

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

LABOR AND TRADE UNION SITUATION IN CUBA





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## Introduction

*This report, prepared by the Observatory of Labor and Trade Union Rights in collaboration with the Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba and the Cuban Association of Self-Employed and Entrepreneurial Workers, provides an overview of the structural deterioration affecting Cuba in economic, labor, political, and social terms. Based on complaints, field interviews, records, and legal analyses from at least ten provinces in the country, the report exposes the direct impact of the crisis on workers in both the state and private sectors.*

Throughout 2024, uncontrolled inflation, mass impoverishment, the collapse of essential services, and systematic repression against all forms of autonomous union organization worsened. The report reveals a sustained pattern of violations of the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization, with emphasis on the criminalization of independent unionism, the institutional exclusion of any organization not subordinated to the Confederation of Cuban Workers, and the use of criminal and administrative laws to punish the exercise of labor rights.

Among the most significant developments are new restrictions imposed by Decree 107/2024 on self-employment and MSMEs; the continuation of Case 3271 before the Committee on Freedom of Association of the International Labour Organization, with no

progress from the Cuban government; and the lack of state response to recommendations from the international supervisory system. Additionally, there were reports of 52 work-related deaths, multiple accidents under extremely unsafe conditions, worsening of the health and education crisis, and the collapse of the agricultural sector.

The report also denounces the persistence of repression, police surveillance, and acts of intimidation against union activists, labor journalists, and independent workers, in a context of growing population aging, forced migration, and a complete lack of prospects for institutional reform or openness.

Cuba ends 2024 with a more impoverished, repressive, and isolated regime, where labor autonomy continues to be persecuted as a threat to power.





## Estimated Real Inflation at 700%

With state wages equivalent to less than 20 USD per month at the informal exchange rate.

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## Inflation and Subsistence Wages

Estimated real inflation at 700%, with state salaries amounting to under 20 USD monthly at the informal rate.

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## Mass Exodus and Demographic Collapse

In 2024, over 250,000 Cubans emigrated. Independent estimates raise this figure to more than 545,000 people.

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## Increased State Control Over MSMEs

Decree 107/2024 expanded prohibited activities and penalized economic autonomy.

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## Occupational Safety Crisis

52 work-related deaths; accidents such as the Cienfuegos cement factory and Santiago de Cuba port revealed extreme risk conditions.

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## Denial of Trade Union Rights

Arbitrary detentions, threats, surveillance, and reprisals against ASIC members in several provinces.

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## Denial of Trade Union Rights

The State does not recognize independent unions nor allow autonomous collective bargaining, in violation of international conventions.

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## Forced Labor and Political Control

The report documents covert forms of forced labor, criminal sanctions, and ideological discrimination against workers.



# Working Conditions

## BETWEEN PRECARIY AND REPRESSION

### State employment, informality, and in-work poverty

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According to a report from the National Office of Statistics and Information (ONEI), the average state salary in 2024 was 5,839 pesos (48.6 dollars at the official exchange rate of 120 to 1), representing a 25.6% annual increase.

However, these figures are far from accurate, considering that the dollar in the black market was trading at 320 pesos in December, which forces a correction of what was published by ONEI. In that case, the real salary would be closer to 18 dollars per month.

Calculations published in March by independent Cuban economist Omar Everleny, based on official data, indicated that it would take just over four average

salaries to cover the basic basket for two people, made up of 17 products, including those subsidized through the ration card.

Other specialists pointed out that the 2024 inflation figure did not reflect the increase in prices in the dominant informal market, where inflation reached triple digits.

As an illustration, the following prices correspond to basic consumer goods in two provinces of the country: Havana and Guantánamo. The differences reflect not only regional disparities but also the disproportionate weight these goods represent in relation to the monthly salary of an average worker.

### Wages and Cost of Living

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According to official data from ONEI, in August 2024 the annual inflation rate was 30.1%. Although lower than the rates in 2022 (39.1%) and 2023 (31.3%), various independent sources estimated that real inflation reached 700%, in line with the extreme situation faced by millions of citizens.

Cubans paid, on average, 25% more for goods and services compared to 2023. This situation worsened due to the depreciation of the Cuban peso: according to the Cuban Currency and Finance Observatory (OMFi), the national currency lost 23% of its value in 2024.

The price of cigarettes and alcoholic beverages rose by 67%, while food increased by an average of 28%. Among the products with the highest increases were: white cheese (5.8%), garlic (5.5%), live poultry (4.5%),

pork (3.2%), and rice (1.9%). Although monthly increases may seem low, the constant accumulation made these products inaccessible for a significant part of the population.

Transportation was 24.5% more expensive than the previous year, especially due to the fuel shortage. The price of liquefied gas also rose by 6.14%. Other notable increases included:

- Bienes y servicios diversos: +22,1 %
- Educación: +21,5 %
- Servicios de la vivienda: +18,6 %
- Prendas de vestir y calzado: +12,2 %
- Muebles y artículos para el hogar: +10,3 %
- Cultura: +9,4 %

Stagnant wages, together with the absence of effective representation, have caused a massive brain drain that further weakens internal productivity.

More than 250,000 Cubans emigrated during 2024 (ONEI), accelerating population decline. Independent estimates raise this figure to over 545,000. Added to this are, since 2022, more than 850,000 Cubans who emigrated to the United States (U.S. Customs and Border Protection) and over 335,000 asylum applications submitted in other countries during 2023 (UNHCR). Altogether, it is estimated that more than 1.1 million Cubans have left the country in recent years, reflecting the sustained deterioration of living, labor, and political conditions.

PRODUCT	LA HABANA	GUANTANAMO
Avocado (1 lb)	166	53
Tomato (1 lb)	600	250
Lemon (1 lb)	650	—
Plantain (1 lb)	125	60
Black beans (1 lb)	400	370
Rice (1 lb)	318	240
Malanga (1 lb)	150	180
Pork leg (1 lb)	980	670
Cooking oil (1 lb)	500	450
Egg (1)	120	130
Milk (500 g)	869	1.304
Yogurt	400	300

Precios en CUP alcanzados hasta diciembre, 2024

### Equal pay and international regulations

Cuban legislation still does not fully comply with the principles established in ILO Convention No. 100 concerning equal remuneration between men and women for work of equal value, despite having ratified it in 1954. According to the report presented by the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations during the 112th session of the International Labour Conference (2024), Article 2 of the current Cuban Labor Code does not fully guarantee this principle, since its wording is more restrictive than that of the Convention. Moreover, national legislation has not yet incorporated an adequate and operational definition

tion of the concept of “work of equal value,” as required by Article 1 of the Convention.

The Committee took note that the Cuban government announced it would evaluate reforms to the Labor Code to address this deficiency, but to date no substantive legislative progress has been reported. The lack of regulatory harmonization not only compromises compliance with international standards, but also limits the legal tools available to combat structural wage discrimination, particularly against women, rural workers, informal sector employees, and people with caregiving responsibilities.





