

ANNUAL REPORT OF LABOR VIOLATIONS COMMITTED BY THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT

AUGUST 2011



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
THE LABOR SITUATION IN CUBA	5
Wages	
Working Conditions	
The Defenseless Worker	
Workplace Discrimination	
Inmate Exploitation	
LABOR “REORGANIZATION” AND “AVAILABILITY”	10
Profession, as dictated by the State	
Health, Education, Achievements of the Revolution	
THE NEGLECTED FARM WORKER	13
State Control	
Bureaucratic Absurdity	
THE SELF EMPLOYED	16
Government Obstruction of Private Enterprise	
Inspectors vs. The Self-Employed	
THE HEALTHCARE WORKER	20
REPRESSION AGAINST INDEPENDENT UNIONISTS	21
Ephemeris and Detentions	
Other Detentions	
Other Repressive Acts	
Releases and Deportation	
Testimonials	
REPRESSION AGAINST INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS AND COMMUNICATORS	28
Detentions, Abductions, Seizures	
Threats, Aggressions, Repudiation Acts, Harassment	
Reprisals	
Releases and deportations	
Testimonials	

INTRODUCTION

“Work in a socialist society is a right, a duty and a source of pride for every citizen. Work is remunerated according to its quality and quantity; when it is provided, the needs of the economy and of society, the choice of worker and his skills and ability are taken into account; this is guaranteed by the socialist economic system, that facilitates social and economic development, without crises, and has thus eliminated unemployment and the ‘dead season!’” -Constitution of the Republic of Cuba, Adopted in 1976, Article 45

“Socialism is an unattainable goal, the regime and socialist system of the Castro brothers has failed. They must leave the decisions in the hands of the working population, we cannot allow the solutions to the problems of 52 years to be imposed by those at fault, we can not permit them to divide up the country as if our island were their domain, we do not want a model of China or Viet Nam. We need definitive change, we need Democracy”, declared Iván Hernández Carrillo, Secretary General for the CTIC and ex-prisoner of conscience of the Group of 75.

These words reflect the sentiments of a large majority of Cuban workers that see how, after 52 years of lies and manipulation by the regime, the system they were sold on –a world power in medicine, healthcare, sports, with the lowest unemployment rate worldwide and which guaranteed social protection to 100% of the population– crumbles, deflates and neglects a population they have made dependent for so many decades and to which they imposed firing squads, imprisonment or exile for many of the changes they now intend to implant.

It is evident that the Cuban regime pretends to make changes to gain time and try to subdue the actual crisis but without losing authoritarian control it has maintained over society in which they have absolute say in all decisions.

In the period covered by this report many events have taken place that mark a new era for the Cuban people and that undoubtedly will have an impact on the coming years.

August 1st, 2011, National Assembly of People’s Power

When Raul Castro said, after 52 years in power, “Let us clear our minds of foolishness of all kind”, no one new, nor will ever know, what was the general referring to.

General Castro, in a speech before the National Assembly, announced additional flexibility on self-employment and taxation, the approval of policy for simplifying the transfer

of ownership of housing and motor vehicles between citizens, bank and lending policy for individuals including the self employed, definition of the basis for the development of the new Tax Law, the reduction of market prices on tools and supplies for farmers and commercialization of diverse equipment, whose sale was not permitted, and packaged goods in large scale in response to the demand from non-state forms of management.

Many of these aspects are prohibited by the Constitution, which dates back to 1976. The measures proposed by Castro make evident what has been known all these years: that the Cuban constitution is in practice dead, and that the Cuban nation has been led and directed based on the whims of its top leaders.

What the general and his team have forgotten, and want to “clear” off their minds, is that these things thousands of Cubans have been imprisoned, have had to abandon the country, lost their jobs, or were expelled from government organizations themselves. To the general, we must advance toward the future militarily, and the victims are collateral damage in the name of socialism; he does not want to revisit the shame of the past. The general proposes a “clean slate”, but on his terms.

For the millions of Cubans who have suffered the wrong policies of the regime's socialist whims, certain things can not be forgotten: the poverty they are subjected to, a country in bankruptcy with a division of the classes more marked than ever, where discrimination and marginalization run wild, and a discouraged society, with a youth that only thinks of abandoning the old boat that is hopelessly sinking.

On the other hand, the opposition has stoically demonstrated their resistance, has made concrete proposals on how to take the country out of crisis, and is in the streets demanding change. The people are joining but it's still not enough, the resistance movement needs solidarity and resources of all kinds to implement its work program and to design an orderly and fair transition process.

VI Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba

On November 8th, it was announced that the VI Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba would convene in April 2011. This Congress assembles after 14 years since it last convened in October of 1997.

Raul Castro announced “the Congress will concentrate on the solution to problems of the economy and on the fundamental decisions updating the Cuban economic model and adopting guidelines for the economic and social policy of the Party and the Revolution.”

He also reported that the Party had decided to put the draft of Guidelines for the Economic and Social Policy up for public discussion between December 1 and February 28, specifying that the Congress “will be an event for all party members and all the people”. He stated that all opinions collected would be analyzed and taken into account when drafting the final document to be adopted, thereby trying to conceal the absolute lack of social consensus, inconceivable to his regime.

Of the thousands of assemblies of analysis, of the millions of proposals that, according to the Party, were derived from the meetings, all they could ascertain is that the system does not work, is ineffective, inefficient, unproductive, and dependent on other countries, nothing the top leadership didn't already know.

But these negative opinions had to be turned into a victory, hence arise the ideas for stabilizing the economic and financial system of the island, a challenge that is impossible to achieve and is only possible through a drastic change that they would not agree to undertake. The patches and partial corrections to a system that is structurally ineffective will lead them to disaster and the loss of their power.

As always, to the regime the problems within Cuba stem from a complex matrix in which negative external effects play a major role, the effects of the economic crisis and the United States embargo are to blame for it all.

Of course the official Cuban press has never mentioned that its five principal trading partners are Venezuela, China, Spain, Canada and the United States, the latter is the leading supplier of food, rank first in sending remittance and

it's the Cuban-Americans who are traveling to the island every year at the rate of more than 375 thousand tourists who contribute most to the coffers of the regime and are the only lifeline for the millions of family members who depend on them.

In the view of the thousands of workers already on the streets in a total state of helplessness, the Congress and their speeches, like the thousands they have heard in more than fifty years, mean nothing.

For the more the 1.3 million workers that, in the next two years, will be left without work, and for the 500 thousand who already are, unemployment and lack of social security, so often proclaimed as synonyms of capitalism, has been brought about by the same people who once condemned it.

The Trade Union Confederation of Cuba (CTC), which should theoretically defend the right of workers and demand the government to enact coherent policies for employment generation, has been commissioned to justify the urgent need to put workers on the street as the only way to save the socialist system.

This year, amid unquestionable employment collapse, the CTC urged workers to march in the May Day Parade “for everything that unites and raises us up, for the nation, for Fidel, for Raul, for the Party, The Revolution and socialism, social justice for all, and for progress”.

Moreover, and with unparalleled cynicism, members of the CTC visited those who had recently been terminated to pressure them to participate, something that not even the CIMEX Corporation –a center that brings a considerable group of supporters, the majority women, to intimidate the Ladies in White, and which also distributed a pamphlet inciting mobs to use stick, iron rods and cables against dissidents– would dare do, now that their workers will be soon be laid off.

In the opinion of many workers and independent trade unionists the changes are small, insufficient and incomplete, and are also late. The Island suffers from major problems, political and moral, including corruption and the loss of ethical values, as well as problems with the environment, and needs major solutions, not justifications.

Throughout the different chapters of this report we will specify and explain the details of the different aspects we refer to generally in this introduction.

THE LABOR SITUATION IN CUBA

The Annual Report from the International Trade Union Confederation on violations of labor union rights for 2011 presents the following overview on labor and trade union matters:

Trade Union Rights according to the law

Basic trade union rights are not adequately protected. While the law guarantees the right to organise, trade unions must also play a political role and contribute to developing and supporting the government. Workers' rights are thus subordinate to political objectives. There is only one officially recognised trade union, the Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC), which has a monopoly with respect to representation of workers vis-à-vis government instances.

The right to collective bargaining is not specifically recognised, and the provisions that regulate how collective agreements are to be concluded are too detailed. The law also requires the approval of the National Office for Labour Inspection for registration of collective agreements in many activity sectors. In the event of differences between the parties, the law imposes compulsory and provides for interference or intervention by the authorities and by the CTC.

The right to strike is not provided for in the legislation, and its exercise in practice is prohibited.

In practice

Repression stifles labour rights: The number of politically-motivated arrests was estimated to have reached 1,224 in November 2010, which discourages the formation of independent trade unions, as the authorities view exercising freedom of association as a political activity.

No independent trade unions: There has been no change in Cuba's state policy of prohibiting the formation of independent trade unions and persecuting their founders, confining the scope of their action to supposedly dissident operations."

Cuba continues to be one of the few countries in the world where the major employer and generator of employment is the patron state, which by decree fixes wages, hours and working conditions.

Annually, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Heritage Foundation* issue their report on the "Index of Economic Freedom". In their latest publication on 179 countries Cuba rated among those with the least economic freedom, ranking at 177. This rating clearly shows that even after years of supposed reform and liberalization of the economy the Island continues to be more of a military compound than a country that wants to

move toward reforms that will improve the living and working conditions of its population, and provide the opportunity for its citizens to prosper economically.

While the naïve think that a few liberalizations mean that the Cuban government is moving toward structural change, they should note that the State is the largest employer and maintains a centralized economy that defines the smallest details of the production processes of the country. Add to this a stagnant bureaucracy, inefficient and dependent on the direction of the central government bodies, creating a perfect formula that has made the economic disaster to be of alarming proportions. Even party officials themselves have voiced disagreement with the bureaucratic red tape, even when they are the designers of an evil impossible to correct and whose only solution would be a drastic change in the economic and political system.

If anything has become clear in recent years is that the Cuban economy is unsalvageable and totally dependent on oil subsidies from Venezuela as well as the billions of dollars generated by those in exile.

Wages

According to the National Office of Statistics, the average salary in 2010 was 448 Cuban pesos a month, approximately \$21, which do not cover the basic needs of families, who have to acquire many of the basic products in CUC (Cuban convertible pesos) while their wages are paid in a currency of different denomination.

For the 1.6 million retirees the situation is even worse. They receive an average of 244 pesos, about \$11. Official sources acknowledge that Cuba has the second largest aging population in Latin America, and by 2025 will have the first.

The monthly salary does not cover the expenses beyond two weeks, the rest of the month Cubans have had to fend for themselves as best as they can. With the growing crisis this turns increasingly worse, wages are not even received, are delayed or are incomplete, for lack of funds, or due to corruption and negligence –amid which the weary Cuban is forced to navigate day to day.

The government owns the jobs, businesses, wages, banking and bank accounts, all of it provided at its own convenience.

An example of the illegality and rampant governmental abuse was seen this past October when the population was informed that the banks would seize wages in all households where there was a delay in payment of the cooking ware imported from China –which the population was forced to purchase from the government during the “Energy Revolution”! The measure is nationwide, but requires compliance “at any rate” where the debt is greater, for example, in the Eastern municipality of Moa, which owes 3million pesos.

Furthermore, the workers of the project for development of the port of Mariel have suffered drastic reductions in salary for the month of April due to "breaches in the plan". In May, workers saw their wages reduced by half. Orestes Martínez, employed by the Cuban-Brazilian venture, complained, “I never arrive late nor miss my shifts, I don’t waste a minute at my job. They need to pay me for what I do, not for what others don’t do”.

Likewise, the workers of the state-owned Fish Company of the Island of Youth complained in January that since September they are not been paid the differential wage for “surpassing” of labor standards. The workers are entitled to a bonus payment in hard currency, vital for purchasing basic necessities. The workers have gone to the Union of Fisheries, which exhorts them to wait.

The scale-repair technician, **Eduardo Tamayo Montero**, complains that he receives an incomplete salary, due to delays from warehouse managers and other state institution in reporting the repairs for which he earns a small bonus.

In December last year, **agricultural workers** from various fields in the provinces of Villa Clara and Cienfuegos were not paid for their daily tasks for more than 60 days. Cooperative management of the sugarcane "El Salto" in Cienfuegos simply told the 40 workers there was no cash to pay them for their work in the month of November and stressed that the problem would continue for the next four months.

Also **agricultural workers** at the Basic Units of Cooperative Production "Juan Verdecia" and "5th Congress", in Villa Clara, have not been paid their salaries for the last three months and still engage in agricultural work.

Furthermore, a group of **workers from the Uruguay Sugar Mill** have had their work day extended from 8 to 12 hour this past March, without an increase in salary. Some of them have resigned; others won’t show for the next harvest.

On December 28th Lt. Teresa García, sub official Damaris Ordoñez Hernández and a civilian by the name Ayli, all from the Economic Department of Prison 1580, were brought before a military tribunal, accused of embezzling more than 47,000 pesos from the salaries of **working prisoners**.

The prisoners who form part of this program work for the Company of Various Products (PROVARI) belonging to the Interior Ministry (MININT), are responsible for the fabrication of building materials. Sometimes they are forced to work up to 12 hours. Their monthly wages are 250 Cuban pesos (\$10), but in many instances, and without justification, they are not compensated; yet the inmates do not complain for fear of future reprisals.

