation against the **disabled self-employed vendors** in the place where they sold their goods. The raid resulted in arrests, fines and decommissioned merchandise.

In December of last year the fruit and vegetable salesman called **Yasser** had his merchandise (tomatoes, carrots, cabbage, bananas, papayas, garlic and onions) confiscated at the spot where he sold his products in Santa Clara. Irritated by this action, Yasser began throwing the food to the ground expressing that he would prefer to give the food away before turning it over to the authorities. At this the officials began beating the street peddler with their truncheons, handcuffed him and dragged him to jail.

**Bárbaro Fraga Rodríguez**, a member of the Democracy Movement and oppositionist that was present at the market, protested over the conduct displayed by the authorities. As a result he too was detained and later fined by the authorities.

That same month the watch repairman **Luis Núñez Fuentes** solicited authorization from the National Tributary Office (ONAT) to work out of his home. He was cited to the local police station and not only was he denied the permit, but the authorities also confiscated his tools. All of this happened despite the fact that Luis already had a license to work as a watch repairman and his dues were all up to date.

In Palma Soriano of Santiago de Cuba approximately **thirty entrepreneurial vendors** protested the revoking of work permits. The protest took place in front the local Communist Party Headquarters, where the group was initially ignored. Finally, a representative of the Agricultural

ministry met and explained to them that the revoking of the licenses reflected adherence to a Central Government order and that the Ministry of Labor and Social Security could offer them work in agriculture and construction. The affected workers responded that they were acting within the law and that it was within their right to choose a livelihood of their choice.

In October, independent sources reported that the targeted **repression against street vendors** in Holguin was such that a widespread famine was feared by much of the population. Since mid-September there have been numerous fines, seizures and arrests. Public trials are randomly being held against persons for selling food such as plantains, garlic, beans and limes with sentences of up to 22 months.

That same month, reports from Caibarien, Villa Clara, revealed that authorities are carrying out **search and seizures of private vendors**. Cigarettes, cheese, milk, fish and rice have all been confiscated and vendors subjected to excessively high fines.

On September 24<sup>th</sup>, a strong police operation shook the town of Regla. Officers of the Technical Investigations and Inspections Department raided the **agro-market** and confiscated various products and scales from vendors. The surprised workers, who could not explain why the raid occurred, were taken along with their products to the local police station. The agro-market –now closed until further notice– was the largest in the municipality.

In August, in the municipality of San Miguel del Padron, the police dismantled **31 craft workshops** dedicated to the production of household products –which the State does not produce nor offers. The closures included 12 factories dedicated to the production of plastics, and 2 wood and iron furniture shops. Among the merchandise that was confiscated were 500 aluminum and plastic plates, hundreds of glasses, pots and pans, brooms, clothespins, sandals, deodorant, Vaseline, buckets and toys. Machinery, raw materials and containers were also confiscated. Sixteen people were sentenced to forced labor correctional institutions and all workers were fined.

### **Repression against taxi drivers**

According to official records, during the first nine months of 2008 there were 72,500 inspections; of these more than 12,558 were that of private vehicles. During this period 45 operating licenses were revoked, and 4,464 fines were imposed estimating approximately 250,000 pesos.

Last April, **Jesús Cordero Suárez**, Secretary General of the Bici-taxi Independent Union, was arrested for not having an operational license. He was fined 250 Cuban pesos and his bici-taxi was confiscated. Cordero Suárez says that he has solicited the license on several occasions, but the Transportation Department has not conceded the permit. Suárez is married and has a three year old daughter he is responsible for.

That same month, **four bici-taxi drivers** that were advertising the sale of potatoes were picked up by the police in Cienfuegos and taken to the local station. Their vehicles were confiscated, being accused of using them for the sale of illegal products. They were also excessively fined: 1,000 Cuban pesos for each illegality. The vendors argue that, this year, the government has so far not provided the tuber to the public and last year they only offered it twice.

In March Manzanillo police carried out a raid against **self-employed vintage car owners**, dedicated to the illegal transportation of passengers. The government, incapable of managing to resolve the national transportation crisis routinely, denies the corresponding license.

In February, **Richard Brown** was sanctioned to 22 months of correctional internment for the supposed crime of contravention. He was accused of conducting a bici-taxi without possessing a license. As seems to be the custom in these cases, Brown has solicited the ONAT for a license and it has always been denied.

That same month in Caibarien, Villa Clara, the police harassed **bici-taxi drivers** for several weeks. They were persistently checking for registrations and fining drivers. Reports revealed that some officials, despite finding no problems with the documentation, tried forcing drivers from the area anyway.

At the end of February the office of provincial inspectors carried out an operation against **private and State drivers** in the municipality of Quemado de Güines, Villa Clara. The inspectors threatened passengers with hefty fines if they continued using the private carriers, and the State drivers were warned if they let more passengers on the buses than permitted. Also the private taxi drivers were threatened with the revocation of their operating licenses and high fines. As a result private drivers have seen themselves forced to raise fares since the amount of passengers that is permissible has decreased.