## Self-employment and the private sector: crisis, restrictions, and decrees

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During 2024, the Cuban private sector—especially self-employed workers, MSMEs, and non-agricultural cooperatives—faced new regulatory restrictions, a more hostile economic environment, and growing distrust toward official policies. Despite the official discourse highlighting the need to boost the national economy, the actions of the State reveal a focus on controlling and cornering independent economic initiatives.

A national survey conducted between March and April 2024 by the Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba (ASIC) and the Cuban Association of Self-Employed and Entrepreneurial Workers (ACTAE), presented by the Observatory of Labor and Trade Union Rights, revealed significant findings:

**67,8 %** *“La economía informal contribuye directamente a la economía local”*

**77,8 %** *“Impacto positivo en la estabilidad laboral”*

**88,5 %** *“El sector debe ser desregulado para permitir su crecimiento”*

**69 %** *“La venta informal de alimentos es clave para la subsistencia”*

**94,3 %** *“El gobierno debe escuchar las demandas ciudadanas, sindicales y académicas”*

**62,1 %** *“La economía debe operar en Moneda Libremente Convertible”*

**93 %** *“Grave o muy grave la situación económica en la Isla”*

The data reflects a clear public perception of the fundamental role the informal sector plays in the collapse of the state system. The survey also highlights how excessive state control, inflation, lack of financing, and exchange rate instability constitute the main obstacles to the development of independent work.

In addition, remittances, emigration, and the use of social media were identified as factors that significantly influence the sustainability of self-employment, both as external support and as causes of small business closures. It is estimated that 596,000 people were self-employed in 2023, and that this sector generated 183,000 jobs, according to official ONEI data.

The publication of Decree 107/2024 in August represented a negative turning point. This new regulation expanded the list of prohibited activities for MSMEs and cooperatives, increasing from 112 to 125 banned categories, including forestry, the manufacture of orthopedic footwear, independent cultural production, and the organization of international events.

The restrictive nature of the decree violates principles of economic freedom, equal access to employment, and non-discrimination. In this context, possible violations of ILO Conventions 87, 98, 122, and 111 are identified, due to preventing people without political ties to the State from carrying out legitimate economic activities. In addition, the conditions for becoming a business partner were tightened, and approval decisions were transferred to the local

level, which reinforces political discretion and reduces transparency.

For analysts like economist Pedro Monreal, this decree constitutes a deepening of the restrictions already contained in Decree 49/2021, reaffirming the pattern of “adding insult to injury” in a context of economic paralysis.

The effect of these measures was not only legal: many MSMEs, already weakened by inflation, shortages of raw materials, and legal insecurity, were forced to close or reduce operations. Others, however, were able to sustain themselves thanks to close ties with the state apparatus. It is estimated that a significant portion of the 9,236 private MSMEs registered as of December 2024 were controlled by individuals linked to government institutions, giving them significant advantages over other sector actors.

This process of covert recentralization impacted not only the economic sphere, but also the living

conditions of independent workers, who suffer the consequences of a model that tolerates only those forms of private activity subordinated to political power. Meanwhile, the lack of real incentives, the persistence of the informal market as a means of survival, and the uncontrolled increase in the cost of inputs and services worsened the precariousness of self-employment. In this context, the official discourse on promoting entrepreneurship loses credibility in the face of daily reality: self-employed workers continue to be objects of suspicion, supervision, and selective punishment. The current regulatory framework does not guarantee a level playing field, let alone labor rights, social protection, or regulatory stability for those trying to survive outside the state sector.

At the end of 2024, a total of 9,236 private MSMEs were officially registered in Cuba. Although no public data exists on their composition, various analysts have warned that current regulations and limitations could favor actors linked to the state apparatus, creating conditions of unfair competition.





## Prohibited activities for MSMEs and self-employed workers

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Decree 107/2024, published in August, expanded from 112 to 125 the list of prohibited activities for MSMEs and the self-employed. This list includes strategic and social sectors under state control, reflecting a restrictive model that prioritizes government monopoly and limits economic autonomy.

### Political, Legal, and Security

- Legislative, judicial, or governmental activities
  - Notarial and registry services
  - Private security services
  - Defense, internal order, and prison administration
  - Independent legal services
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### Health and Education

- Private medical and paramedical practices (with limited exceptions)
  - Private formal education (preschool, primary, secondary)
  - Professional training with official certifications
  - Production of medical devices (e.g., prosthetics, orthopedic footwear)
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### Culture and Communication

- Independent cultural production (theater, audiovisuals, recorded music)
  - Editorial services and publication of books, magazines, or digital sites
  - Production of news or informational content
  - Organization of international artistic and cultural events
- 

### Agriculture and Environment

- Silviculture (forest management and exploitation)
  - Activities with environmental impact or requiring strategic natural resources
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### Industry and Defense

- Manufacturing of weapons, ammunition, explosives, or military vehicles
  - Production or marketing of strategic goods reserved for the state
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### Transport and Telecommunications

- Air, rail, or maritime traffic control
  - Telecommunications and public network services
  - Operation of mass media outlets
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### Finance and Banking

- Financial or banking intermediation activities
- Currency issuance, stock exchange operations, or public fund management

# Independent unionism

## UNDER ATTACK

### Exclusion from the state model: hegemony of the CTC

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The situation of independent unionism in Cuba remained extremely hostile during 2024. The Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC), the umbrella entity created at the dawn of the system, maintained its absolute hegemony as the only legal union and one subordinated to the State. This union monopoly enabled repressive actions against members of entities such as the Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba (ASIC), and strict control over the members of each union section in state institutions, in order to ensure total obedience of the working class to the dictates of power.

Organizing outside state structures continued to be punished. There were no signs of change or openness: any attempt at autonomy was considered a political confrontation. This attitude constitutes a direct violation of ILO Conventions 87 and 98 and reflects

the Cuban government's disregard for the recommendations of the Committee on Freedom of Association in Case No. 3271, "ASIC vs. Government of Cuba" (see corresponding section for a detailed development of the case).

Furthermore, in its 2024 report, the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations reaffirmed that the Government of Cuba severely restricts trade union freedom. The Committee pointed out that the existence of independent unions is impeded, mandatory affiliation to the CTC is imposed, and international conventions on freedom of association are applied in a partial and discriminatory manner. According to this body, such practices "undermine democratic principles and labor rights," in clear contradiction to Convention No. 87.

### Repressive strategy against labor activists

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The repressive apparatus of the Cuban State maintained a sustained strategy of surveillance, detention, threats, and criminalization against independent trade union leaders, labor journalists, and members of organizations not subordinated to the Communist Party. These actions intensified on key dates such as May 1st, the anniversary of July 11th, and visits by foreign leaders.

**Axes of anti-union repression:** The Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba (ASIC), the Cuban Association of Self-Employed and Entrepreneurial Workers (ACTAE), and the news agency Sindical Press.