The **inmates** of the provincial jail at Boniato in Santiago de Cuba, who also work for PROVARI in fine woodworking, brick making, upholstery and crafts, have complained about the mishandling of their salaries for which the authorities receive monthly 25 pesos in national currency. The factory pays a stipend in Cuban CUC, known as "chavitos", but the inmates have never seen that money.

Factory workers at the Dietary Products Company “Abigail González” (previously NESTLE), in Bayamo, have complained that when there are no materials for work due to state inefficiency, they are sent home without pay.

According to Yoandris Montoya Avilés, delegate for the Trade Union and Labor Training Center (CNCSL) in the eastern territory, the production has been paralyzed for the last three months, due to the lack of materials.

Working Conditions

“People throw all sorts of things in the trash containers: rubble, car batteries, cans, dead animals, cattle guts. The population is very inconsiderate towards us, is poorly educated. The containers get filled. Beside them, they throw out their garbage and we also have to pick this garbage up by hand.” -Maikel Rodríguez Caballero, garbage collector.

According to data from the National Office of Statistics, during 2010 there were 4,919 workplace accidents in Cuba, meaning that each workday 19 workers suffered some sort of accident.

Likewise, 88 fatalities were reported, that is, every 3 working days one worker has lost his or her life.

In these statistics, the government does not include occupational accidents at state companies of the Ministry of Armed Forces or the Ministry of the Interior and others they deem sensitive.

The negligence of workers and state administrators, general lack of control and the lack of complaints from the official unions are the best breeding grounds for occupational accidents and illness that occur on the Island.

The labor conditions of **workers in the Cuban-Brazilian venture in port of Mariel** worsen daily. From transportation, to meals, the quality dropped in the first days. Also, in May of this year, a “stimulus” payment in convertible pesos was initiated, yet at the same time the basic salary in national currency was practically reduced by half.

The three teams that make up the **Water and Sewage Company** in Santa Clara do not have the right tools for their work, which has resulted in an increase clogging of

“We have to lift to the truck or wagon the filled garbage cans without gloves or with worn out gloves. Since collection isn’t daily, the containers overflow or people throw all sorts of filth anywhere, and we have to pick it up with shovels. There are many ways to contract disease,” – garbage collector.

sewage networks. These workers have carried on for more than six months with no drain rods, no rubber boots, gloves, pipes or other implements needed to carry out their tasks.

Throughout this year the **cleaning crews** of San Miguel del Padrón have demanded the Department of Community for boots, gloves, overalls, brooms, knives and files to do their work of grass mowing. They have also complained about the poor quality of food they are given. But the brunt of the demands deal with the diseases they are exposed to for lack of means of protection.

Maikel Rodríguez Caballero, 24 years old, resident of Regla, left the Department of Community Services as a trash collector, where he worked from 9pm. to 7am. He described appalling working conditions, where workers lack all kinds of tools for their protection, including gloves to pick up waste from overflowing trash cans.

The province of Las Tunas reported that up to November of last year, there were **179 injured workers** in work-related accidents, two of which died. Even though there are ten less non-fatal accidents than the previous year, the balance is unsatisfactory since the severity index increased from 38.3 to 39.8 of workdays lost per injury. ACINOX Foundry Company and the regional ministries of

Transportation, Sugar and Agriculture are among the most prone to accidents.

Workers complain of the lack, shortage or poor quality of the means of protection. And even though the sum of 619,200 CUC was allocated for the purchase, only 401,500 was used “which shows the lack of interest in the health and integrity of the work”.

In the agricultural farm "**La Coca**", near the village of Campo Florido, the workers say they have to work in dusty or muddy soil in sandals. Moreover, they have no boots or gloves to handle farm equipment, exposing workers to accidents.

Lifeguards **Justo Izquierdo** and **Daniel Sabatier**, of Guanabo, complained in March of the terrible conditions in which they must work. “We conduct rescues with effort, skill and will, without any tools,” they added. “We have no motorboats, or any other type, to quickly reach the swimmer. Nor are there flotation torpedoes for those in danger to grab on to.” Safety on the beaches is almost nil, they say. “There are no warning flags to prohibit swimming, nor telephones for miles of beaches to call for medical attention or ambulance. There is no medical post. There are no swimming fins for speed. Nor whistles!”. Monthly wage is around 400 pesos (merely \$20), which includes the extra pay for extreme working conditions.

A squad of **construction workers** repairing houses in Central Havana denounced the lack of work implements such as gloves, helmets, belts, boots and safety straps, where two to three workers at a time are on scaffolding, daily putting their lives in danger. Also, they are not paid extra for dangerous conditions, and work 12 hours or more for only 375 pesos a month without including overtime. They also complain of being poorly fed.

Under the same conditions workers in the Surveillance and Protection Corps, watching what will become a local cell phone shop, must do their jobs. The **guards** work outdoors without overcoats, work uniforms, boots and other supplies that should be provided by the agency that hires them.

The Defenseless Worker

The life of the Cuban worker is deplorable. Helpless, besieged and subjugated for over 52 years by an inhumane and unjust regime, without someone to appeal to in defense of their interests, without labor unions or legal knowledge, without freedom of any kind to decide their employment, and nowadays many out of work due to indiscriminate firings without stipend of more than

500,000 state employees that began to take place in October of last year by government decision with the full support of the CTC.

As it is well known, the Cuban trade unions answer only to the government, and, far from defending the interests of workers, they are vehicles for subordinating them to the decrees of the regime. Therefore, union leaders do not defend their members and always tend to side with management. If at times the opposite happens, the unionists are the one expelled from their jobs.

With no one to represent his interest, **Lázaro Cazales** was fired without recourse, as inspector of the P-2 buses in the bus terminal Alberro, in the San Miguel del Padrón municipality, this past March. The administration alleged corruption by the driver, who says the real reason was that he was disliked by his boss, Silvestre Alfonso.

At the **Los Laureles Hotel**, on the Central Highway, several workers were upset last June for not being able to meet the planned collection of revenue in domestic currency –not receiving as a result the essential "incentive"– as the site management has forbidden the sale in Cuban pesos.

The member of the opposition José Hernández López denounced in March the exceptional measures set out in the **Mario Muñoz Monroy sugar mill** in the town of Los Arabos, Matanzas, where workers are held every end of day by the army Special Forces, who control the site. "The mill functions like a prison. Workers are forced to undress. Those who are caught stealing are beaten and detained. Wages do not surpass 200 or 250 pesos monthly, and they are forced to work 12 hours a day."

The lack of components and parts in the **bus assembly plant** in Guanajay, Artemisa, has forced the administration to send most of the workers home since February, retaining 60% of their salaries. It maintains a small rotating working group of 50 workers who repair old Giron buses, which the company buys at 5,000 pesos and sells for 16,000.

Lázaro Valdés Tejeda, driver for the state-owned bus company Trasmetro, says he is innocent of the charges of "illicit economic activity." The driver is accused of using the bus to transport "people linked to human rights" and has been definitively dismissed without work option, even before the pending court tribunal.

Anisley Muñoz, a female worker at the cigar factory "Ramiro Cruz Lavandero", in Ranchuelo, was forced by the police to strip naked on April 3rd at the end of her shift.

Such degradation is regularly seen at the old cigar factory "Trinity and Brothers", aimed to curb the theft of cigarettes and raw materials stolen by workers as a way to survive against low wages.

Workplace Discrimination

"The term discrimination includes: (a) any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation;(b) such other distinction, exclusion or preference which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation as may be determined by the Member concerned after consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations, where such exist, and with other appropriate bodies."-ILO Convention 111, as ratified by Cuba.

In October of last year, **Omeris Ramírez Coba**, an employee for the bakery Cadena del Pan, and **Robert Alfonso Córdoba**, a CVP worker, who were lured into participating in a rally to protest against the opponent Rogelio Lopez Tavío, were dismissed from their jobs after they apologized to the victim.

Adonis Pérez Salgado, a delegate for the Cuba Independent and Democratic Party in the municipality of 10 de October, was fired from his job at the Barroso farm, in Arroyo Naranjo, on January 3rd after its owner was blackmailed by State Security.

On January 3rd, **Carlos Alberto Gómez Vasco** was fired from his post as assistant in the psychiatric ward of the Surgical Clinic in the Provincial Hospital "Camilo Cienfuegos" in Sancti Spiritus, by head of the ward Rosa Elia Borroto Calderon, who informed him that he could not work in the medical center because he was a "counterrevolutionary."

Angel Pairol Alvarez, a professor of biology at Fructuoso Rodríguez High School, was dismissed from his job last March where he had worked for two months. The center's director, María Gónzora, canceled the teacher's contract "for having a conversation with students, before classes, on political issues out of line with the official approach, as well as for not participating in political activities and volunteer works", in violation of established guidelines.

Mareisy Columbié López, wife of political prisoner Frómata Andrés Cuenca, was fired on June 6 for supporting her spouse's 30-day hunger strike. Columbié, an English teacher at the Fabio Rosel School of the provincial capital, said that principal Magalys Gainza handed her a document stating that she was suspended from teaching for 3 years, for having supported a dissident.

Professor of Physics **Hergues Frandín Díaz** was dismissed for political reasons from his job at the Universidad de Oriente, where he worked for 5 years in the Department of Applied Physics as a teacher of students in the second year of Career of Computer Engineering. In a meeting with the administration and the union representative, Frandín was notified that he was expelled for being member of "a Opposition Committee and a counterrevolutionary faction". Frandín, also member of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering Polytechnic Institute Julio Antonio Mella, Santiago de Cuba, serves as the program manager of the Center for Proactive Democracy Strategic Studies "José Ignacio García Hamilton" and president of the Municipalities of Opposition in Songo La Maya.

Last June, Cruces polyclinic, in Cienfuegos, denied employment to nurse **Bárbara Lucía de la Cruz**, whom they consider a local opposition sympathizer. Barbara, who has practiced nursing for 21 years, was even denied a janitor's assistant position available at the center.

Vicente Padrón Casas, a member of the Corriente Agrarista, an independent attorneys association, reported on June 28th that he was dismissed from his post as General Counsel for the Western Packaging Company of the Ministry for the Steel-Mechanical Industry after having reported all the irregularities perpetrated by the company's management and opposing that unjust sanctions be applied to workers.

The opponent **Dennis Pino Basulto**, activist for Impacto Republicano, was fired in July from his cleaning job for refusing to pay union and territorial militia fees. The Area Manager, Rosel Pérez, informed him that he was not "suitable to continue to carry out his duties".

Jacqueline García Jaens, wife of imprisoned dissident Ariel Arzuaga, was fired from her job last July 6th at the René Vallejo Polyclinic, where she worked as a dental technician. García had worked at the center, in Bayamo, for more than five years, where she "had been pressured and blackmailed several times by the director". García has not been able to get a Dental License because of her marriage.

The last job of **Pascual Ramos Osorio** was as a custodian at the brick factory Cerámica Roja in Isla de la Juventud, where he was fired for not paying union dues and not attending political activities, as well as for not belonging to the CDR. Because of his contentious attitude he has not been able find employment.

Inmate Exploitation

Prison authorities from maximum security **prison Combinado Sandino**, in Pinar del Rio, use inmates to cut thorny trees without providing the clothing, safety devices or footwear that such work requires. The prisoner's daily work exceeds 10 hours, in inhumane conditions and poor food, and with wages of 20 to 25 pesos a month. Inmates enrolled in programs to shorten sentences are used to do this work, as they would lose this right if they refuse.

Inmates at the camp PROVARIAS, from "Nieves Morejón" Provincial Prison, in Sancti Spiritus, members of a masonry brigade known as "La SEPMI", were being paid between 30 and 40 Cuban pesos, equivalent to less than \$2, denounced last May a political prisoner.

At the penal camp for study and work Toledo 1, west of Havana, the **47 inmates** working on the construction of three buildings for use by the MININT (Minister of Interior), work long hours under the sun without the right to rest, with inadequate nutrition and in appalling working conditions.

In prison 1580, in San Miguel del Padrón, prisoners who are employed by the **PROVARI** to work in the prison's block factory complained this past March of mistreatment and verbal abuse by the chief of production known as "Mayito", who was recently demoted and served a prison sentence in the Ganuza military prison for supplying drugs to a prisoner.

LABOR “REORGANIZATION” AND “AVAILABILITY”

“There'll be no dialogues or spaces to redirect the working life of the millions of people that will be left helpless. Any alternative expression that isn't controlled by the regime will no be allowed. At least that is what the authorities attempt.” -Victor M. Domínguez, independent trade unionist.

Raymundo Navarro, member of the secretariat of the CTC, affirmed that the Cuban economy, with its current vulnerability, could not continue to fund the “welfare model”, defending the measures implemented by the government.

In his statement on September 13th, Navarro explained the government's measures, and exclaimed, “The success of the process that is now being initiated will depend on the political assurance which, from the labor movement and under the direction of the Party, the union leaders will give in advance to the actions that must be undertaken, and the social consensus that we will reach on the economic and political relevance of this step. We favor that trade union organization in every level of management contribute to compliance of this policy, guaranteeing the continuation of the construction of Cuban socialism.”

In October last year, it was announced that within a period of 6 months 500,000 people would become unemployed, and that those affected would be offered various options (agricultural, police, construction, education). They would receive 60% of their salary in the first month after their dismissal, afterwards, nothing.

In the past, those who were left unemployed could continue to receive their full wage. Later on, the access to education was considered a form of employment, and also early retirements were being offered.

But that is the past. At the end of the layoff process, 25% of current state employees will be left on the street, without any social assistance and with little hope of survival without a job.