In September of last year, at the headquarters of the Poder Popular of Jaimanitas, **25 bici-taxi owners** with work permits –granted by the police and the Labor Department in 2003- were cited to appear at the Communal, where **23 drivers** had their licenses revoked and the remaining two are pending review by the ONAT.

### THE DEFENSELESS WORKER

On March 26<sup>th</sup> a group of residents from the city of Santa Clara spontaneously protested upon seeing various **police officers beat up a worker** in the Leoncio Vidal Park. Despite the forced apologies of the authorities, in lieu of the facts, the worker was detained for two days, under investigation.

That same month dozens protested the beating and arrest of **Jorge Díaz Carmona** and **Pedro Dondique**, both bus drivers. The crowd screamed “abusers!” and “assassins!” as they witnessed the spectacle. The bus drivers worked the urban omnibus routes P16 & P12 for the Metropolitan Omnibus Enterprise in the municipality of Boyeros. The detained bus drivers were finally liberated after the other bus drivers at the terminal threatened to go on strike. The drivers were released without charges, although they were fined 500 pesos each.

Workers at the Communal Enterprise of the municipality of Lajas, in the province of Cienfuegos, conducted a **work stoppage** on March 10<sup>th</sup> demanding an increase in wages after the administration informed them that the supplemental food packages would be discontinued. These are bonus bags of food companies typically give workers in lieu of monetary compensation, given the meager wages paid Cuban employees.

**Twenty four workers** of the cane collection center *El Palmar*, in Santa Isabel de Las Lajas, belonging to the Agro-industrial Complex Caracas City, protested before the administration the **extension of the workday** to a full 24 hours broken out into two 12 hour shifts. The workers declared that the salaries are too low given the administration’s demands. They also complained that the food was not in accordance with the work they realized, they are not provided safety gloves and proper lighting.

In February, the **25 intern teachers** of the Primero de Mayo Poly-tech institute of Pinar Del Rio had **not received their salaries** for more than three months. According to a executive at the province’s Ministry of Education, the delay in the payment of their salaries was because the center was facing budget problems. The administrators further informed the teachers that if the situation continued they would no longer be permitted to have lunch at the institute –although they would continue to be charged 30 pesos monthly. In contrast, the tenured general professors of the center who form part of the “Battle of Ideas” political campaign are prioritized by the government and are re-numerated without problems or delays.

The professors at the middle school in Santa Clara expressed their dismay and frustration when informed by the Ministry of Education that the **classroom sizes would increase to 45 students** per classroom well beyond the 20-student capacity.

The workers at the Plastics Enterprise of Havana demonstrated earlier this year against the **excessively high expectations** at their work center, as they are difficult to comply with and if the expectations are not met the workers become victims of reductions in their monthly salaries. The disagreement has been brought up by the employees at meetings and production assemblies, without obtaining results. The employees are also upset about the poor food quality and the lack of clothing and tools necessary for work.

Last January the High Command of the Ministry of the Interior of Santa Clara **denied the resignations** solicitations of 100 policemen due –the authorities claim- to the disasters caused by the hurricanes of 2008 and the prolonged illness of Fidel Castro.

Since the beginning of the year, the **rural farmers** from the area of Velazco and Gibara in the province of Holguin are discontent with the lack of packaging bags, tools and what they consider is an unjust pay for their harvests of vegetables.

In January, the **workers of the automotive workshop** pertaining to the Municipal Culture Headquarters of Marianao demanded their corresponding pay for the recuperation of the two omnibuses used to transport employees. The demand was made to the company administrator Raul Lezcay. There has been no response or solution to date.

In December, a **group of farmers** from Guane, Pinar del Rio denounced the harassment they are submitted to by the municipal government and the directors of the tobacco sector who force them to plant tobacco or risk losing their lands. Some, fearful and under pressure, have stopped planting vegetables and tubers for consumption. At the end of each tobacco harvest the farmers pay is deducted of all the supplies they needed for the harvest, such as fertilizers, tools and supplies etc. As a result the farmers are left with little to no profits.

That same month, the Center for Hygiene and Epidemiology fined **Xiomara Dominguez**, a worker at the market *La Centrica*, because of the deterioration of the establishment. There were water leaks and equipment breakdown. The establishment is the property of Ministry of Interior Commerce, which is responsible for its maintenance.

In November 2008, in Santa Clara the **horse and buggy drivers** with permits to transport persons were **prohibited from carrying dissidents** under threat of losing their license, horse and buggy. According to the police, dissidents would rent out this means of transportation to travel to and from places where they were having demonstrations.