The following practices were documented:

- Home surveillance.
- Summons lacking legal basis.
- Intimidating interrogations.
- Arbitrary fines.
- Restrictions on freedom of movement.
- Confiscation of property.
- Attempts at recruitment by State Security.
- Employment dismissals.

These actions form a systematic pattern of harassment aimed at dismantling any form of autonomous labor organization.



## Case 3271 before the ILO: current situation and persistence of violations

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Case No. 3271, presented by the Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba (ASIC) before the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association, is one of the most thoroughly documented files on systematic repression against autonomous unionism on the Island. Throughout multiple sessions, the Committee has confirmed that Conventions 87 and 98—concerning freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, both ratified by the Cuban State—are gravely and continuously violated in Cuba.

Since its submission in 2016 and the subsequent observations by the Committee, a series of key recommendations have been reiterated, including:

- **Legally recognize** independent trade union organizations.
- **Guarantee freedom of association** without interference or reprisals from the State.
- **Investigate and cease practices of harassment**, detention, threats, and dismissals for union-related reasons.
- **Allow the existence of unions** outside the CTC monopoly and ensure conditions for their free operation.

Despite these recommendations, the Cuban government has not only ignored these demands but has deepened the very practices that gave rise to the case. The repressive actions against members of ASIC — documented with dates, names, and methods in this report — demonstrate the existence of a State policy aimed at preventing any form of union organization outside official control.

The pattern denounced in Case 3271 remains and is even worsening: there has been no legislative or institutional progress toward legalizing independent unionism; criminal charges continue to be used to threaten or punish autonomous union leaders; and the Department of State Security (DSE) continues to operate as a direct persecution apparatus against ASIC representatives and their allies.

Far from complying with the Committee's recommendations, the Cuban State has chosen to reinforce repression and institutional siege against workers organized independently. This report therefore constitutes a substantive update of the case before the ILO and can be considered part of the ongoing documentation of its evolution.

## International recognition of ASIC as a legitimate complainant

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ASIC continues to be recognized by ILO supervisory bodies as a legitimate source of information and complaints regarding violations of international conventions ratified by the Cuban State. Despite the government's attempts to delegitimize its existence and representativeness, the ILO has maintained its formal recognition as an independent union interlocutor.

In its report presented during the 112th session of the International Labour Conference (2024), the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) explicitly mentioned ASIC as a complaining party and referred to multiple observations made by this organization in recent years. Furthermore, it reiterated its request for the Cuban government to provide a substantive response to the documented facts.



Among the highlighted points, the Committee took note of:

- **ASIC's complaints regarding the National Classifier of Economic Activities**, approved in 2021, which restricts self-employment and prohibits autonomous organizational activities, directly affecting the right to freedom of association (Conventions Nos. 87 and 98).
- **The warning about Article 143 of the new Penal Code**, in effect since September 2022, which criminalizes international financing to non-governmental entities. ASIC denounced that this provision directly affects unionists, journalists, lawyers, and self-employed workers, and constitutes a means of criminalizing international cooperation.
- **Observations on the case of the Hotel Saratoga**, whose explosion caused the death of 32 workers. ASIC denounced the lack of safety conditions, the absence of consultation with employees, and the employer's evasion of responsibility. The Committee confirmed that the case remains open, with no public sanctions or mechanisms for structured dialogue (Convention No. 155).
- **The Committee also noted that the government did not respond to the allegations** regarding the biased application of international conventions nor provided substantive information about the documented complaints. Despite the State's attempt to discredit ASIC as a valid representative entity, the ILO maintained its recognition and formally processed its complaints as a basis for its recommendations.

This sustained recognition reinforces ASIC's role as a legitimate interlocutor of autonomous Cuban unionism before international supervisory mechanisms and confirms its active contribution in documenting violations of labor rights in Cuba.

## Chronology of documented repressive acts during 2024

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### JANUARY

**January 11:** In Colón, Matanzas, DSE agents surrounded from dawn the home of ASIC's general secretary, **Iván Hernández Carrillo**. The operation lasted until the afternoon of the following day and coincided with an official visit by ruler Miguel Díaz-Canel to the town. The police presence, without judicial order or public justification, was clearly intended to neutralize any union expression or worker meeting that day. This act constitutes an example of direct surveillance and intimidation, incompatible with the right to privacy, freedom of association, and freedom of expression.

**January 12:** In the province of Cienfuegos, unionist **Rodolfo Aparicio Alemán** was detained while traveling with his stepfather and brother to attend an agricultural fair. The vehicle was intercepted by a PNR patrol acting on orders from political police. They were taken to the police station, where a DSE officer ordered Rodolfo's imprisonment on charges of "contempt," releasing his companions. He remained six days in a cell and was later transferred to Ariza prison, where he stayed until March 22. He was released after paying a fine of 1,000 CUP and returning a bail of 5,000 CUP. The case lacked due process and was clearly a political punishment for his union activism.



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**January 27:** In Havana, several independent unionists and ASIC members were verbally summoned to the Dragones police station, in Centro Habana municipality, where they were interrogated by a DSE officer who identified himself as “Tony.” He expressly warned them not to carry out any activity during the March of the Torches, organized by the regime to commemorate José Martí’s birth, nor on the anniversary of the founding of the CTC, the only legal union in the country. The interrogated unionists were **Ulises González Moreno, Yaquelin Dalis Caballero, Luis Orlando León Randich, Nora Noa, Dayán Ortíz, Leonardo Hernández Camejo, and Emilio Alberto Gottardi Gottardi** (ASIC’s general secretary in Havana province). The objective was clearly dissuasive and coercive, with no legal basis, aimed at preventing any alternative expression of unionism in the public sphere.

## MARCH

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**March 26:** In the municipality of Colón, Matanzas, DSE officer Sergio Savignet Santana remained stationed in front of **Iván Hernández Carrillo’s** house from early hours. His presence was interpreted as a surveillance and intimidation measure to prevent any type of union activity or contact with other activists. This action is part of a sustained pattern of harassment directed at him, aiming to isolate and restrict his mobility.

**March 29:** At night, **Iván Hernández Carrillo** was arrested in a public area in the city of Matanzas while attempting to travel to Havana for a medical check-up. The arrest was carried out without a judicial order and in a public place, making it an arbitrary act of repression. He was taken to La Playa police station, where he was interrogated by Lieutenant Colonel “Yoel” and an unidentified female sub-lieutenant. During the interview, he was issued a formal warning record for the alleged crimes of “attempting against the constitutional order” and “mercenarism.” The former carries sentences of up to 15 years in prison, and the latter is defined in the Cuban Penal Code with a possible death penalty. Before being released, the agents warned him that if he persisted in his union activities, he would be prosecuted on those charges. He was also reprimanded for expressing support for the families of political prisoners and for allegedly inciting peaceful protest. The case was interpreted as an attempt at demobilization through extreme criminal threats.