The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), the largest mass organization in Cuba, with nearly 8,800,000 members, 95% of the population over 14 years old, was assigned by the PCC members to explain the process of “labor reorganization”, in an attempt to shift public confidence to the coming changes. However, without knowledge of issues –such as resolutions No. 8 of 2005, which establishes employment policy, and No. 28 of 2006, both from the Ministry of Labor

and Social Security, on the Implementation of worker's suitability, proven competence and training– those in charge were unable to answer its members' concerns.

In September, meetings began on the state level between institutions leaders and their workers, where it was informed on the “staff amortization process”, as well as the creation of advisory committees, responsible for the selection of “qualified personnel” who would remain employed. The “Recruitment Committees”, designated as such by labor legislation, are comprised of workers who are appointed by the management, the union, the Communist Party and the Union of Young Communists.

The “relocation” of employees to other sectors or “useful” posts, and their possible recruitment in the private area or in new forms of management such as government coops, are part of the authorities' strategy to address the situation of layoffs.

But the government had to alter the schedule planned for the dismissal of half a million Cubans, given by the insufficient development of self-employment and other factors such as inadequate training and complaints about the choosing of workers that will become “available” at workplaces. In February, Raul Castro said the measure could not be framed inside “inflexible deadlines”, admitting a delay in the process.

Sources from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security said in July of this year that the overall implementation of the process is still being analyzed and perfected, but that is “going well” in the sectors where it has already started.

Up until the publication of this report, almost half a million Cubans have been part of this “labor reorganization”, many relocated to jobs completely unrelated to their work, or in bankrupted sectors. Thousands of others have simply remained “available” –that is, unemployed. The Cuban government has not provided relevant figures of this process.

Profession, as dictated by the State

"I no longer build parts for tractors and wagons, now I hoe the land."

In Cuba, the car mechanic today may well be a construction worker tomorrow, the builder may have by now been relocated to agriculture and the farmer may be looking for a job repairing shoes.

In Cuba, the government decides the course of the workforce and the fate of their workers.

Of the **18 workers** who were laid off and declared "available" (lathes, milling machines, grinders) from the Machinery Mill in the municipality Jovellanos, in Matanzas, 14 were relocated to the Administration for Varied Crops "Vladimir Ilich Lenin", to work as farmers. These workers, no only will suffer the radical state-ordered change of profession, but will undergo a wage reduction of up to 50 pesos a month, in addition to now having to commute to a rural area 10 kilometers from their town of residence, without means of transport.

The company ACINOX (stainless steel) terminated **23 workers** in August, and offered them employment in agriculture, which they refused.

In Las Tunas, **42 employees** from the municipality's swimming pool, including ten swimming instructors, were fired. They were offered cleaning and agriculture work. Eighteen chose unemployment.

The Athletic Preparatory High School of the same municipality declared **35 workers** redundant, including professors, assistants and custodians. They were offered jobs in cleaning and construction. Only three accepted.

1,263 workers who were dismissed last October from the Urbano Noris Sugar Mill, in Holguin, will be relocated to agriculture –many without having been consulted–, where in many cases there is no budget for their salaries. The management of the state agency proposes to pay 30% of their salary, only if they agree to work in sugarcane planting.

At the same time, in Las Tunas, the specialization of Agriculture Technician was eliminated from the curriculums, due to the lack of employment possibilities, leaving hundreds of students without graduating in this field.

In October, production and clerical assistants of the state-owned rural farm La Coca, in Habana del Este, as well as the custodians, were left unemployed. Government officials "invited" them to become agricultural workers in direct jobs in the fields. By not accepting, these workers will be added to the long waiting list of Ministry of Labor's Employment Agency, for labor opportunities in agriculture, construction, or as police officers.

Duralmet, a producer of metal structures, one of its kind in the Island, fired **40 workers** in April. As an alternative, they were offered positions in construction and agriculture as laborers, with lower wages and less qualified work.

"The Agricultural Technician specialization has been discontinued. We were left up in the air. The administration says that it make no sense to graduate operator and technicians that will not be employed in agriculture. I lost, without benefit, my three years of study." -Student of "Alvaro Reynoso Project".

In October, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, through the Ministry of the Interior of Santa Clara, presented laid-off workers with four offers for relocation: police officer, prison guard, forest ranger, firefighter and in agriculture.

The labor chaos prevailing in the country was clearly demonstrated earlier this year when, while **530 workers** were being dismissed from the locomotives and wagons plants of Puentes Grandes and Boyeros, in Havana, –and with more layoffs looming overhead– the national television and other media (all state-owned) was promoting the enrollment of young people to railway technical schools.

The Administration for Varied Crops in Banao, Sancti Spiritus, which served for over forty years, was disbanded last Thursday due to low profitability, leaving **150 workers** in the street. The director, the principal analyst, the accountant and the remaining four workers were relocated to the also unprofitable Provincial Company of Collections.

Health, Education, Achievements of the Revolution

According to data published by the National Office of Statistics **47,421 technicians, nurses and assistants** were dismissed from this sector last year. These layoffs represent a reduction of 14 percent of health care personnel in 2010. And this year it has been reported that there will be even more.

Party officials have acknowledged "shortcomings in primary health care and lack of permanence of doctors and nurses in clinics". However, this government policy to reduce medical costs –and free up doctors to send them to provide services abroad– leaves clinics and hospitals, already deficient in staff and resources, even more affected.

*"The provincial public health officers assure us that the position of Nurse Assistant does not exist under the Labor Code; that former minister Balaguer ordered its removal. How can they tell us that the position doesn't exist if wages have been paid for almost five years at clinics in the Island? It's absurd!" -
Unemployed Nurse Assistant.*

As in the case of the **Mantilla Polyclinic**, in Arroyo Naranjo, several health workers were threatened earlier this year with unemployment. In January, during a meeting with leaders of the Provincial Office of Public Health, it was announced the maximum reduction of staff. Some workers will be relocated to different hospitals in the capital while others will simply remain unemployed. The measure will leave the clinic with only four qualified specialists for the general care of patients.

Moreover, the decline of health care is strained by the disappearance of the **Nurse Assistant** position in the country. Only some of the most important hospitals maintain the position, such as the Center of Cardiology and Cardiovascular Surgery in the Vedado district of Havana.

Cuban leaders have promised health workers "they will not be left helpless". Without a doubt, many will be listed as "internationalist workers". Cuba has about 38,544 healthcare specialists in their missions throughout the world, generating an annual average of about \$168,600 per capita.

Almost all healthcare specialists who go abroad –or who are laid off– remain without replacement.

At the sugar mills the clinics have been closed, and only a first-aid post with one nurse will be available to the workers and their families.

Education, one of the main Revolution's "social conquests", is also affected by these layoffs. For example, the non-university education sector in Cuba will close the 2010-2011 academic year with the reduction of approximately **15,000 workers**.

The Faculty of Arts and Letters at the University of Havana was left without **eight teachers** in July, after a recent process of posts reduction.

By April of this year, the Committee of Experts of the state's Artistic Contracting Company of Matanzas left more than **500 artists** of the province without employment, who are left without options in the artistic sphere, because recreation centers belong to the state and have eliminated them from their budget. All of the sudden, countless of spectacles, some of the oldest popular music groups, music associations, and soloists disappeared.

THE NEGLECTED FARM WORKER

"We cannot enter into contracts, market freely, or obtain supplies on our own. Nor do we have the freedom to commercialize production where and how it best suits us. All those obstacles undermine agricultural development, profitability, the welfare of farmers, and the tables of the citizens are more poorly served" - Gumersindo Gutiérrez, coop farmer in Pinar del Río.

Cuba, an island once world-famous for its fertile land and unique crops, now imports 80 percent of its food, for which it destines more than \$1.5 million annually.

The government has failed to make significant changes in agriculture, or eliminate the major obstacles imposed on field workers. Increased agricultural production remains elusive. In 2010, food production fell by 2.8%.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, as of December 2010, 1,179,000 hectares had been handed to **146,000 people**, 67 percent of the barren lands in the country, as part of the strategy of the government of Raul Castro to boost food production in the country.

In July of this year the Cuban agriculture authorities reported that they had withdrawn the grant of lands to **9,000 beneficiaries** due to unsatisfactory farming, even after these impoverished workers had invested resources to start their projects.

State Control

"They fine harshly. They catch you selling your products, harvested with your sweat, your effort, at your cost and everything, they impose a fine, they can seize them. You're forced to sell to Collection" -Maykel Alexander Hernández, tobacco grower from Pinar del Rio

Cuban farmers are grouped into two state-controlled structures: cooperatives –formed by the Agricultural Production Cooperatives (CPA) and The Basic Cooperative Production Units (UBPA)– and individual farms that form the Credit and Service Cooperatives (CCS).

The majority of the food produced in Cuba is produced by the latter group, counting on very few resources and with obstacles of all kinds, in less than 30% of the arable land. However, the government offers them no pension or social assistance in case of accidents. To get a state pension they would have to surrender their lands to the State.

Farmers are prohibited from selling directly. The state-owned Collection is responsible for purchasing and distributing food produced by small farmers, cooperatives and state farms, from volume and price agreements established at the start of the harvest. Inefficiency in management has led to numerous complaints in recent years, because of losses from spoilage due to the inefficiency or disinterest of this agency.

Moreover, the cooperative members complain of excessive guardianship that prevents them from increasing yields and gain better profits.

An example of this: article 29 of the Draft Economic Policy Guidelines for the VI Congress of the Communist Party says "The first-degree cooperatives , on a voluntary basis, may agree amongst themselves on the creation of second-degree cooperatives (the union of several cooperatives of mutual agreement), with legal status and own proprietorship, with the aim of organizing common processes (production and services), joint purchases and sales with a aim of achieving greater efficiency".

This unification is imposed by Communist Party officials, the Tobacco Company and the ruling ANAP (National Association of Small Farmers, an organization that operates as a department of the structures of the Party, responsible for implementing the agricultural policy derived from agreements of Party Congress and the meetings of the Council of Ministry) and has been rejected by many farmers, who nevertheless must comply to it as it is "a call made by the Revolution and therefore cannot be denied", according to what was communicated to farmers of the CCS in the municipality of San Juan y Martínez, in the Pinar del Rio province, where the best blond tobacco in the world is grown.

The newspaper Granma, on December 28th, emphasized that this process in the farming sector, guided by the ANAP is "fully democratic."

Among the consequence of the tight state control over agricultural production are the losses of products which are

rotting in the fields for lack of transport to the city –due to the inefficiency of the one and only buyer, the state–, the limit to productive diversity, poor management of obtaining and implementation of vehicles belonging to the cooperative, lack of supplies, including seed, fertilizer, pesticides, which impede the personal progress of the cooperative members and their families.

The poor cultural care of the plantations, lack of payment to workers or delay in pay, little concern by the State in dealing with cooperative members and employees in terms of poor food, not providing heavy duty work clothes or footwear, nor gloves, all necessary for harsh agricultural labor, has been the responsible for the closure of many of these Units.

Farmers of the municipality of Cifuentes have complained of being affected by the shortages of more than six months in the store of the Provincial Company of Agricultural Supplies, set up for the purchase of supplies and means of labor for use in their work. Farmers, based on the quantity of products or liters of milk they deliver to the state, have the right to buy supplies, work tools or household items through a system of accumulated points.

The residents of the 14 Granma's municipalities look with dissatisfaction at the plummeting in the supply of meats, fruits and vegetables, as well as rice, coffee, meat, milk and its derivatives, among others which have always reached high results on a national level. The crops are not exploited to their potential and the products fail to meet their standards or rot for lack of transportation to take them to the city.

Bureaucratic Absurdity

"They do not sell herbicide, or fertilizer, or farming tools, nothing! But they want us keep everything like a garden. You cannot. We buy oil to throw on the stalks of cut marabou, which is a very hard wood, to kill it. Sometimes we succeed, sometimes it grows back. It is enough to go mad". -Juan González, a farmer in Havana.

The management of Cuba's agricultural sector is in the hands of bureaucrats without the slightest knowledge of the land or its use, only political workers that the government has placed for total control over the peasantry –so far the only clear goal and success of the regime. From this stems all of the absurd and stifling measures that do not allow the agricultural worker to do his job efficiently.

In the Municipality of San Juan y Martínez, in Pinar del Rio, **43 CCS farmers** were fined 500 pesos each for using fallow lands to plant black beans, in early October. The bean is a short-cycle crop and is harvested while the tobacco seedlings are developed for transplant to the plantations in January. This practice, long-standing among Cuban tobacco growers, incorporates nitrogen into the soil, which makes tobacco plantations more fertile, and results in a leaf with more tissue, texture and quality.

*"What harm do we cause anyone in producing charcoal, which is badly needed, and eliminating marabou, which is so detrimental?" -
Farmers fined for using marabou*

State absurdity has clearly been shown in the war against the thorny marabou (*Dichrostachys cinerea*) that, due to government extended mismanagement of agriculture, consumes about 65% of the productive land in the country. The farmers, only ones who know how to deal with the problem are, far from being assisted, hampered and often punished by the regime.

Lorenzo Frómata Martínez and **Rolando Verdecia Ramírez**, farmers from the Isla de la Juventud, who clear lands infested by marabou and use its wood as charcoal, were fined this past October 500 pesos each for not having the corresponding permits, and had their 28 sacks of charcoal seized and were ordered to dismantle the rudimentary furnace they used. Both partners responded that permits were never granted despite their many efforts to obtain them.