Moreover, the driver of an omnibus for the Council of Cuban Churches **Carlos Ortega Chávez** was verbally abused by a police agent for stopping to pick up several persons traveling to Matanzas to participate in a Council activity. Ortega Chávez explained that for several years he has been suffering that same type of abuse coming from the police. The abuse becomes more aggravated whenever the computer is checked and information appears that he was sanctioned in 1992 for attempting to leave the country illegally.

**Tomás Rodríguez Víctor**, administrator of the Luis Hinojosa State Farm, in the province of Havana, along with three other workers was fired and taken to court for an infraction that was unknowingly committed and outside of their sphere of responsibility. The union to which they are affiliated did not intercede on their behalf before the Labor Tribunal of the Municipality of Bauta, where he was adjudicated last September.

The masonry operators **Andrés Estevanel Choing** and **Juan Pozo Reyes**, workers at the Social Micro Brigade of Playa, demanded that they be provided with gloves and in return they were threatened with losing their jobs.

During the beginning of September, the Havana Omnibus Enterprise had offered training in the province of Santiago de Cuba. The 70 drivers were trained how to conduct the actual “P” type bus that circulates around Havana. The company promised to improve their salaries, bonuses, housing in good condition and meals. Around mid-October some **30 drivers had to return to their province** of origin because the company failed to meet its promise concerning food and housing.

That same month two inspectors from the ONAT arbitrarily confiscated a sharpener and various tools from the self employed worker **Miguel Morejón León**. The authorities stated that he did not possess the documentation proving the origin of the tools, without taking into account that the sale of these instruments in the private market does not come accompanied with documents.

At least **28 prisoners** are being exploited for labor in a shoe factory that operates on Mexican capital. The factory is located within the Güanajay prison in Havana. The entity pertains to the National Center of Various Products (PROVARI).

According to the prisoner of conscience and independent journalist of the Group of 75 José Ubaldo Izquierdo Hernández, source of the information, the prisoners work 10 hour days from Monday to Saturday. During these shifts they must produce some 260 shoes, name brand Hercules, the amount of which is surpassed daily as more than 350 shoes are made daily. In April, the company simply **stopped paying their salaries** of 225 pesos a month –which is further deducted for the prison lodging and food they receive.

The peaceful oppositionist **Reinaldo Rivera Hanzlik** denounced being the victim of harassment at his work center, the Municipal Construction Enterprise of Holguin. Rivera Hanzlik is being accosted by the head of the Communist Party Bureau. In this particular instance he is constantly being pressured for his political ideas and he sees himself obligated to participate on the political acts that the company sponsors something that he refuses to do despite the threats of firing.

During the month of April it was revealed that the **agricultural workers** of the Yabu Varied Cultivation Enterprise are searched and patted down by the police daily during the harvesting of potatoes. Officials of the police routinely search the bodies and personal belongings of each employee to avoid the appropriation of the product, the reason for several firings that have occurred.

In December of last year, in the town of Ranchuelo, Directors of the bread and sweets company **closed a bakery placing a metal mesh** around the perimeter and placed a surveillance squad of six guards 24 hours around the clock. The action is aimed at stopping the locals from breaking in and taking the primary materials such as flower, oil and leavening.

Despite the fact that Cuban workers find themselves without any true labor or political representation, the government continues to pursue independent unionists and to deny the creation of independent unions without ties to the CTC the government’s official representative. On reiterated occasions, the different union organizations that comprise Cuba’s independent labor movement have solicited the legalization of their organizations before the corresponding authorities; however none of these organizations have ever received a reply.

Such is the case of the **Victoria Independent Labor Union**, affiliated to the National Independent Cuban Workers Confederation (CONIC), who once again presented their solicitation of inscription on the Register of Associations of the Justice Ministry half way through last year and has still yet to receive a reply.

Last December 5<sup>th</sup>, the **national executive board members of the CONIC** turned over a list of demands to the Federal Attorney's Office. Among these is that the Government and the CTC respect and comply with ILO's 87<sup>th</sup> and 98<sup>th</sup> Conventions, which establish the freedom of association and the right to strike and collective bargaining. Also solicited is the unconditional release of the prisoners of conscience, which includes the independent labor leaders. Regarding the government's employment policies, the CONIC demands that the arbitrary dismissals of workers affiliated to independent labor unions cease, that employees and employers be permitted to freely negotiate labor conditions and that the option of a free market economy be established.

As is typical in these cases the Cuban authorities have not replied.

## CONCLUSION

All of these acts here presented, clearly recount the daily abuses to which the Cuban worker is submitted to and the absolute disregard by the Cuban government of the international conventions that promote and guarantee human rights as well as ILO's fundamental International Conventions.

The GIRSCC firmly believes in the universality and the unrenouncability of these principles and that they should rein supreme over any ideology.

Cuban nation and its workers require immediate and active international solidarity.

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