## APRIL

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**April 1:** ASIC union journalist **Yunia Figueredo Cruz** was under surveillance throughout the day. Several DSE agents, along with civilian collaborators, stationed themselves in front of her home in the Playa municipality, Havana. The operation prevented both her departure and the entry of visitors, leaving her completely isolated. The action had a clearly intimidating nature and was aimed at neutralizing any participation in civic or union activities.

**April 2:** Unionist **Leonardo Hernández Camejo** was summoned to appear at the Dragones police station in Centro Habana without receiving an official written summons. During the interrogation, he was questioned by two DSE officers about his involvement in independent union activities. The interrogation included veiled threats and warnings about the possible consequences of continuing his activism.

**April 8:** DSE First Lieutenant “Irislady” personally appeared at the home of **Iván Hernández Carrillo** with the intention of delivering a summons to appear before the Department of Police Investigation. Hernández Carrillo, finding no legal basis for the summons, refused to accept it formally. The action represented a new attempt at harassment and criminalization without judicial support.

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**April 30: Yoanys Olivera Vicente**, union activist from ASIC in the municipality of Cruces, Cienfuegos, was summoned by phone to appear at the local police station. Upon failing to attend, she was arrested two days later, initiating a chain of harassment that included threats of imprisonment, a heavy fine, and pressure to become an informant.

## MAY

**May 1:** Coinciding with International Workers' Day, acts of sustained surveillance were reported at the homes of several independent union leaders, preventing them from participating in any kind of public action. Among those affected were: **Yunia Figueredo Cruz**, **Liván Monteagudo Rivero** (ASIC provincial secretary in Las Tunas), **Bárbaro de la Nuez Ramírez** (general secretary of Cienfuegos province), and **Iván Hernández Carrillo** (ASIC general secretary, Colón, Matanzas). These actions reflect a preventive policy of isolation on politically sensitive dates.

**May 2: Yoanys Olivera Vicente** was arrested by the National Revolutionary Police at a checkpoint located in the town of Martha Abreu. The arrest was a consequence of her failure to attend a phone summons made on April 30. During the interrogation, a DSE officer threatened her with a sentence of 3 to 5 years of imprisonment, a fine of 10,000 CUP, and the confiscation of her motorcycle if she did not abandon her ties to ASIC. Additionally, the agent attempted to recruit her as an informant, a coercive practice that seriously violates freedom of conscience and association.

**May 15:** A surveillance operation was deployed around the home of **Bárbaro de la Nuez Ramírez**. The operation involved a visible presence of plainclothes agents and patrols monitoring the house from early morning until the end of the day, causing fear among neighbors and family members. The objective was to restrict his mobility and prevent any contact with other members of the organization.

## JUNE

**June 20: Julio Aleaga Pesant**, journalist for the ASIC press agency Sindical Press, was summoned by DSE agents Lieutenant "Rodrigo" and Major Colonel "Frank," who accused him of violating Decree Law 370 on the use of social media. This decree, frequently used to censor political criticism on the internet, was invoked to impose a fine of 3,000 CUP (approximately 25 USD), equivalent to more than one and a half times the monthly minimum wage in Cuba. During the interrogation, the agents accused him of "spreading messages against morality, good customs, social interest, and the integrity of individuals," clearly attempting to punish the exercise of freedom of expression on digital platforms.

**June 26:** ASIC members **Consuelo Rodríguez Hernández** (secretary of women workers at ASIC, in Cruces, Cienfuegos) and **Lázaro Roberto Aguiar Mendoza** (activist in the municipality of Cruces, Cienfuegos) were summoned to appear at the local police station. There, two DSE officers interrogated them and threatened them with prison sentences of 2 to 8 years for critical posts they had made on social media. They were also warned to sever all ties with Iván Hernández Carrillo, ASIC's general secretary. Furthermore, they were prohibited from leaving the municipality, which constitutes an arbitrary restriction of their freedom of movement and a form of reprisal for their union activism.

## JULY

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**July 10:** In the morning, independent unionists **Ulises González Moreno** and **Yaqueline Dalis Caballero** were visited at their homes by a DSE agent who instructed them to report to a police unit in Centro Habana municipality, without an official written summons. Upon arrival, they were taken to the nearby Dragones and Campanario police station, where an officer warned them about the consequences of continuing their union activities. They were ordered to remain at home and refrain from any activity, due to the third anniversary of the massive July 11, 2021 protests. Lastly, they were informed that they would be under close surveillance and would be arrested if they failed to comply.

**July 11:** Plainclothes agents maintained surveillance all day at the homes of unionists **Consuelo Rodríguez Hernández**, **Lázaro Roberto Aguiar Mendoza**, **Bárbaro de la Nuez Ramírez**, **Yunia Figueredo Cruz**, **Emilio Alberto Gottardi Gottardi**, and **Iván Hernández Carrillo**. These acts of surveillance and intimidation were part of the regime's repressive measures to prevent demonstrations or commemorative activities marking the anniversary of the July 11, 2021 protests.

**July 22:** Surveillance operations were reported in front of the homes of unionists **Yunia Figueredo Cruz**, **Consuelo Rodríguez Hernández**, and **Bárbaro de la Nuez Ramírez**. These operations consisted of the presence of DSE agents near their residences, aiming to intimidate and deter any attempt at meetings or activities related to independent union activism.

## OCTOBER

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**October 22:** **Lázaro Roberto Aguiar Mendoza**, union activist and nurse with the Integrated Emergency Medical System in Cruces, Cienfuegos, was accused, along with the driver of the ambulance he worked in, of being involved in the alleged theft of a vehicle part. Aguiar was summoned to the Manuel "Piti" Fajardo polyclinic, where a PNR patrol awaited him. He was taken to the police station, interrogated, and accused of "failing to report a crime" and "neglecting the preservation of state property." He was ultimately released without charges, but the incident revealed an attempt at labor retaliation without clear technical or legal grounds.

**October 23:** Yoanys Olivera Vicente was summoned for another interrogation at the Cruces police station. There, two DSE officers threatened to dismiss her from her job as a veterinarian at a state institution if she did not sever all ties with ASIC General Secretary Iván Hernández Carrillo. They also demanded she cease all her activities within the organization and hand over her mobile phone for forensic examination. When she said she didn't have it with her, they threatened to raid her home. Finally, they issued a formal warning before releasing her.

## NOVEMBER

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**November 8:** **Yoanys Olivera Vicente** was once again summoned by authorities without a legal document. On this occasion, she received further threats related to her affiliation with ASIC. The purpose of the interrogation was to reiterate pressure for her to abandon her involvement in independent unionism, with veiled threats of employment and criminal consequences.



## Violations of ILO Conventions by the Cuban Government

This report identifies multiple violations of fundamental ILO Conventions ratified by the Cuban State.

Based on the documentation compiled by ODLs, ASIC, and ACTAE, the main affected Conventions are presented below.

The documented violations include systematic restrictions on trade union freedom, political discrimination, repression against union representatives, and practices that amount to disguised forms of forced labor.