On the other hand, in July inspectors from the Ministry of Agriculture imposed a fine of up to 500 to 1500 pesos in national currency to every farmer who had marabou on his farm.

Faced with this, some farmers threatened with surrendering their lands to the State, as so far the government has not provided the resources and supplies necessary to remove the invasive plant, nor is there an independent market where farmers can acquire the means necessary for the task.

Farm tenants (holders of state land granted by lease) in East Havana **Miriam Medernás**, **Juan González**, **Salvador Valle** and **Casimiro Fernández**, complain of harassment by the authorities, who fined them for having marabou on their land despite not having any resources for its care, or wire fences, for example, to protect livestock. If within the year the lands have not produced, they are taken away. If cattle are

stolen, they are imposed with fines greater than 500 pesos, and are threatened with the seizure of the rest of their livestock.

When the Ministry of Agriculture is finally able to provided its producers with fertilizers, fuel and herbicides, then crops are lost due to lack of combines, carts, fuel and the poor road

conditions, as it happened to rice growers in several CCS in different territories of Villa Clara, which were about to lose their crop last October due to lack of conditions for its collection. The ministry had promised the farmers that their crops would be collected mechanically, with the commitment sale of a large percentage of production to the institution.

THE SELF EMPLOYED

"You can see the two lines. Some come to apply for the license, and others to return it." -Daniel, Havana resident

On August 1st 2010, Raul Castro "proposed" before the highest legislative body, the National Assembly of People's Power, a plan of adjustments to the nation's economic model they call "update of socialism", which follows an opening to the private sector.

Along with the massive dismissal of workers in workplaces with 90% inflated payroll, some existing prohibitions were raised for the granting of new licenses and the selling of certain products, as well as relaxing the possibility of hiring employees in specified activities, all in order to absorb the "available workers".

178 trades were authorized, but many without major economic impact –such as doll repairman and caretaker of public bathrooms–, some frankly ridiculous –such as palm toppers and lighter fillers–, or absurdly obsolete such as buttons lining. Moreover, at least 21 of these activities have been practiced without a license for several years by many people. This has raised great fear among these workers, many too poor to pay the high taxes that the legalization of their status demands.

On the other hand, in a surprising decision, the government will allow 83 of these activities to contract workforce without having to be partners or relatives of the owner, considered crime until a few days ago under the penal code which carries a penalty of up to 3 years' imprisonment and fines of up to 25,000 pesos in national currency.

According to official calculations, some 1.8 million Cubans will switch to the self-employed sector in the next 5 years, tripling the private sector, after the introduction of a group of reforms to reanimate the fragile local economy. As of July, there were 314,000 workers.

The self-employed will have to recourse to a special tax regimen where they will pay taxes on sales or public services as well as their personal income. Also, those who contract workers will have to pay a tax for using workforce, which will be regulated to avoid concentrations of wealth and the indiscriminate use of the workforce.

The Cuban regime has a dysfunctional relationship with the process of self-employed workers: on one hand, it is the only possible form of generating useful employments, and on the other hand it is a window for economic freedom which, in the opinion of most orthodox leaders, Cuban workers do not deserve and may become a problem down the road. It is evident that there is a double standard in words and action, and the most latent example of limiting individual initiative is the way in which they will collect taxes on personal income.

According to the regulations, taxes will be determined by the sum of all earned income minus the allowed deductible costs. For the determination of the tax base, as well as deducting declared income, taxes paid and the percentage of expenses necessary for the activity. A progressive scale of annual net income exists that starts at \$5,000 Cuban pesos and when it reaches \$40,000 it can reach up to 40%.

From 50,000 pesos there is a tax of 50% that, together with the payment for the use of workforce, progress and investment in new small businesses becomes practically impossible. There is also a payment for the contribution to social security of 25.0%.

It's a shrewd scheme. Instead of having to subsidize an unproductive and costly workforce, it will finance its ineffective system with the toil of millions of "independent" workers.

Another figure that no one speaks of and which undoubtedly was very well included in the plans of General Castro –and may be in the order of millions of dollars– is that of family members living abroad who are providing initial investments for small businesses in Cuba. One owner of a small restaurant said that without the help of her family living in the United States could not have started her business. "The people here speak of credit, and when you go to Cuban banks they only offer you 5,000 pesos. My initial investment was more than \$1,200, about 26,400 pesos."

Moreover, many Cubans living abroad are acquiring properties for their families and their future retirement in a new Cuba that many expect to arrive soon.

But the disproportionate tax system and the restrictions that impede the progress of private businesses, do not allow self-employment to become a real initiative. Everything that is not specifically consented to is prohibited, professional and higher technological activities are not permitted; regulatory provisions are very precise, with many likely pitfalls and sanctions, causing failure and immorality; the tax base is raised to asphyxiating levels and does not stimulate the hiring of workers. Advertising is also not allowed, nor intermediation.

Forced to navigate through high taxes, the demands of inspectors, –many of them corrupt– police abuse, shifting and arbitrary rules, the poor broadcasting of restrictive laws, the low purchasing power of wages and the prices, often in foreign currency, of the materials needed to work, as well as the absence of a wholesale market with differentiated retail prices, many have given up on private initiative and gone out of business or surrendered their licenses –more than 40,000 in April, according to governmental organizations. These Cubans remain unemployed, without any social assistance –unemployment subsidies or assistance program for the poor do not exist in Cuba.

Government Obstruction of Private Enterprise

The center of Studies of the Cuban Economy (an entity subordinate to the University of Havana) estimates at \$1 billion dollar the revenue that state coffers will obtain in 2011 from the new taxes on private work. These taxes are levied on both the production and sale of products and services such as the rental of housing, among other things.

In July, it was known that in Santa Clara more than **800 self-employed workers** had relinquished their licenses, due to the constant persecution and soaring fines by inspectors and police officers to private vendors.

In January, more than **200 coach drivers** from Jatibonico went to the offices of the National Tax Administration Office (ONAT) to surrender their license, complaining that new taxes are unfair to those who solve the transport deficit in that town.

In December, taxes to the drivers who travel between the Central Road and the provincial prison in Sancti Spiritus "Nieves Morejon" were raised, as well as a "contribution" for additional social insurance.

This past May, **15 self-employed hairdressers** from the municipality of Santo Domingo were willing to leave their business because government officials fell silent to their demands to reduce their taxes of 250 pesos a months, which according to them they are the only ones taxed so high outside the provincial capital (the rest pay 150). Municipal government authorities have the power to raise or lower the amount paid by the self-employed in the municipality without violating the legislated minimum fee.

The disclosure of the Official Gazette, where the increase in fees for patents of the self-employed appears, generated considerable discontent at the end of last year among the affected in the town of Yayabo, according to mason **Tomás García Macías**, who commented that in his case his taxes were raised from 40 to 200 pesos.

The agreement of the Council of the Provincial Administration of Havana for the management of the self-employment in the capital has been in effect since last May. Article 3 of Resolution 32of 2010 of the Ministry of Work and Social Security empowers the provincial and municipal governments to group the self-employed in areas that the administration decides.

Based on this new arrangement the Santa Clara county government banned in April the self-employed engaged in the trade of clothes and shoes, settled in the hospital zone, from selling their products, because it affected "the state trading network". That is, so as not to compete with the state.

For the same reasons, the directive of the Marta Abreu Central University. in Las Villas, expelled self-employed street vendors from the institution because they were competing with the five state-owned cafeterias, which offer terrible service.

Self-employed workers of the Craft Vendor modality in Santa Clara feel affected by the obligation of concentrating themselves in specific areas created by government officials. In addition, they have been prohibited from selling items purchased at stores that operate in foreign currency, despite not having a stable market where they can buy their raw materials.

For Manolo, a peanut vendor, children have to run after him as he passes in front of the elementary school at the end of the school day. "I cannot stop, imagine if I lose everything I've made today on a fine" –commented the vendor, moving along.

Reinaldo Pacheco, a grocery owner in Sancti Spíritus, was forced on Tuesday to demolish his kiosk a few days after having finished building it, following all legal procedures established, because an inspector reported that the shack “damaged the image of the city”.

“You don’t know what you can sell. My license allows me to sell only household items. But yesterday, for selling steel wool pads the inspectors gave me a warning ticket. Afterwards, one of them asked me to give him a pad. There are things we know we can’t sell since they are not related to our license, but others are, and they still fine us, and if you complain it gets worse”. –A vendor in Havana

A **millar and sawyer** from the town of Cabanas, in Artemisa, who has had a license for self-employment for years, was officially notified by authorities that he must hire an assistant to maintain his licenses active. For this, he will have to pay, along with the salary of the worker, a monthly tax of 70 pesos in national currency, social security tax, and other new costs.

In June, the ONAT informed the owners of small private businesses that as of July 1st they must present themselves at their municipal offices with a stamp of 5 pesos to establish a record of income and expenses. Although the resolution of the ONAT has not appeared in the Official Gazette, the disposition of the order is mandatory. It has been leaked that by the end of the year they may impose a tax on annual earnings and it is speculated to be 10%.

Given all this, the state media –the only media allowed– highlighted the work of the self-employed as very positive. In a television interview of a retired woman with a license to sell snack foods, the journalist said to her: “Now you can say that you are the owner of your life”.

Inspectors vs. The Self-Employed

The poverty is widespread, and transforms inspectors and police –as poor as their victims– into scavengers. In their walks through commercial zones they tell vendors what they need openly and with no shame –be it money, goods or favors. They protect or whip, according to the merchant’s attitude.

L. Andrade Fernández, a self-employed worker from Guanabacoa, complained in the Granma’s Letters section that the inspectors require non-state street vendors to be constantly moving. According to this self-employed worker, inspectors imposed him a fine of 250 pesos for stopping to sell popcorn.

Additionally, the reader related how two inspectors from the Integrated Directorate of Guanabacoa, confessed that they were required to impose 10 fines daily.

Oscar Pérez, a baker and owner of a café that he owned in his home, says that to buy flour, yeast and sugar, he has to resort to the black market, and then bribe the inspector.

Yunieski Fleitas Zurbano, a DVD vendor in the city, complained that he has been detained frequently and without any explanation, just like the majority of ambulatory vendors with patents that circulate in the inner city.

Another reader, **I. Bello Lazo**, a member of the Municipal Department of Housing, explained that each inspector for the housing system, by direction of the provincial office, must impose 6 fine a month. Failing to meet the quota, the entity loses points, and the evaluation of the inspector is classified as poor, even leading to disciplinary measures.

In San Antonio de Los Baños, the independent press reported that police harassment against **retirees and the disabled** who survive on the proceeds of their minute businesses has increased dramatically, despite government propaganda in favor of self-employment.

“I have to be quick, on the lookout, to avoid a clash with the inspectors. Imagine, how can I sell without stopping? It’s impossible, but they will fine you for sure.” –a slushy vendor

The self-employed workers that work in Havana as **street vendors** are continuously harassed by the inspectors, who impose fines begin in the amount of 250 pesos and can reach up to 750 pesos in national currency. The most abused are the grain vendors, peanut vendors, and ice cream and snack vendors.

This past September only one month after the government’s decision to permit private initiative, inspectors and police intensified their persecution of the self-employed and arrested **dozens of vendors** in the streets of the capital. They also seized goods and imposed fines on those who traded in doorways, where vegetables, meats and other foods were visible.

On the 13th of November, in the market of Las Palmas, in the city of Havana, **street vendors without a license** were violently detained and were beaten by dozens of police of both sexes. Female police beat female vendors and the male police

beat the masculine offenders. Several vendors were left dipping blood, among the most serious was a 30 year old individual sold apples, and a 60 year old woman who sold spices.

On the 12th of June more than a dozen people repudiated the inspectors for imposing fines and confiscating items from two self-employed workers that sold in front of the popular Copelia ice cream parlor in the central El Vedado zone of Havana. Finally police officers appeared, fined the vendors 250 pesos, they confiscated their products and took them into custody, keeping a police operative there for some time to calm the protests that continued.

Furthermore, according to the self-employed vendor Yuniesky Fleites, soldiers repress daily the legal and illegal vendors in the city center of Santa Clara. He says that the police proceed with elevated fines, confiscation without allowing any explanation of the origins of good, and, even worse, the self-employed who have licenses are led toward police units.

The Government has handed out more than 47,000 licenses for the private transport of passengers and cargo, as part of its efforts to alleviate the economic crisis, according to data provided by the minister of the industry. Lack of transportation is one of the main problems Cubans face.

However, drivers, especially of bicycle taxis (bici-taxi), are a group that has been particularly harassed by the authorities for years.

Jesús Cordero Suarez, Secretary General of the Independent Union of bici-taxi drivers, reported last August the arbitrary arrest of driver **Richard Martínez González** and physical assault of a colleague.

Martínez was charged with "contempt" by an unidentified First Lieutenant, after the officer stopped him in the busy street of Galiano, in Havana, under the false pretext that he was forbidden to transit through that avenue. Along with Richard Martínez was a colleague who was assaulted by this officer with a slap.

The bici-taxi driver **Rolando William Pavón Ricard** was the subject of an act of police brutality last August in Sancti Spiritus, when he was beaten and detained by police unidentified officers for objecting to a fine. They imposed a tax of 300 pesos and threatened to take away his patent. Pavon Ricardo was held until the next day.

On January 30th, Luis Alberto Mena, area head of the Popular Council "La Federal" in Aguada de Pasajeros, slapped the bici-taxi driver **Antonio Fernández Zapata** for refusing to surrender two crates of oranges he was carrying without being handed the proper seizure records. The driver was detained at the local police station, where he was charged with "contempt". The charges that were dropped next day by the head of unit due to protests of friends and relatives.