These violations not only contravene international commitments assumed by the Cuban State but also directly and persistently affect thousands of workers, especially those linked to independent unionism, self-employment, and sectors marginalized for political reasons.

The lack of state willingness to correct these practices consolidates a model of exclusion, repression, and systematic violation of fundamental labor rights..

<b>C. 87</b>	Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criminalization of independent trade union organization (ASIC).</li> <li>• Surveillance, harassment, arrests, and systematic repression against trade unionists.</li> <li>• Exclusion of any union not subordinated to the CTC.</li> </ul>
<b>C. 98</b>	Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• De facto prohibition of collective bargaining outside the CTC .</li> <li>• Dismissals, harassment, and reprisals for ties to autonomous unions.</li> <li>• Complete lack of institutional recognition for independent organizations.</li> </ul>
<b>C. 111</b>	Discrimination (Employment and Occupation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political discrimination against workers not aligned with the State.</li> <li>• Administrative and legal obstacles to self-employment for dissidents.</li> <li>• Threats of dismissal against union activists for political reasons.</li> </ul>
<b>C. 122</b>	Employment Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of an open, productive, and non-discriminatory employment policy.</li> <li>• Deliberate restriction of economic activities through Decree 107/2024.</li> <li>• Promotion of informal employment without protections or rights.</li> </ul>
<b>C. 29</b>	Forced Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of coercion in state employment programs and international missions.</li> <li>• Restrictions on mobility and use of criminal threats to force individuals to abandon union activity.</li> </ul>
<b>C. 135</b>	Workers' Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct persecution of independent union representatives.</li> <li>• Systematic denial of recognition to figures such as Iván Hernández Carrillo and other ASIC leaders.</li> <li>• Intervention by the Department of State Security to prevent meetings or representative actions.</li> </ul>

# Structural crisis

## ECONOMY AND REPRESSION AS STATE POLICY

### Political and economic outlook

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The disintegration of the system continued to deepen. The persistence of obsolete policies—centered on centralized planning and top-down control—as well as the adoption of other equally harmful measures, revealed the persistence of a Marxist-Leninist ideological apparatus that responds solely to the interests of those in power, relegating to oblivion the millions of people it claims to represent.

Cuba remains immersed in a structural governance crisis, without a clear recovery strategy or a coherent economic roadmap. Government decisions continue to focus on short-term measures—mostly repetitive and with unsatisfactory results—without addressing the deep transformations required by the scale of the collapse.

Signs of systemic breakdown are accentuated by the apathy, clumsiness, and immobility of a parasitic bureaucracy, more concerned with preserving privileges than confronting disaster. Every announced correction turns out to be a smokescreen, every new “solution” nothing more than a semantic game without substance.

The political will to adopt viable measures remains absent. This lack of commitment stems from decades of delays and marks a painful end to a historical cycle. The narrative of the U.S. embargo as the main cause

of the crisis loses weight in the face of the government’s obstinacy in repeating failed formulas that institutionalize misery.

In this context, various organizations have denounced a worsening of repressive legal frameworks.

Specifically, the CEACR, in its report presented during the 112th session of the International Labour Conference (2024), expressed concern over Article 143 of the new Cuban Penal Code, in force since September 2022. This provision criminalizes with imprisonment those who, representing non-governmental, international, or associative entities, receive foreign financial support for activities considered contrary to the State or its constitutional order.

According to complaints filed by ASIC, this law directly affects unionists, journalists, lawyers, self-employed workers, and members of organized civil society, as it criminalizes international cooperation and severely restricts freedom of association and expression.

By the end of the year, there were no signs of real change. The only “good news” came from official reports and state media propaganda, which insisted on defending socialism as the only path out of the national catastrophe.

### Economy in critical condition

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Beyond the dismissal and imprisonment of the Minister of Economy and Planning, Alejandro Gil, in early February 2024 for “serious mistakes made in the performance of his duties,” the year was marked by deep economic tensions affecting millions of citizens across the Island.

This case, along with that of Deputy Prime Minister and former Minister of Communications Jorge Luis Perdomo Di-Lella, reflects how corruption has ceased to be an isolated phenomenon and has become a structural feature of the system. Although the official discourse insists that Cuban socialism combats

corruption as a capitalist evil, in practice, persistent, systematic, and normalized forms of corruption exist at all levels of the state, economic, and social apparatus, including daily life.

One of the most impactful government initiatives was the economic “paquetazo,” which came into effect in March, raising the costs of electricity, water, gas, and fuel, and ending the universal food subsidy distributed via the ration card. In practice, this increased inequality within society.

The measures were considered by several specialists to be one of the largest macroeconomic adjustments in decades. Although Prime Minister Manuel Marrero downplayed their effects, presenting them as a simple attempt to revitalize the economy and contain hyperinflation, the truth is that shortages were not alleviated, and inflationary indices continued to rise. The inability to generate productive dynamics and the absence of a coherent development strategy based on pragmatism and sustainability continued to manifest unequivocally, marking the course toward new failures.

The opacity of economic policy objectives and the questionable link of these plans to the resolution of a wide range of longstanding socioeconomic problems have kept essential external financing and investments at bay.

The low presence of investors and foreign capital can be partly explained by the large external debt and the inability to meet repayment obligations. According to estimates by the think tank Economist Intelligence Unit, the debts were estimated at 27.205 billion as of November 2024.

A report by the Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy at the University of Havana, together with

the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, covering the period from July to December 2024, stated that “the neglect of key and immediate aspects such as the creation of a currency exchange market, the renegotiation of short- and long-term debt, the establishment of clear rules, and the reconfiguration of the state business sector has contributed to a continued deterioration of the main indicators”.

The government had established a list of priorities within the complex internal panorama to reverse the severe economic contraction, but the final outcome was negative.

This included progress in business development, institutional transformation, protection for vulnerable people, and increasing national income. The failure was so significant that, during the meeting of the National Assembly of People’s Power, no information was released regarding GDP, as is usually done each December. Forecasts were set at 2%, but several experts estimated the final figure did not even reach 1%.

Regarding inflation, although official figures reported a slight deceleration compared to previous years, independent studies—as mentioned earlier—estimated much higher real levels, in line with the sustained deterioration of purchasing power. The devaluation of the peso and the growing dominance of the informal market—excluded from official statistics—further widened the gap between income and cost of living for most Cubans.

In October, economist Pavel Vidal warned in *El Toque* that official data underestimates real inflation, as it excludes much of the informal market, and noted that wage and pension controls have prevented hyperinflation, but at the cost of destroying the purchasing power of millions.



## Collapse of the agricultural sector

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The results of the 2023–2024 sugar harvest indicated a total collapse of the industry, with a production of just 160,000 metric tons, half of what was obtained in the previous campaign. Only 15 sugar mills were active, compared to 36 three years ago. In addition to the fuel shortage, there were organizational problems, ineffective recycling of obsolete equipment, lack of spare parts, low availability of labor, and poor weather conditions. The 2024–2025 harvest, which began in November, does not offer better prospects. Given the production collapse, Cuba was forced to import thousands of tons of sugar from Colombia, Spain, France, and the United States. In the first half of the year, sugar was imported from the U.S. for a value of \$834,000, according to Cuba Trade Blog.

A similar situation affected rice. In 2024, only 80,000 tons were harvested, representing 11% of national consumption and only 30% of what was produced six years earlier, according to data from the newspaper Granma. The lack of inputs and fuel were key factors. All rice distributed through the ration card had to be imported, as acknowledged by Orlando Linares Morrell, president of the Agricultural Group of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Each year, the country spends between \$1.6 and \$2 billion on food imports as a result of the structural collapse of its agricultural sector.

Production targets for eggs, meat, and milk were also unmet. A sector official acknowledged failures in contracting producers, difficulties transporting animals to slaughterhouses, low livestock weight, and impacts from drought. Beef and horse meat production reached only 70% of the plan; in the case of eggs,

231 million units were recorded—94 million fewer than projected. Similar declines were reported for beans, tobacco, coffee, milk, cocoa, and honey. Pork production showed a significant setback: from a target of 11,300 tons, only 3,800 were achieved.

Despite this situation, resource allocation for agricultural development was not among the government's priorities. According to ONEI figures, between January and September 2024, the government invested 4.6 times more in sectors like tourism—particularly hotel construction—and in real estate and business activities than in agriculture, education, and health. In absolute terms, tourism received 17.311 billion Cuban pesos (\$721 million), compared to 1.829 billion for agriculture, 1.205 billion for health, and 671 million for education. This distribution reveals an investment policy disconnected from the country's social and food needs.

Although part of these investments was formally channeled through non-state structures, their distribution was opaque and concentrated among actors with direct ties to the official apparatus. A more detailed analysis of the impact of these policies on the private sector can be found in that section.

Coffee, one of the most symbolic products of national consumption, was not spared from deterioration either. From the 61,000 tons produced in 1961, only about 10,000 were harvested in 2024. The decline is attributed to a combination of poor management, adverse weather conditions, technological obsolescence, and a lack of skilled labor.



# Impact of the national crisis

## ON WORKERS

### Deterioration of living conditions

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The year 2024 was marked by an even deeper collapse in living conditions in Cuba. Extreme poverty became a daily reality for the vast majority of the population. According to a report by the Cuban Observatory for Human Rights (OCDH), 89% of citizens lived in conditions of extreme precariousness. The most affected were the elderly, the unemployed, and those deprived of liberty. Added to this structural crisis were hunger, prolonged blackouts, and the uncontrolled rise in the cost of living.

Food remained the most serious problem in the country. Only 15% of those surveyed stated they were able to eat three meals a day. The government was forced to request assistance from the World Food Programme (WFP) for the purchase of powdered milk, a product that reached 5,000 pesos per kilogram on the informal market—more than double the monthly minimum wage. Although these informal supply networks offer relief for many families, their structural impact is further analyzed in the section on self-employment and the private sector.

The severity of the food crisis was internationally acknowledged: for the first time, Cuba was included in the UNICEF report *Child Food Poverty: Nutrition Deprivation in Early Childhood*, which highlighted acute nutritional deprivation in early childhood.

Access to medication followed the same pattern of collapse. One third of the population could not obtain the medications they needed due to high prices in the black market. The widespread shortage pushed many people to seek remedies through informal means, feeding an illegal market that benefits from state mismanagement. 89% of surveyed citizens rated the public health system negatively—including hospitals and pharmacies—contrasting with the official narrative that presents it as one of the core achievements of Cuban socialism.

To all this was added the energy devastation. In 2024, three large-scale nationwide blackouts occurred, with outages lasting more than twenty continuous hours in various regions of the country. For most of the year,



the electricity generation deficit remained above 50%. The eight old thermoelectric plants, mostly built in the 1980s and 1990s, continued to suffer technical failures worsened by the lack of oil, shortage of spare parts, and structural obsolescence. Neither the 70,000 generator sets active since 2004 nor the Turkish floating power plants contracted as an emergency solution managed to contain the collapse. Various experts estimate that solving the energy problem would require an investment between 8 and 10 billion dollars—an unattainable figure for an economy drowned in debt, with depressed exports and a growing dependence on imports.

Public transportation also did not escape the deterioration. The drop in mobility was widespread and particularly affected urban and rural services. According to official data, the number of transported passengers decreased by more than 120 million compared to the previous year. Urban routes were the most affected, with a contraction of 41.8%. Meanwhile, freight transport also experienced a 19% year-on-year decline, impacting national logistics and

access to basic goods in provinces already hard-hit by shortages.

While citizens' daily lives became increasingly difficult, the government intensified restrictions on private work. In August 2024, Decree 107 expanded the list of prohibited activities for MSMEs, consolidating an even more hostile environment for independent entrepreneurship. The specific consequences of this measure are further developed in the section on informal labor.

Cuba has one of the most aged populations in Latin America. More than 22% of the Cuban population is 60 years or older (about 2.3 million people), according to official data from the Center for Population and Development Studies (CEPDE)—data considered unreliable due to the regime's well-known statistical manipulation. It is estimated that by 2050, Cuba will be the most aged country in Latin America and the Caribbean, with more than 35% of its population in advanced age. This trend will have a critical impact on the available labor force, the pension system, productivity, and healthcare services, further deepening the country's structural crisis.

## Public health in bankruptcy

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During the 9th Plenary Session of the Communist Party, held in December 2024, the government officially acknowledged the deep crisis in the public health system.

In Villa Clara province, an increase in infant mortality due to congenital anomalies was reported. The provincial health authority confirmed the phenomenon and attributed it, among other causes, to the infection of pregnant women with the Oropouche virus, as well as to the lack of folic acid and essential supplements.

The shortage of medications persisted throughout the country's pharmaceutical network. It was acknowledged that 70% of the basic drug list was lacking, including both domestically produced and imported medications. The lack of raw materials, combined with a severe shortage of foreign

currency, worsened the crisis. One of the main suppliers, India, reported outstanding debts owed by the Cuban government.

As a result, the black market expanded, where basic medications such as antibiotics, painkillers, antihypertensives, or insulin were sold at prices unaffordable for most. This situation had serious consequences, including the worsening of chronic illnesses and, in some cases, the death of patients due to the lack of timely treatment.

The deterioration of health infrastructure also affected service quality. Hospitals and polyclinics suffer from leaks, damaged roofs, power outages, failures in potable water supply, and broken equipment. Many hospital wards are out of service. The lack of ambulances added to this scenario: in 2023, it was acknowledged that the system covered only

39.6% of the demand, and no visible improvements occurred in 2024.

Between 2010 and 2022, 63 hospitals, 37 medical clinics, 187 maternity homes, and 45 dental clinics were closed, according to ONEI data. Although some closures were justified by mergers, others were due to the irreversible physical deterioration of the facilities.