THE HEALTHCARE WORKER

Cuba has about 38,544 healthcare specialists in their missions around the world generating around \$168,600 per capita each year, according to figures provided by the Cuban government. More than 75 percent of these professionals are in Venezuela.

On average, Cuba charges Venezuela more than \$200,000 annually for each of the 29,300 doctors, technicians and nurses participating in the health program Barrio Adentro, which contrasts with the \$500 to \$600 these workers receive each month. From this amount, the worker gets about \$230 for their monthly expenses, between \$125 and \$225 are deposited to an account in Havana, and \$50 given to their family in Cuba. The deposit can only be withdrawn at the end of the mission or of service overseas.

If a worker decides to emigrate, the family in Cuba is prohibited from reuniting with him, in a virtual kidnapping that can last for years, sometimes decades, and which very few individuals are willing to face. Still, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, about 1,574 Cuban doctors have embraced the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program, an initiative of the U.S. Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security.

Twenty-three Cuban doctors who were part of the healthcare team of the Mission Barrio Adentro in Venezuela, expressed their willingness to join the slavery lawsuit against the governments of Raul Castro, Hugo Chavez and the state oil company Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA), filed in 2010 by eight colleagues; after having testified that they worked under inhumane conditions, abuse and negligible pay during their time spent in Venezuela, under the control of the Cuban government.

The plaintiffs asserted that they lived as “modern slaves”, packed in rented homes or the homes of people sympathetic to the Venezuelan regime, while working without a legal medical license, violating the laws of that country.

This is also how the situation of doctors in Nicaragua is described by the pediatric surgeon **Rafael Fontirroche Cruz**, who defected in February from the Cuban medical brigade based in Muelle de los Bueyes, after reporting acts of corruption by the director of the brigade.

The physician described the poor health conditions they lived in, in shacks divided by cardboard with only one bathroom for 30 people, and receiving low wages insufficient to cover basic necessities –let alone to send money to their families in Cuba.

In recent years, the death of 69 Cuban doctors serving in Venezuela has been reported. However, it is not known whether the prosecutor’s office has initiated any investigation on these murders.

Authorities have denied **Dr. Arelis Arencibia Gómez**, a 32 years old 2002 graduate of Finlay Institute, and her 7 years old son, the permit to leave the country, in order to reunite with her father in the United States. Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP) has refused to grant the documents for her release, and order her to go back to work and wait for another five years.

Doctors **Geovany Jiménez Vega** and **Alfredo Felipe Valdés** were protagonists of a hunger strike in December of last year, demanding the MINSAP to reinstate their medical licenses. Four years ago, the physicians were barred from the practice for an indefinite time, after they sent a letter to the minister complaining about the low wages for health workers, and which was signed by 300 workers: 180 doctors and dentists and 120 nurses and technicians of dental assistance.

REPRESSION AGAINST INDEPENDENT UNIONISTS

“Workers and employers, without distinction whatsoever, shall have the right to establish and, subject only to the rules of the organization concerned, to join organizations of their own choosing without previous authorization.” –Article 2, Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, ratified by Cuba

Being a member of the opposition in Cuba is in itself a matter of high risk. Independent trade unionism is one of the activities least conceived of by the regime of the island as it openly contradicts with the essence of the “Dictatorship of the Proletariat.”

The Cuban trade union movement, historically strong and champion of incredible labor battles without precedent, practically disappeared in Cuba after the rise to power of a regime intrinsically anti-worker.

Today, that trade union movement finds itself in the difficult task of reorganizing after 50 years, retaking the reins of a united and democratic trade unionism, and learning how to organize the structures from the ground up of what will be the future Cuban trade union movement.

In March of 2011 the Independent Trade Union Coalition of Cuba (CSISC) was founded, formed by the three major unions in the country: the Council of Cuban Workers (CUTC), the Confederation of Independent Workers of Cuba (CTIC) and the National Independent Confederation of Cuba (CONIC). Its goal is to unify the labor, political, economic and social actions in order to adopt a common agenda.

The Coalition defined their work agenda in the following aspects:

- To claim the right to legally represent its members before employers and the government, guaranteed by international standards endorsed by Cuba of mandatory compliance.
- Communicate to the international trade union bodies the existence of the Coalition and apply for membership to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Confederation of the Americas (CSA).
- Apply for the inscription of the Coalition in the Register of Associations of the Republic of Cuba.

As expected, the regime has responded aggressively to the risk that the unity of the trade union movement represents. The brutality of the members of state security against trade unionists, in total disregard of international law, enjoys total impunity, which violates any respect for human rights, in addition to violating the ILO core conventions, signed by Cuba.

Especially since earlier this year, union leaders and activists of the National Confederation of Independent Workers of Cuba (CONIC) and those ascribed to the Confederation of Independent Workers of Cuba (CTIC) have been harassed by state security. Also the delegates of the National Trade Union and Labor Training Center (CNCSL) in different provinces have been under siege and unable to perform their instructional plans.

Within the new regime's repressive mode, at the slightest sign of a meeting, event, national days of importance or of the opposition, Cuban trade unionists are retained in their homes or taken to police stations, to prevent their participation.

Ephemeris and Detentions

May 1st, International Workers' Day

Iván Hernández Carrillo, secretary general of the CTIC, **Emilio Oliver Jerez**, organising secretary of the CONIC, and **Maria Elena Mir Marrero**, general secretary of the CONIC, were all violently arrested April 30 and kidnapped in a car owned by the State Security (DSE), when they left the home of Marrero.

Oliver Jerez was locked in a cell at the police station and Mir Marrero in an office. Both were interrogated and had hair samples taken, as well as being ordered to sign official warning documents emphasizing that they had no labor ties, that they were demonstrating against the revolutionary process and maintained close relations with persons hostile to the government.

Maria Elena Mir Marrero was detained until 4 pm on May 1st. The police cordon around her home, consisting of a patrol car, three motorcycles and about fifteen police officers, was lifted that day at 2 pm.

Jerez Oliver was detained until May 1st at 8 pm. This unionist was also arrested on April 26th. On this occasion he was mistreated and beaten by three DSE officers who were not identified. He was in the cells of the police unit in Aguilera, of the municipality of 10de Octubre, isolated and without communication.

Hernández Carrillo was held for 2 hours at the police station of Guanabo. Authorities confiscated several of his work documents.

Hernández has been detained he previous month in Matanzas, while preparing to attend a work meeting. He was confined to a cell of the local police station and released several hours later, after receiving threats of imprisonment. On June 2nd, the unionist was arrested at the corner of the house of the peaceful opposition member Jorge Luis García Pérez (Antunez), taken to the police unit in Placetas, and released eight hours later without any explanation. A month later, during a trip to Pinar del Rio, he was arrested with four other former prisoners of conscience (Angel Moya Acosta, Guido Sigler Amaya, Felix Navarro Rodríguez and Diosdado González Marrero), and held without identification documents for an hour. The only explanation given by the agents was that they were under orders from higher command.

This unionist is part of the Group of 75. After refusing to leave his country in exchange for his unconditional release, Carillo was finally released on February 19 of this year, under a parole law that puts him at risk of being imprisoned again for the remainder of his sentence. According to the parole letter, the sentence remains effective until March 10, 2028.

That same April 30th, a police operative by agents of the DSE "Ignacio", "Camille" and "Alexander", raided the workplace of the independent unionist **Ernesto Herrera Viel** and detained him in the police station known as "La 4ta" for two days.

On the first of May, the independent trade unionist **Daniel Reina Pérez** was arrested in Matanzas by DSE police and was taken to the station, where he was warned by officer "Jaime" that they would not allow any activity at his home. Reina Pérez refused to sign the warning and was released that evening.

May 20th, Independence Day

The home of **Maria Elena Mir** was kept under strict surveillance from the 18th until the 20th of May. The unionist was officially warned by DSE official "Ignacio" that she could not leave town.

Manuel Pérez Cruz, a CONIC delegate in Las Tunas, was arrested on May 20th by two DSE agents, who took him to the outskirts of the city and kept him handcuffed for three hours and guarded so he would not to leave the remote site. After being released, the activist was arrested again trying to get back to where the union activity was taking place, suffering through the same maneuver.

That same day, DSE agents "Michel" and "Lazarus" arrested **José Felix Rodríguez**, along with Carlos Suarez Licor, during an activity that took place at the trade unionist's home. After severe interrogations and various threats they were released at night.

April 16th-19th, VI Congress of the PCC

DSE agents forced **Emilio Oliver Jerez** to remain in his home under police surveillance from early morning of Saturday the 16th until 5:30 pm on Tuesday the 19th of April, coinciding with the first and last day of the VI Congress.

According to his testimony, the harassment began days earlier, when on Wednesday the 13th, the DSE official "Ignacio" visited his home in Old Havana. "On Thursday morning two soldiers took pictures of the property, without us knowing why. On Friday they mounted an operation, with five officers watching. They warned me that it was not house arrest, that I could make the daily trips to the market, but that they will follow me everywhere", Emilio recounted.

Jerez decided to confront the harassment. One day he put on a sweater with the slogan CHANGE (CAMBIO) and went out. Followed closely, he was finally arrested few blocks away, and detained for two hours in a patrol car. He was later returned home. "Same thing happened the day before when I escaped from my house," recounts Emilio. At 5:30 in the afternoon of Tuesday the 18th the Congress ended, and the police withdrew the operation.

Maria Elena Mir reported that on Saturday the 16th, around 10 am, and while undergoing care at the polyclinic of Guanabo, her town of residence, she was approached by two agents

identifying themselves as DSE officials and was led to the police station. A police clerk asked for her identity card, mandatory for every citizen to carry at all times. The document was not returned once she was released, with the aim of restricting its movement to the capital.

The opposition member and independent unionist **Alexis Gómez Fernández** (affiliated to the CTIC) reported that that Friday morning he was detained, and was released on Saturday night. During the interrogation, in which he was insulted and threatened with jail, the DSE agent "Yansel" asked him to "stay "calm" during the Congress.

Minaldo Ramos Salgado, secretary general of the Independent Union of the Self-Employed (affiliated to the CTIC) and **Andrés Gago Laguna**, organizing secretary of the same union, were arrested on April 14th on a public street in Central Havana by the same officer "Yansel" on their way to the funeral of a relative of Ramos Salgado, and were warned not to participate in any union activity. This detention lasted 3 hours.

January 28th, Birthday of José Martí

Maria Elena Mir Marrero, along with **Emilio Jerez** and some CONIC activists, were detained at their respective homes to prevent a celebration in honor of the revered figure.

Reinaldo Cosano Alén, director of the agency Union Press and member of CONIC's board of directors, was arrested in his home to prevent him from speaking at a forum on democracy, held in Havana on January 29th.

In the province of Granma, **Yoandri Montoya Aviles**, a delegate of the CNCSL, was prevented from traveling to the capital on February 2nd by holding his identity card. The same thing happened to **David Morales Ortiz**, a delegate in Las Tunas.

Olga Lilia González, delegate of the CONIC in Villa Clara, was visited on January 27th by the agent Hector de la Fé, from the DSE General Staff of the Department 21, who threatened her with repercussions to her family if she took part in any activity.

Roque Emilio Martínez Angulo, a CONIC affiliate, was the victim of vandalism at his home after an meeting to commemorate the January 28. In the early morning of the 29th, at about 2 am, strangers threw tar on the front of his house.

August 5th, Anniversary of the "Maleconazo"

Ernesto Herrera Viel was detained on the morning of August 5th by the state security official "Luke" and was driven to the police station of Capri, in the Havana municipality of Arroyo Naranjo, where he was locked in a cell –with two other activists– until noon.

The unionist, a member of the Independent Union for Workers of Light Industry (SITIL), member of the CONIC, and who serves as a longshoreman in the warehouses of the Wholesale Company for Internal Trade in the municipality of Cotorro, was threatened with being fired from his post and prosecuted for "pre-delictive dangerousness".

Manuel Pérez Cruz, general secretary of the Independent Union "Victoria", in Las Tunas, member of the CONIC, was detained on August 4th and threatened with jail if he carried out the activity planned for the next day.

Other Detentions

On the morning of March 31st CONIC activists **Ernesto Herrera Viel**, **Justo Javier**, **Alexis Gomez** and **Emilio Jerez** were arrested after staging a public protest in the vicinity of the national CTC (Cubans Workers Central) headquarters in Havana. The peaceful protesters demanded –in front of the only labor organization permitted by the Cuban government– fair wages that are correlated with the high costs of living.

Maria Elena Mir and Emilio Jerez, along with the unionists Mirian Maderna, Ernesto Herrera, Antonio Rizo, Manuel Vazquez and Reinaldo Cosano, presented a list of demands directed to Salvador Valdés Mesa, general secretary of the CTC on July 30th at the national headquarters of the CTC. Two days later, **Mir Marrero** and **Cosano Alén** were visited by DSE agent "Ignacio", who angrily mentioned "the insolence" and threatened that the government would not tolerate activities that aim to destabilize the revolutionary process.

Ernesto Herrera Viel was detained July 30th because of his participation in this event and was confined for a few hours in the Zanja Unit of Central Havana.