The conditions of medical care led to the increasing use of natural and traditional medicine as an alternative to the lack of conventional treatments. While this practice is part of Cuba's medical culture, it is insufficient for treating serious illnesses.

Many citizens resorted to applying for humanitarian visas to receive treatment abroad. Some cases were successful; others did not arrive in time.

Although no official figures were published in 2024 about the personnel who left the sector, it is presumed that the trend from the previous year—when more than 43,000 workers left—continued. The total number of employees fell from 464,118 in 2022 to 421,120, affecting all specialties, including doctors, nurses, dentists, and support staff.

The number of doctors per 10,000 inhabitants dropped from 88 to 79.

Despite the internal collapse, the government maintained its policy of exporting medical services, considered its main source of income. In 2022, it generated more than 5 billion dollars. In 2024, it remained the most profitable export sector.

While the official discourse insists on its humanitarian nature, various organizations classify it as a form of labor exploitation. According to ONEI, between January and September 2024, the country allocated over 1.205 billion pesos to the sector, almost 12% more than in the same period in 2023. Nevertheless, the amount allocated to health and social assistance represented less than 2% of the total investment budget.

Finally, the number of deaths due to malnutrition rose by 74.42% between 2022 and 2023, making it the twentieth most common cause of death in the country. The difficulty in accessing food and the deficient medical care suggest that this trend will continue.

## Education in free fall

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In August 2024, the Cuban state press—in one of its rare news coverages—reported that the 2024–2025 school year would face serious problems due to the shortage of notebooks, textbooks, and uniforms, as well as a teacher deficit of 12.5%, equivalent to 24,000 fewer teachers, according to statements from the Minister of Education cited by Granma. This figure exceeded that of the previous year, when the shortage was estimated at 17,000 teachers. In addition, official data indicated a demand for 4.2 million uniforms.

In an attempt to mitigate the shortage, the Ministry of Education approved in December 2023 Resolution 23, which established an additional payment for teachers based on years of experience.

Later, in February 2024, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MTSS) issued another measure to update the payment procedure for teaching overload. The first regulation benefited around 180,000 teachers, and 9,000 new teachers were incorporated, including 3,900 retirees. With the second measure, the number of beneficiaries rose to 11,000, according to Cira Piñeiro Alonso, First Deputy Minister of MINED, in July 2024. Despite these incentives, the demand was not met.

On the other hand, the poor condition of hundreds of schools throughout the country—many of them at risk of collapse—the lack of desks, and the deterioration of sanitary services remained unchanged, as part of a process of total abandonment by the authorities, with no sign of real interest in viable and lasting solutions.

## Health and safety at work: critical conditions and absence of guarantees

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Throughout 2024, working conditions in Cuba confirmed the structural lack of effective public policies regarding occupational health and safety.

The absence of independent labor inspections, the precarious state of workplace infrastructure, the lack of legal protection for self-employed workers, and the overall deterioration of state services created a permanent risk environment for thousands of workers.

According to data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MTSS), 934 workplace accidents were reported in 2024, representing a 37.7% decrease compared to 2023. However, the fatality rate increased significantly: 52 workers lost their lives, maintaining the average of one occupational death per week. The number of fatalities per 1,000 injured rose from 33.7 to 53.3, a 60% increase. These figures are questioned by ASIC, given the well-known official manipulation of national statistics.

The most affected sectors in terms of occupational accidents were public health and social assistance (165 incidents) and manufacturing (141). In terms of fatalities, construction (8 deaths), electricity, gas and water supply (7), and agriculture and forestry (7) topped the list. Havana reported the highest number of accidents (324) and 8 fatalities, while Santiago de Cuba was the province with the most occupational deaths (9).

The structural causes of this situation include the physical precariousness of workplaces, the lack of personal protective equipment, the absence of technical supervision, and the nonexistence of a risk prevention culture. Moreover, there was a marked gender imbalance in the assignment of risky tasks, as 69.1% of those injured were men, mostly employed in high-risk activities.

Although the MTSS organized some awareness days and prevention campaigns during the year, these activities did not include participation from independent trade unions and were not accompanied by substantial legal reforms. As a result, health and safety at work remains under the exclusive control of the State, with no space for autonomous worker action.

In the private sector—especially among self-employed workers and MSMEs—there is no effective regulation in this area. Working conditions are determined by informal agreements, with no access to occupational health coverage, or even minimum prevention or compensation protocols in case of accidents.

This situation was also reflected by the ILO Committee of Experts in its 2024 report.

In particular, the Committee addressed the case of the Saratoga Hotel, whose explosion in 2022 caused the deaths of 32 workers. ASIC denounced that the accident was caused by lack of maintenance, failure to implement preventive measures, and a total absence of consultation with workers.

The Committee confirmed that the investigation had not yet been concluded more than a year later and called on the government to establish mechanisms for dialogue with workers or their representatives on safety and health matters.

Throughout 2024, several workplace accidents in Cuba stood out due to their severity and media coverage, highlighting the country's deficiencies in occupational safety and health.

Some of the most significant cases are detailed below:





## Explosion at cement factory

In October 2024, an explosion at a cement factory in Cienfuegos caused the death of electrician **Raymundo Narciso Sarria Lavín** and seriously injured **Dionel Figueroa Calunga**, **Francisco Díaz Urquiza**, **Hermes Rojas Campos**, **Carlos Aguilar Sabina**, and **Alexei Aguilar Valdés**, highlighting the need for preventive measures in the heavy industry sector.

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## Explosion at asphalt plant

On December 24, 2024, a fire at an asphalt plant in Sancti Spiritus caused serious injuries to **Alexei Díaz Salas**, who died on January 4, 2025. This incident casts doubt on official statistics reporting zero occupational deaths in that province during 2024.

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## Death of a lineman

In March 2024, young lineman **Leonel Barroso Machín** was electrocuted while working at an electrical substation in Havana. This case underscores the risks associated with the lack of adequate protective equipment.

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## Fire at floating power plant

On September 26, 2024, a fire broke out at the KPS-57 floating power plant anchored in Havana Bay, resulting in the tragic deaths of two Turkish workers, **Halil Karadeniz** and **Fuat Türkyilmaz**, and injuring six others, including two Cubans. The incident occurred during welding work on the vessel, owned by the Turkish company Karadeniz Holding.

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## Accident at feed factory

In October 2024, worker **Emilio Norberto Rosas García** lost his life in Havana after a wall collapsed due to the impact of a crane, highlighting unsafe conditions in the manufacturing sector.

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## Dockworkers' deaths

In February 2024, dockworkers **Raiko Calzado Kindelán**, **Yosbani Patterson Duany**, and **Roibel Bejerano Hernández** died after inhaling toxic gases when opening a fumigated container at the port of Santiago de Cuba. This was one of the most serious workplace accidents of the year.

## Discrimination and harassment in the workplace

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In addition to physical and structural risks, work environments in Cuba lack adequate mechanisms to prevent and penalize discrimination and sexual harassment.