On February 23, unionists **Emilio Herrera** and **Ernesto Jerez Oliver Viel** had successfully displayed in public a poster with the inscription "ZAPATA LIVES" in the busy Central

Park, during midday hours. Days later they were threatened by DSE officers, who warned that public activities would not be allowed. The officers added that even though they have been tolerant of “internal union activities” those activities would also be stopped if necessary. Herrera was detained for three hours.

On January 17th, the CONIC delegate **José Felix Rodríguez** was detained that night and taken to the DSE offices, to keep him from participating in an activity he had planned along with several other independent trade unionists. He was released on the 18th in the afternoon, after been threatened. During his detention he refused to eat.

On January 7th, CONIC delegate from Matanzas, **Oswaldo Antonio Castillo Alvarez**, was beaten in the street by two unknown individuals, causing fracture of two ribs and other blows to the body. The trade unionist was traveling to Havana to attend a monthly meeting and convey information to the headquarters of that organization.

On another occasion, on March 18th, the activist was kidnapped by DSE officers and taken more than 70 km away from the city of Pinar del Rio, and abandoned on the shores of the town Alonso Rojas.

The CONIC delegate in Santiago de Cuba **Raudel Avila Lozada** was detained by agents of the DSE on January 19th for more than 24 hours, after receiving at this home members of the peaceful opposition from other provinces, including Jorge Luis García Pérez “Antunez”, on the occasion of the creation of a new independent union and the founding of an independent library.

The trade unionist has repeatedly been detained and prevented from leaving the province.

From December 26th until January 14th, the political police withdrew his identity card to prevent him from travelling to the capital. On February 4th, the unionist, along with members of the opposition, was detained again while participating in a demonstration in the central area of Camaguey, and beaten by agents of the DSE. He was warned that coming into the province was forbidden and was threatened with imprisonment. On February 15th his ID was withdrawn again for 3 days. On March 30th, Avila was detained for eight hours, and on April 2nd was visited by political police and threatened with jail if he were to leave his province. On May 27th, he was detained and taken to the Unit of Confrontation of the political police

after a peaceful march marking the closing of the workdays “Boitel y Zapata Live”, along with the independent unionist Carlos Alberto Reyes. He was released hours later with the threat of being prosecuted for pre-delictive dangerousness.

Aylin Hernández Toledo, from the Independent Union of Workers in Commerce, was visited at her workplace on June 6th by the head of DSE, to threaten her with unemployment if she continued to participate in independent union meetings. This conversation-threat lasted two hours, causing fear among the workers witnessing the scene.

On the 19th of May, union activist **Félix Pérez Palenzuela** was attacked by members from the Rapid Response Brigades and the Communist Party on his way to an activity organized by the CONIC in the municipality of Perico. The attackers knocked him off his bike, striking him in the face and body, and destroying the shirt –with the word CHANGE– he was wearing.

Madelín Lázara Caraballo Betancourt and **Miriam Espinosa Del Valle**, of the Independent Union for the Self-Employed, affiliated to the CTIC, were detained in their homes on July 25th of last year by DSE officer “Tamayo”, to prevent a union meeting that was to be held at Caraballo’s home.

Jesús Cordero Suarez, general secretary of the Independent Union of Bicycle Taxi Drivers, affiliated to the CTIC, was arrested at his home to prevent him from attending a union meeting, and later taken to the police station, where he remained until the evening.

Minaldo Ramos Salgado and **Carmelo Díaz Fernández** were visited on July 27th by DSE official “Tito” and were threatened for organizing and participating in independent trade union activities.

Emilio Roger Gotardi, youth representative of CTIC, was detained by police for 12 hours on August 4th, after being accused of participating in a trade union meeting. He was insulted and threatened.

Pedro Antonio Scull, of the Independent Union of Education Workers, **Emilio Roger Gotardi** and **Bárbara Toledo Hernández** of the Independent Union of Education, **Aylin Hdez Toledo**, of the Independent Trade Union, and **Guillermo Ordoñez Lizama**, of the Independent Union for

the Self-Employed, were arrested on January 26th as they tried to attend a union workshop in Havana.

Maria Elena Mir Marrero was visited on July 12th at her home by two agents of the DSE, who, without any word or identifying themselves, forced her to accompany them, only allowing, and under strict surveillance, to take her ID card. The unionist was taken to the headquarters of the National Revolutionary Police of Alamar, Havana, where she suffered beatings and threats. She was then held incommunicado in a prison cell.

"I could hear the police chief order his subordinates that it was very important that no one knew where I was," the unionist said.

Before releasing her the next day, they warned that she would "face the consequences" if she denounced the act abroad, because the union leader ensured her captors that the "only way to achieve her silence was to keep her in prison since reporting this would be the first thing she would do when released".

Emilio Jerez Oliver was also kidnapped by the police on June 9th, when he was detained along with a group of opponents. His companions finally tracked him the next day to the 4th Police Unit of the PNR, where the police was fabricating a case for public disorder. He was released after the protest of his companions in front to the police station.

On October 29th, **Victor Manuel Domínguez**, director of the CNCSL, and **Jorge Olivera Castillo**, from Sindical Press labor news agency, were detained as they headed to the conference of Civic Consensus, and ordered to return to their homes.

Ernesto Herrera Viel was parted from his identity card on **January 11th**, which resulted in several detentions during the time he was without the document. On several occasions the unionist has requested its return, but officials contend that it is lost. On January 31st, he was detained once again by police for not having the document and was taken to the police station, where he remained for four hours. "I explained the situation; I called the DSE headquarters of and they authorized my release. Beforehand, I was fined seven pesos. I'm still without identification".

Union member **Hugo Damián Prieto Blanco**, along with members of the opposition Barbara Lázara Cendiña and Ariel

González Cendiña, took to the streets on the morning of April 4th, and began shouting "Long live human rights!", "Freedom of assembly!", "Long Live Free Cuba!", "Down with abuse!". They were jumped on by members of the political police and were detained.

Santo del Pozo Rodríguez, a welder by profession and secretary general of the Independent Union "William Le Sante Nacer", who is on probation, was visited at his home by the delegate of the National Assembly of People's Power in his neighborhood and a representative of the People's Council, who threatened to return him to prison if he continued his relationship with people "against the Revolution". Officials also warned him not to "waste time" in visiting the ONAT to apply for licensing of self-employment because they would not grant the document. The Independent Union "William Le Sante Nacer" is composed of welders, carpenters, masons, street vendors, among other trades.

On March 28 **Alexis Gomez Rodríguez**, secretary general of the Independent Union of Trade and Gastronomy, affiliated to the CTIC, was arrested and interrogated by unidentified DSE agents. After being kidnapped to a police station he was questioned about his union work and pressured to sign a warning that said the activist met with antisocial persons and counterrevolutionaries, which he refused to sign and so was returned to jail. Alexis was warned that police will have more control over him and independent trade unionists.

Yoan Fernández Ortiz, of the Independent Union of Bicycle Taxi Drivers, was taken to the police station on July 18th and had his bici-taxi seized.

Other Repressive Acts

During the municipal elections, several unionists were pressured to vote or threatened if not.

On April 24th, in the province of Las Tunas, the independent unionist **Alfonso Aiser** was arrested and taken to the sector of Revolutionary National Police (PNR) in Manati, where he was questioned by the DSE major "Miguel" and threatened with prosecution with the Electoral Act. That same day **Victor Pérez Naples** was visited at his home by the same agent, who made the same threat.

Manuel Pérez Cruz, a CONIC delegate in Las Tunas, was also detained for 4 hours and threatened with prosecution if he performed any activity during the time of voting.

On April 25th, two unidentified agents of the DSE visited the home of trade unionist **Cusidó Misladis Rodríguez** and pressured the family to vote.

The state worker **Alberto Toranzo Torres**, a member of the CONIC, was permanently banned from working in the agricultural farm "Sierra Maestra", in Nueva Gerona, for being politically "unreliable", despite being compliant with work regulations established at the center. Managers told Toranzo that he was "not reliable because it is against the system of government to refuse to pay the monthly union dues (official) and not to belong to the CDR, or to not participate in political activities".

Lázaro Jaime Sarduy, of the Independent Union of Bicycle Taxi drivers, was fined 1,500 pesos in August of last year for not carrying the license that has repeatedly been denied him.

Releases and Deportation

In April 2011 Raúl Castro announced the end of the process of the release of political prisoners opened the year before, at the same time warning the opposition that they will not have room "in the plazas and streets."

During the process initiated in July 2010, 115 prisoners were released, of whom 103 were deported to Spain. Twelve members of the Group of 75 refused exile and remained in Cuba after being released.

One of these 12 is the unionist and journalist **Iván Hernández Carrillo**, who was sentenced to 25 years in prison in 2003, and was one of the last to leave prison after refusing to leave his country in exchange for his freedom. Carrillo was released under a parole, which exposes him to be imprisoned again legally to complete his sentence.

This unionist has continued his union work in Cuba. He has been arrested several times in the period covered by this report, harassed and threatened with returning to prison, including other repression that he has had to suffer. Iván was one among the worst treated during his stay in prison, a victim of all kinds of abuse and victimization, constant beatings, punishment cells, cruelty, death threats from common prisoners and denial of medical treatment, among others. He was the protagonist in several hunger strikes, one of them for several weeks along fellow political prisoners, protesting for having to live in an area of extremely dangerous criminals. Throughout those

years his mother, the Lady in White Asunción Carrillo, denounced his condition, demanding humane treatment for her son and the possibility of medical treatment for all diseases Iván contracted while living in various prisons.

The rest of the unionists of the Cause of the 75 were deported to Spain. These are: Nelson Molinet Espino (sentenced to 20 years), Miguel Galbán Gutiérrez (trade unionist and journalist, who was sentenced to 26 years), Héctor Raúl Valle Hernández (sentenced to 12 years), Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona (trade unionist and journalist, 26 years) and Alfredo Felipe Fuentes (26 years).

Testimonials

Nelson Molinet Espino

Secretary General of the Confederation of Democratic Workers of Cuba.

"We have suffered the most terrible things that a human being can endure. We were forced to put on the clothes of common prisoners, to participate in the prisoner counts. But we refused. That caused us to go sometimes 7, 8 months without seeing our families... my daughter was a child. I was often in solitary confinement for 7 years. Once I was in a solitary cell four months, along with all kinds of insects, rats. I always had to feed myself by my own means, as food was unhygienic.

"We lived in a 4x3 meter cell, with no ventilation, sleeping on the floor, using the cells latrine to both relief myself and bathe. Sometimes we were moved into of overcrowded cells, intended for 30 or 40 people, where 120 were living.

"We saw many murders, torture. There is a torture that they call "the little chair", in which they tie your feet and hands and join both parts with a rope in the back. Others were beaten with batons. I remember that Zapata was one of the most tortured. Also Fidel Suarez. One day Normando Hernández [an independent journalist] was thrown down a flight of stairs, as sick as he was.

"In prison there are deaths. Last July, they beat a man to death. There are people that are strangled, and everything goes unpunished. In Cuba, there are no human rights. In other countries these things happen, but measures are taken against the officers. But in Cuba this does not exist."

Hector Raúl Valle

Confederation of Democratic Workers of Cuba.

"I was taken to the prison in Guantanamo, 900 kilometers from my home. Arriving there was as if the world had fallen on me. We were

taken to isolation cells, sealed in. There we lived with frogs, scorpions, mice.

“In the prison we saw many tortures of prisoners. Prisoners had to mutilate themselves for their situations to change. One of them, a kid, jumped from the fourth floor. Another inflicted 95 cut to himself.

“While at the prison my loved ones came to visit. My mother and my son could not recognize me, which cause me great pain. During conjugal visits, my wife was forced to undress; these were hard times for her, until I managed for them not to do it anymore.

“In the prison we were in a cemetery of live men. We came in healthy and left with many illnesses. In my case, I suffer from hypertension, erosive arthritis erythematosus, scarring ulcers, cervical arthritis, spinal compression, melasma, and loss of sight.

“No only political prisoner, common prisoners also go through almost the same problems. The vast majority of prisoners working in prisons are not paid and are used as slaves.”

Alfredo Felipe Fuentes

Unitary Council of Workers in Cuba.

“We met our attorney 5 minutes before the trial, some even less time. That is, after a month of being incommunicado and denied access to

documents to prepare our defense argument, while the prosecution did, they had a month or more to prepare the accusatory argument.

“After the trial they put us in cells, which I would describe as torture chambers. I’m talking of the Guamajan prison in the province of Villa Clara. There, for example, we were in a cell 1.4 meters wide by 2 meters long, with a toilet space, a rustic toilet space, with no windows of any kind, the cells were seal during one year.”

Miguel Galbán Gutiérrez

Independent journalist and sub director of the National Trade Union and Labor Training Center.

“I don’t understand how they came to ask for life imprisonment for me. I am not political, I will never be political. My thing is writing.

“The theory was that, by reporting a violation of human rights, I could provoke U.S. intervention in Cuba.”

“When you stage a [hunger] strike in prison, they leave you naked, without water, light, no mattress, no belongings of any kind, in total isolation.

“I staged two hunger strikes to try to resolve the difficulties within the Aguica prison. At the end, my family was able to get me transferred to a less strict prison and in my own province. In my last protest I was without visitation during 14 months.”

REPRESSION AGAINST INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS AND COMMUNICATORS

"It seems as though every two weeks they threaten me, detain me, or I have to spend the night in prison... I know all the police stations in Havana" -Dania Virgen García, journalist and blogger.

After the release of the journalists of the Group of 75, in prison since March 2003, the repression against the independent information workers, as of the opposition and the people in general, has taken an increasingly violent tone. A long list of aggressions, some samples of which have been presented in this report, are clear evidence of the repressive Cuban regime.

Beatings, arrests, imprisonment, threats, stalking and violation of privacy, family repercussion, layoffs, registration and confiscation of work tools and smear campaigns –in which the regime accuses them of being mercenaries receiving money, transmission equipment, supplied by the CIA and U.S. government– are inherent risks of this work in Cuba.

Legal instruments such as Law 88, known as the "Gag Law", remain in force and threaten every independent communicator, be it a reporter, writer, narrator or blogger, who could be accused, at any time at the whim of the regime, of committing acts "aimed to break the internal order, destabilizing the country and liquidating the socialist state and the independence of Cuba" for simply doing their work.

Detentions, Abductions, Seizures

"It's a psychological war. With death threats, inducements to leave the country along with our families, incessant detentions and interrogations, sometimes lasting more than four hours, seek to silence us." -Roberto Jesús Guerra Pérez.

In its 2010 annual report, the Information Center of Hablemos Press (CIHPRESS) reported 173 arrests and threats against independent journalists. As of the writing of this report, there have been more than 60 arrests of journalists while doing their work or in their homes that have been reported this year.

In June of this year, CIHPRESS, an independent organization that issues a monthly report on violations of human rights, said

in its monthly report: "Our center has noted with great concern the increase in violent incidents and serious human rights abuses against dissidents, independent journalists and the general population. As well as a notable change in these abuses, through actions such as intimidation and harassment, there is physical violence."

Meanwhile, Reporters without Borders reported that in just the first trimester of this year 30 journalists have been arrested.

Information workers are arrested as much in their homes, where they generally undergo a search and seizure of their work tools, as while covering any activity during the days of significance for the opposition and especially during national events.

In each event or anniversary on the Island the government makes sure to block the access of independent journalists, whether through short-term detentions or house arrests. Other times, especially in recent months, a beating has become the preferred instrument to prevent these workers from going to work.

During the VI Congress of the PCC the government conducted several raids on journalists and opposition members.

At least **10 correspondents** of the CIHPRESS were detained in police stations, under house arrests or were threatened with being arrested days earlier.

Enyor Díaz Allen, a young correspondent for this agency in the Guantanamo province, was attacked by pro-government mobs and arrested by the DSE on the night of April 15th. He was detained for four days. Since his release from prison on May 3rd, 2010 Díaz Allen has been arrested countless times.

The house of **Luis Roberto Arcia Rodríguez**, another correspondent of the news agency in the province of Mayabeque, was surrounded by eight officers of the DSE and police for

12 hours on April 16th to prevent him from traveling to Havana. Similarly, correspondent **Sandra Guerra Pérez** was held at her home by 20 law enforcement agents from the 16th to the 18th.

Also on April 15th, two DSE agents appeared at the headquarters of Hablemos Press and warned **four journalists**, including **Roberto de Jesús Guerra**, director of the agency, they would be arrested if they left their homes during the congress.

Alejandro Tur Valladares, of the Jagua Press news agency, in Cienfuegos, was arrested July 15th by two officers of the DSE and taken to a place near the resort of Rancho Luna. He was released four hours later.

Independent journalist **José Alberto Alvarez Bravo** was detained in his home on April 13th and 14th by agents of the State Security, blocking him from leaving and receiving visits during the Congress.

Alvarez Bravo was also arrested on August 5th, during the commemoration of 16th anniversary of the "Maleconazo", the date commemorating dissidence in Cuba, and was released after seven hours. The same happened to several journalists, including **Mayki Martorell**, **Omar Laffita Rojas**, **Juan Mario Rodríguez Guillén**, **Lázaro Oscar Fernández Labastilla** and **Rubén Carty Lowell**.

Roberto de Jesús denounced in June of this year an escalation of repression against members of the agency he leads. According to Jesús, the situation began to deteriorate from the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party, when state security agents barred journalists from leaving their homes during the entire period of the congress.

On March 23rd, **Roberto de Jesús Guerra** was arrested along with **Héctor Julio Cedeño**. According to Ignacio Estrada, independent journalist of Hablemos Press, Cedeño was detained by political police while covering the march of the Ladies in White in the vicinity of the Church of Santa Rita. Similarly, Cedeño was arrested in October last year and detained for eight hours at a police station.

In February this year, two agents of the political police appeared at the headquarters of "Hablemos" Press to threaten **Roberto de Jesús Otero** and reporter **Norvis Magaly**, and prevented them from leaving. Guerra said in a telephone

conversation, the agents told them they could not leave the house, and that they had orders to arrest them if they did.

Magaly Norvis has been arrested three times by police and DSE agents during 2011. In one of those arrests he was slapped and beaten by police officers. In other circumstances, the officers took his identification card and confiscated it for several days, thus condemning him to house arrest since Cuban law requires citizens to carry identification with them at all times. During the arrests, DSE agents warned him that he would be imprisoned and stripped of custody of his children if he continued practicing journalism.

Héctor Julio Cedeño was detained on the street on October 22nd and mistreated by the police. Five of these agents rushed upon Cedeño to prevent his passage, and forcibly handcuffed him, while seizing all the documents he was carrying. He was later jailed for 4 hours at the police unit of the Capri.

On February 27th Cedeño was savagely beaten by four DSE officials, who beat and detained him, after leaving the Santa Rita church, where the Ladies in White traditionally meet on Sundays for morning mass.

Another correspondent of Hablemos Press in Havana, **Idalberto Acuña Carabeo**, was arrested at his home on March 31st by DSE agents for several hours after he reported on a labor protest that took place at the CTC headquarters. The political police demanded that he surrender the photographs he had taken, to which he refused. Acuña was released after 24 hours of interrogation and threats.

On February 22nd, Idalberto Acuña was visited by two agents of the political police asking what his attitude would be toward the anniversary of the death of Zapata.

Raúl Arias Marquez and **Elier Muir Avila**, correspondents of Hablemos Press in the provinces of Moron and Ciego de Avila, were arrested and threatened on April 5th and April 6th by police and the DSE at Marquez's house where the journalists would gather. Both men were also arrested in October for several hours.

Yoandris Gutiérrez Vargas, **Enyor Díaz Allen** and **Raúl Alas Marquez**, of the same agency, were arrested twice, on the 17th and then on the 22nd of June.

Another correspondent of Hablemos Press, **Calixto Ramos Martínez Arias**, was arrested twice in May of last year. On

May 16th he was arrested and spent 72 hours in police custody by order of an officer of the State Security.

On June 18th, Calixto Ramón was arrested again and deported, for the eighth time. After destroying his ID card, a Lieutenant Colonel of the Alternative Center of Criminal Procedure told Martínez he would shoot him in the head the next time he saw him there. The correspondent was deported to Camagüey, the city of origin listed on his ID card. According to Decree 217, which regulates internal movement on the island, the citizens of other provinces are prevented from staying overnight in the capital. The authorities have refused to legalize Calixto in Havana.

The journalist was beaten by DSE officers in his latest arrest, while he was covering a protest at the home of Sara Marta Fonseca Quevedo.

On April 9th somebody threw stones at the home of journalist **Jaime Leygonier Fernández**, of Hablemos Press, following the publication of an article severely criticizing the regime.

Three agents of the DSE detained, on February 18th, the correspondent for the Diario de Cuba in Las Tunas, **Alberto Mendez Castelló**, placed him inside a windowless van and transported him to an unknown location, where an official threatened to imprison him under the Gag Law. During the kidnapping, led by the head of the Confrontation of Crimes Against the State Security in Las Tunas, Modesto Fernández, the agents blindfolded him to keep him from identifying the location he was taken to. In 2009, Modesto had threatened to kill the journalist.

On the morning of July 30th, police in San Antonio de los Baños arrested the independent journalist **Lamasiel Gutiérrez Romero**. After searching her purse, they took away her mobile phone and her ID card, and threatened the reporter with keeping her in jail, because, as the agents expressed during the interrogation, “her news reports has given San Antonio a bad image”. After three hours Lamasiel Gutiérrez was taken to the municipal headquarters of the PNR, where she was interrogated by two officials. The reporter was released after spending several hours in the unit, without letting her to phone her family to inform them of her detention.

Journalist **Richard Roselló** was arrested on November 26th when he went to give a lecture to a group of dissidents in the town of Artemis. Roselló was detained for several hours in a police station in the municipality Bauta. The police searched

him and seized the documents he was carrying and a flash drive.

The blogger and independent journalist **Dania Virgen García** was detained on December 16th for more than two hours by police. After confiscating her belongings, the journalist was brought before the chief of the Counterintelligence section of the municipality, who expressed his interest in her listening to a recording that “could save your life”. However, the recording was never played.

On the morning of February 8th, DSE officials, after preventing **Dania Virgen García** entering the Church of La Virgen de Regla, kept her in custody for several hours and refused to return their identification card after her release, which they held for three weeks after the detention.

On February 22nd **Dania Virgen** was detained for more than 24 hours at the police unit to prevent her from participating in the commemoration of the first anniversary of the death of Orlando Zapata Tamayo. All the while, the journalist was imprisoned in a cell.

In a letter dated July 30th and delivered on August 23rd, the General Customs of the Republic of Cuba informed **Dania Virgen** of the confiscation of a postal package sent from the United States last March. The reason given by the office for the seizure was that the contents of the shipment “threatened the integrity of the country”. The package contained a digital camera, recorder, toiletries, pencils, markers, crayons, coloring books, balloons and toys.

On the morning of April 13th a group of primary school teachers from “Conrado Benitez” performed an act of repudiation at of the house of the journalist. During the event teachers used their students to shout slogans against her.

On January 18th **Diana Virgen** was arrested and beaten in the province of Mayabeque, for visiting a family that had been evicted more than 5 months before. She spent 6 hours at the local police station.

On May 22nd she was arrested to prevent her from reporting on the march of The Ladies in White.

The journalist **Adolfo Pablo Borraza** was violently arrested by two DSE officers near his home in Central Havana, on the morning of January 4th. Borraza was taken to the police station

in handcuffs, where for nearly 10 hours he was interrogated and threatened by officials about his activities as a journalist.

On July 5th Adolfo Pablo was interrogated for more than 3 hours at a center for Military Counter Intelligence (CIM). Borraza was summoned by the CIM due to his recent reports regarding cases of corruption and sexual harassment in unit of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), as communicated by the Lieutenant Colonel who interrogated him.

Journalist **Julio Beltrán Iglesias** was arrested and threatened on February 16th. He was released after five hours, after being insulted and threatened with jail. On July 20th of last year the General Customs seized a package containing a camera and various personal hygiene items sent by a friend. The record of retention and notification explained that the contents “went against the general interests of the nation”.

On September 30, **Beltrán** was kidnapped by the political police on the street. After being threatened with a “do not form any scandal to avoid trouble”, was taken to the police station and subjected to intense interrogation for six hours. The agents threatened him with imprisonment “at their will” if he continued writing “slander against the Revolution”.

On March 7th, forces of the PNR led by the DSE rushed against independent journalist **Idalberto Acuña Carabeo** when he went to the home of Hugo Damián Prieto Blanco, promoter of the Cuban Council. Handcuffed and beaten, Idalberto was put into a police car and driven to the police unit known as “The Seventh”, located in La Lisa, where he remained until later that evening.

Independent journalist **Juan González Febles**, director of the independent digital media *Primavera Digital* and the newspaper *La Primavera de Cuba*, was arrested on March 29th by police officers while taking photos of a raid to detect and seize illegal satellite dishes (used to capture satellite television signals from abroad). The journalist was taken to the police station where he remained for about 9 hours. There, he was given an official warning that he refused to sign, and had his cell phone confiscated. Febles has reported that police agents have commented on some of his phone conversations.

On the morning of July 12th, the DSE officer "Octavio" forcefully entered the home of journalist **José Alberto Álvarez Bravo** and his wife, the Lady in White Lilia Hernández Castañer, accompanied by members of the DSE and the PNR, holding a dubious search warrant, not signed by a prosecutor or

the court. Right before is arrest, the political police conducted a search of his home, and seized equipment and work materials, including a computer, a camera and a mobile phone, plus personal documents and 168 books, nearly all Cuban editions. He was accused of attempted assault, possession of stolen property and contraband. Three days he was released without charge and under the threat that he could be brought before the court.

One of the collaborators of the online alternative magazine *Convivencia*, **Juan Carlos Fernández**, suffered similar arrest and confiscation when he was arrested by agents of the DSE and the police after a search of his residence, at which they seized several work equipments. He was then threatened with the Gag Law, and later on detained for more than 10 hours in an office of the Technical Department of Investigation (DTI), in Pinar del Rio.

Convivencia's editor, **Dagoberto Valdés**, denounced in June of this year the "sustained harassment over the past six months against its members and staff." Among them, **Karina Gálvez**, member of editorial board of the magazine, who suffers harassment in the workplace and was detained on July 16th. His sister, **Livia Gálvez**, also of the editorial board, has suffered harassment by the agents.

Guillermo Fariñas Hernández, whose hunger strike of 135 days last year put his life in danger on several occasions, has been arrested multiple times this year. Fariña was denied permission to leave the country last December to accept in France the notorious 2010 Sakharov Prize of the European Parliament.

The same treatment was given to **Yoani Sánchez**, author of the popular blog *Generation Y*, after being invited from abroad several times to collect awards for her work.

The blogger was arrested in February and June of this year.