Although the government has reported training activities promoted by the Federation of Cuban Women and training programs for labor inspectors, Cuban legislation still does not clearly define or penalize all forms of sexual harassment in employment and occupation. The Committee of Experts urged the inclusion of specific provisions against quid pro quo and environmental harassment, as well as guarantees of effective protection against discrimination based

on gender, political opinion, or other personal conditions.

Although Cuba has not ratified Convention 155 on Occupational Safety and Health, current practices violate fundamental principles of decent work. These conditions also hinder compliance with SDG 8.8 and contravene the provisions of Conventions 111 and 122.

Unless the institutional framework is comprehensively reformed, Cuban workers will remain exposed to an unsafe and negligent labor system with no mechanisms for protection against risk situations.

## Systematic repression

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The organization Justicia 11J documented the existence of 879 individuals imprisoned for political reasons (57 of them women), 551 of these cases linked to those arrested during the mass protests of July 11, 2021. Regarding detentions, the report recorded 1,586 arrests, of which at least 694 people received some form of sanction.

Despite repression, around 268 public protests took place, showing an increase compared to the previous year, when 83 were recorded. The number of group protests reached 117, mass protests 16, and others varied in type (family-based, solo protests, etc.).

The organization denounced increasing surveillance and punishment of activists, human rights defenders, and the general public for content published on social media.

Based on several complaints submitted to UN bodies, such as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Justicia 11J prepared a report expressing concern over violations of due process and the right to a fair trial, as well as “harsh sentences, physical mistreatment, and psychological

violence, including arbitrary use of punishment cells in poor conditions and for excessive periods.”

The report also addressed the denial of family visits to political prisoners and the obstruction of alternative forms of detention that would allow them to live with their children and families.

At the 190th Session of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Cuban authorities’ flagrant and systematic violations of human rights were also denounced.

Topics such as violence against family members of political prisoners, as well as forced exile, were also addressed. Justicia 11J reported 250 police actions that affected 80 relatives of prisoners. Regarding forced exile, more than 100 activists were forced to leave the country over the course of the year.

For its part, the Cuban Observatory of Human Rights estimated that acts against religious freedom had risen to 996, representing 60 more cases than in 2023.



The organization Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) documented 20 cases of harassment, threats, and fines against Christian and Afro-Cuban groups.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) highlighted serious incidents in 2024, including:

- Prohibition of a Catholic priest from ringing bells in protest.
- House arrest of a pastor.
- Prevention of meetings with bishops.
- Withholding of humanitarian aid.
- Interrogations for organizing public prayers.
- Denial of religious assistance to prisoners.

The Cuban Prisons Documentation Center (CDPC) recorded 7 deaths in prisons up to November,

although a much higher number is suspected. Among the deaths was political prisoner **Manuel de Jesús Guillén Esplugas**, who died under suspicious circumstances. Authorities claimed suicide as the cause, but his relatives are convinced that his death was due to a severe beating. He was the fourth prisoner, among the hundreds sentenced for the July 11 protests, to die in custody.

Prison violence reached its most brutal levels in detention centers located in the provinces of Havana, Mayabeque, and Camagüey, though violations were reported in a total of 35 prisons across 13 provinces.

Due to abuse and neglect in prison, July 11 protester **Yosandri Mulet Almarales** also died by throwing himself from a bridge during a temporary leave from the labor camp where he was being held.



# Final Considerations

## Conclusions

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The year 2024 confirmed the structural collapse of Cuba's economic, political, and social model. The combination of persistent inflation, widespread shortages, accelerated devaluation of the peso, and the deterioration of basic services plunged the country into a daily survival crisis for the majority of the population.

Far from reversing this situation, the measures implemented by the government—such as the so-called “economic package”—deepened social inequalities and multiplied levels of poverty and exclusion. The fiscal adjustment failed to resolve any of the structural imbalances and further worsened the precarity of the most vulnerable sectors.

The energy crisis was a symbol of this collapse: Cuba was the only country in Latin America to suffer complete blackouts—four in 2024—affecting not only households, but also hospitals, schools, water supply networks, and food preservation systems. The inability to maintain a functional power grid illustrates the magnitude of the collapse.

At the same time, the tightening of regulations against the private sector blocked any possibility of economic dynamism outside the state apparatus. Mipymes and cooperatives were restricted by new regulations that favored businesspeople linked to the regime, discouraging genuine entrepreneurship and closing the few remaining spaces for economic autonomy. These restrictions especially affected self-employed workers without political connections, who faced greater legal and operational obstacles to sustaining their productive activity.

In this context, the mass exodus of citizens, systematic political repression, and denial of basic freedoms cemented a scenario of authoritarian stagnation. The government once again showed that its priority is not collective well-being, but the preservation of political control.

Cuba closed 2024 with a regime that is more impoverished, more isolated, and more repressive—and with no real signs of transformation or openness.

## Beyond the Assessment: A Call for Solidarity

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This report is more than a record of events: it is a denunciation of the economic, social, political, and ideological collapse Cuba is going through, and of its direct impact on workers' fundamental rights. What is documented here are not isolated incidents, but repeated expressions of a state policy that criminalizes autonomous organization, represses dissent, and obstructs any productive or civic alternative outside official control.

Throughout 2024, not only did the material hardship of millions of workers worsen, but the regime also refined its repressive mechanisms to silence, fragment,

and punish those who exercise their rights. In the face of this reality, this report aims to strengthen strategies of documentation, international pressure, and active solidarity with those who, from within the Island, continue to defend their dignity.

The report does not conclude with an assessment, but with a call: to reinforce support networks, to continue denouncing violations before international bodies, and to remain steadfast in the struggle for a free and democratic Cuba, and for free trade unionism that is independent and protected by law.



## Sources Consulted

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*This list does not include all the sources consulted for the preparation of the report, as they are numerous. Only some of the most relevant ones used to compare figures, document violations, and support the analyses are presented here.*

This report was prepared by the **Labor and Trade Union Rights Observatory**, in collaboration with the **Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba** and the **Cuban Association of Self-Employed Workers and Entrepreneurs**, which also act as primary sources through surveys, interviews, direct documentation, and grassroots work.

**Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba (ASIC)** – Co-authoring organization of this report, prepared in collaboration with the ODLS and ACTAE. Its members and networks throughout the country serve as a primary source of information through surveys, interviews, documentary records, and case monitoring. Complainant in Case 3271 before the ILO.

**Cuban Association of Self-Employed Workers and Entrepreneurs (ACTAE)** – Co-authoring organization of this report. Participated in the national survey on self-employment (March–April 2024) and contributed testimonies, interviews, and territorial documentation on the conditions of independent work.

**Labor and Trade Union Rights Observatory (ODLS)** – General coordinator of the report. Compiled, systematized, and wrote the content, and contributed thematic analyses and internal reports produced during 2024 on repression, working conditions, and independent unionism.

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