Luis Felipe Rojas, a freelance journalist in Holguin and author of the blog *Cruzar las alambradas* (Crossing the barbed wires) has been arrested multiple times throughout the period covered by this report. In August of last year he was arrested several times after publishing a report, *Informe del horror* (Report of horror), in which he denounced 128 arbitrary arrests and 49 beatings, and other human rights violations in several Cuban provinces.

On November 27th Luis Felipe was detained again, along with his wife and 2 children, and arrested twice in December, and sentenced to house arrests.

On July 22nd, **José Ignacio Martínez Smith** was arrested by agents “Octavio” and “Leo”, who threatened him for participating in the journalism course imparted by the Florida International University.

In less than 2 months the Postal and Shipping Customs, an entity belonging to the General Customs, imposed two administrative penalties of confiscation on the attorney and freelance journalist **Laritza Diversent**, concerning shipments from the United States. The most recent, served on August 13th, provides for the seizure upon detecting content that “went against the general interests of the nation.” The consignment contained pens, markers, crayons, cameras, flash memory, glue, note pads, compact discs, aftershave, oral hygiene, handbag, shampoo, comb, toothbrush, nail clippers, water purification tablets, etc. The first penalty of confiscation applied to the jurist occurred on June 8th, arguing the same reasons and legal basis.

On July 3rd of last year, freelance journalist **Idalmis Nuñez** was arrested in the province Clara Santa while trying to reach the Arnaldo Milán Castro hospital to see **Guillermo Fariñas**. That day Idalmis was beaten by military women and had to be later on treated at the hospital.

The political police, in conjunction with the national police, raided the home of the journalist on the night of Monday, July 5th. According to **Nuñez** when her home was raided, the instructor, Lt. Leonardo González of the DSE, handed him a copy of a document which states: “Under the provisions established by current legislation, the present is to perform the search and take supplies and documents that threaten the nation”.

Threats, Aggressions, Repudiation Acts, Harassment

Paulino Alfonso Estévez, journalist and economist, was the victim of a violent attack by unidentified persons on January this year. Alfonso, 65, collapsed after receiving a blow to the head when walking at night in his neighborhood. When he regained consciousness hours later he was in the Calixto García Hospital, had a wound with six stitches on the head, and bruises on his face and back.

“It seems to me that they kept on beating me after I collapsed. It was not an assault to rob me because when I woke up I did not find anything missing, not money I had on me, nor my watch; everything was returned to me at the hospital. But nobody could say who took me to the Calixto García. No doubt this is the work of the State Security.”

On the night of August 8th, the DSE official “Octavio” visited the home of independent journalist and writer **Luis Cino Alvarez** to warn him that authorities will not allow “counterrevolutionary activities instigated by him”, and that soon he would be interviewed by the local chief of police.

That same day, and while on his way to cover a meeting of former political prisoners in Havana, journalist and blogger **Dania Virgen García** was arrested by DSE agents and taken to the police station. During the arrest the reporter was slapped, beaten by police and pepper sprayed by a prison guard. She was released six hours later, but suffered severe bruising and persistent inflammation of the eyes. They also stole the money she had in her wallet.

DSE officers threatened to imprison **Dania Virgen** for reporting on the case of prisoner José Angel Luque Alvarez, on hunger strike. DSE officials “Ricardo” and “Frank” blamed Dania with what might happen to the prisoner and warned that if Luque died the journalist would be sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Journalist from the APLA news agency, **Omar Ortega**, was violently attacked by unidentified persons on January 6th, after being besieged by the political police for several days. The blows caused cuts and bruises that had to be treated in the hospital.

Ubaldo Manuel León, reporter for the Cuban Network of Community Communicators, was arrested on January 14th on his way to cover a series of evictions in a neighborhood of Bayamo. He was detained for several hours and was then forced to go back to Manzanillo, his place of residence. During the arrest, he was not allowed to use the phone and he was given an official record accompanied by threats and prohibition to return to the scene.

Magaly Norvis Jesús Otero and **Roberto Guerra Pérez** reported harassment and death threats over the phone from strangers. The same happened to **Ana Margarita Perdigón**, from Yayabo Press Agency.

Miguel Iturria Savon was arrested and beaten on April 22nd, when he was intercepted by a car with no police plate, from which four agents got out of and assaulted him. He was stripped of his belongings and taken to the police station. He received threats and insults, and released five hours after the arrest.

On April 26th, journalists **Idania Yanes Contreras** and **Jazmín Conlledo Riverón** were arrested and beaten by members of the Rapid Response Brigades and DSE officers in the 5th unit of the police, where they went to learn about opponents who were detainee there.

Caridad Caballero Batista was arrested and beaten on May 24th at his home by agents of the DSE, to prevent her from participating in the trial of the Limas Cruz brothers.

Yoandris Gutiérrez, from Hablemos Press, was detained on the 10th and 24th of June, and abused by a police captain, who threatened to beat him to death and told him he would not stop until he took him to jail. "I'm tired of you", the military said.

The journalist and director of an independent library **Prudencio Villalón Rades** was beaten on June 17th while taking photographs of opposition activities in Santiago de Cuba. In a police unit of that city, he received threats and intimidation by DSE agents.

On July 1st, he was violently arrested by agents of the DSE while trying to attend the public hearing being held on a complaint of verbal abuse of an official of the government against the lawyer Ernesto Rodríguez Vera. Prudencio was beaten by police and paramilitary mobs.

Reprisals

"It's very difficult to work under the threat of jail, wondering what would happen to my family if I go to prison, my husband, my home." -Magaly Norvis

Luis Felipe Campos Zamora, the 15-year-old son of freelance journalist **Licet Zamora Carrandi** failed the tenth grade and had to repeat the year. According to the mother of the harassed child, an employee at the school approached her and whispered "Take your son out of here, because they will continue to make his life impossible". He has been hassled by a history teacher, Rosa Emilia Gomez, who ironically has asked

for his 'black uncle', -referring to the journalist Guillermo Fariñas, whom the young boy visits at the hospital.

The child has been affected in his studies before, when he was ejected from a sports center where he was captain of the Taekwon-do team for "being son of an dissident".

The daughter of Hablemos Press correspondent **Magaly Norvis** has been harassed at school so badly that she has had to drop out.

The last July 31st the wife of Luis Felipe Rojas, **Exilda Arjona**, was the victim of verbal abuse in front of her seven-year-old son, whom suffered a nervous breakdown. The child is under psychiatric care after witnessing an arrest of his father.

Also, prisoners that dare to collaborate with any independent news agency suffer a worsening of their conditions in jail.

Two prisoners who collaborated with Hablemos Press, **Alexander Suárez Torres** and **Carlos Amir Cárdenas Cartaya**, were transferred from prisons in Havana to further Camagüey by orders of the State Security.

From the prison of Quivicán, Alexander Suárez provided information on the death of the prisoner Salvador Ferrer, who was murdered by guards inside the prison. When the DSE officials found out, Suárez Torres was pressured into filming a video retracting his statements, and was then transferred to prison 1580.

Jorge Felix Otero Morales, a prisoner sentenced to life imprisonment and who reports from the Kilo 9 prison in Camagüey, has been confined in a punishment cell for providing information to Hablemos Press. Same thing happened to **Ramón Arias Acosta**, from the El Típico prison, in Manzanillo-Granma.

Inmates **José Angel Luque Alvarez** and **Jorge Alberto Carrandi Sánchez** recently reported from the prison of Cienfuegos that they have suffered reprisals and been threatened because they have been in contact with independent journalist José Alberto Álvarez Bravo.

José Angel was sent to solitary confinement in the morning of August 9th in the provincial prison in Cienfuegos. His family has also suffered reprisals. A sister has been fired from her job and his wife has suffered searches where important documents

have been destroyed. Meanwhile, authorities denied medical care to Jorge Alberto.

Both inmates have been denied the parole they deserve.

Releases and deportations

As part of an agreement promoted by the Catholic Church and the Spanish government in July 2010, the Cuban government decided to release the 29 journalists imprisoned in 2003 without due process and unfairly sentenced to long prison terms after summary trials.

Isolated from events taking place outside of prison and from their colleagues in jail, after serving seven years in prison under inhuman conditions, and most of them suffering serious health problems, these men were given only one option: to abandon the country immediately. Eighteen journalists were thus deported to Spain.

Only three journalists from this group, **Héctor Maseda Gutiérrez**, **Iván Hernández Carrillo** and **Pedro Arguelles Morán**, have remained in Cuba after rejecting deportation to Spain as a condition for their release. The three were released on parole, which means they could be sent back to prison to finish serving their sentences at anytime the government deems it appropriate.

Testimonials

Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona

"With our arrival at Guantanamo we were moved to solitary confinement, seal in and alone. There began a very difficult situation, because by the second, third day of being in these cells, we were visited by a general, with whom I had a verbal confrontation, as well as other officers. I was immediately taken out of there and brought to even worse cells. They kept me in these cells for almost 3 months. These cells are in deplorable hygienic condition, almost all covered in excrement, feces, from that cell and others. Rats, animals of all kind. The cold and the heat; and food and water were scarce."

Juan Adolfo Fernández Sainz

"When the accused is a delinquent and he's to be sentenced for a robbery he didn't commit, he accepts it, in acknowledgement of other robberies he did commit."

*"I met so many wrongly sentenced inmates, so many convicted on merely an accusation or a tip-off as proof, facing excessive punishments given the size of the robbery--the mentally retarded sentenced to four years for dangerousness for diving into dumpsters to find something to eat or to sell--that I had very legitimate doubts about the Cuban police, the tribunals, and the penal code."**

Héctor Maseda Gutiérrez

*"New generations of communicators are emerging in ever greater numbers and higher professionalism. The Cuban government has failed in its repeated efforts to eliminate us. It would not be prudent to apply the formula used in March 2003 because we are no longer a few dozen in the battle of ideas against obscurantism and stagnation. We are now hundreds and will soon be thousands; we will impetuously open the road with the pen or the personal computer at the ready."**

Normando Hernández González

*"I long to forget, but cannot. To erase from my memory the murmurs of suffering, the plaintive screams of torture, the screeching bars, the unmistakable music of padlocks, the garrulous sentinels... Nor do I wish to listen to the sad confessions of the torture victims, to see their tears or to feel, in my own flesh, the cold steel handcuffs pressing their wrists against the bars of their cells. I have even less desire to see them crucified naked on the bars awaiting a coldwater bath at dawn as the mosquitoes stick to their skin and suck, drop by drop, the little blood that is left to warm them."**

José Luis García Paneque

*"After six hours of searching, around 11 pm I was told that I was detained. Without further explanation, I was transferred to Instructional Provincial Police Unit, in the province of Las Tunas. They locked me in a dark, damp cell. That was the first night of 7 years and 4 months in nine different prisons in five different provinces of Cuba."**

Julio César Gálvez

*"I spent seven years and four months in a dark cell three meters long by 1.8 wide, of which nearly a year was spent in total darkness and with only two liters of water a day as torture to try to break my physical integrity. All for the simple supposed crime of denouncing to the world the terrible situation that happens to the Cuban people under the tyranny of the Castro brothers."**

Juan Carlos Herrera Acosta

"I was sent to Kilo 8 prison, known as 'I lost the key' because of the endless confinement of the highly dangerous prisoners housed there. Journalists and other prisoners of conscience were forced to live with such criminals, and with 'snitches' who would inform on our whereabouts. We were surrounded by large colonies of mosquitoes, cockroaches, and rodents. I sewed my mouth, literally, as an act of shame and honor at the same time."

Omar Rodríguez Saludes

"It was my interest in speaking out for democracy, to defend freedom of the press and freedom of opinion I took journalism, both written and photographic, for so many years. The government did not like it ... I just denounced its atrocities. The Government was the one who committed crimes. If I committed a crime was not to be afraid of Fidel Castro, so the State requested for life imprisonment and punished me with 27 years in prison."⁷⁶

Ricardo González Alfonso

"I used a pack of cigarettes. Carefully I opened the bottom of the cellophane wrap, leaving the industrial label. I pulled out half the stick, and put in the little rolls of paper with poems. Then stuffed them one by one in the cigarettes and put them back in the bottom of the pack. Then, very gently, I reclosed the cellophane. All that remained was the requisition of the visit. The final frontier."⁷⁷

Miguel Gutiérrez Galbán

"When you stage a hunger strike in prison, they leave you naked, without water, light, no mattress, no belongings of any kind, in total isolation. I do not understand how they came to ask for life imprisonment for me. I am not political, I will never be political. My thing is writing."

SOURCES

Cuban Independent Press

Independent National Workers' Confederation of Cuba (Confederación Obrera Nacional Independiente de Cuba, CONIC)

Independent Workers Confederation of Cuba (Confederación de Trabajadores Independientes de Cuba, CITC)

Trade Union and Labor Training Center (Centro Nacional de Capacitación Sindical y Laboral, CNCSL)

Council of Cuban Workers (Consejo Unitario de Trabajadores Cubanos, CUTC)

Hablemos Press Information Center (Centro de Información Hablemos Press)

CubaNet News / cubanet.org

PayoLibre.com

Cubasindical.org

Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation (Comisión Cubana de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional)

Council of Raporteurs of Human Rights in Cuba (Consejo de Relatores de Derechos Humanos de Cuba)

Martha Beatriz Roque Info

Committee for the Protection of Journalists (Comité para la Protección de los Periodistas)

Reporters Without Borders (Comité para la Protección de los Periodistas)

Encuentro en la Red

Radio Martí

Misceláneas de Cuba

Diario de Cuba