



# LIST OF DEMANDS FOR TRADE UNION FREEDOM, ECONOMIC JUSTICE, AND DEMOCRACY IN CUBA

*Addressed to the National Assembly of People's Power of Cuba*

## I. INTRODUCTION

### **The contradictions of the Cuban regime in relation to a democratic, just and equitable model**

Since 1959, the Cuban regime has presented itself as a project of social justice, equity, and popular sovereignty. However, more than six decades later, the prevailing model has become a deeply totalitarian, centralized, and exclusionary structure. Twenty-first-century socialism, instead of guaranteeing rights, has been used to justify the systematic denial of fundamental freedoms.

One of the most evident contradictions is the gap between the discourse of equality and the criminalization of independent work. While claiming to uphold social justice, the regime persecutes productive initiatives outside state control, blocking the prosperity of thousands of Cubans. This undermines essential rights such as work, property, and free economic initiative.

In the labor and trade union field, the contradictions are even more severe. The regime maintains an absolute trade union monopoly through the Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC), which is subordinated to the Communist Party. This control deprives workers of their right to freely organize, in clear violation of ILO Conventions 87 and 98. Case No. 3271 before the Committee on Freedom of Association confirms that these practices are not isolated incidents but rather a systematic policy of repression.

At the same time, while touting national sovereignty and condemning foreign interference, the Cuban dictatorship organizes overseas labor missions that violate international standards on decent work, contractual freedom, and fair remuneration. These missions, far from being acts of solidarity, have become schemes of disguised labor exploitation and human trafficking, with no guarantees or rights for the professionals involved. Any medical mission or international contract involving Cuban workers must comply strictly with fundamental ILO conventions, guaranteeing decent work conditions, individual freedom, and the protection of rights.

Moreover, the exclusion of critical voices, the lack of judicial guarantees, and the use of the legal system as a tool of control reveal a structural incompatibility with any authentic form of democracy. The use of

criminal charges such as “contempt” or “pre-criminal social dangerousness,” along with impunity for abuses of power, consolidates a repressive model disconnected from modern law.

In summary, the contradictions between the Cuban model and a democratic, just, and inclusive State are not reformable within the current framework. They are structural and require a profound transformation based on political plurality, citizen autonomy, respect for human dignity, and real protection of economic, labor, and trade union rights.

In light of this situation, the Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba (ASIC), founded on October 26, 2016, in Havana, presents this List of Demands to the National Assembly of People’s Power as an act of collective action in defense of the human, labor, and democratic rights of the Cuban people.

This document reflects the aspirations of millions of citizens subjected to precarious working conditions, legal insecurity, and institutional repression, including the emerging private sector, the self-employed, MSMEs, and independent trade unionists.

The List also incorporates substantial observations derived from Case No. 3271, currently before the ILO, which documents and denounces persistent, widespread, and systematic violations of Cuban workers’ fundamental rights.

## **1. Democratic reforms as a guarantee of structural economic change**

### **We demand:**

- The call for free, democratic, and plural elections, without ideological exclusions and under international supervision.
- Judicial independence and guarantees for fundamental rights.
- Effective respect for and protection of freedom of expression, association, and peaceful protest.

Justification: Without a truly democratic environment, any economic reform is doomed to failure. The concentration of power, censorship, repression, and lack of judicial guarantees hinder the full development of any citizen or business initiative. Democratic reforms are the foundation of a modern, fair, and inclusive economy.

## **2. Immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners**

### **We demand:**

- The immediate release of all persons detained for political reasons, conscience, or for peacefully exercising their fundamental rights.
- Public recognition of the political nature of these detentions and the annulment of their criminal records.

- Independent investigation of abuses committed during arrests, trials, or detentions, and full reparation for the victims.

**Justification:** The existence of political prisoners in Cuba blatantly contradicts the official discourse of justice and sovereignty. While hundreds of people remain imprisoned for exercising basic rights, the judicial system serves repression. The immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners is a non-negotiable demand for initiating any real process of democratic opening.

### **3. International hiring and labor missions under international standards**

#### **We demand:**

- That all medical missions or international contracts involving Cuban workers comply with ILO conventions and recommendations.
- That Cuban workers abroad are guaranteed decent employment conditions, contractual freedom, full wages, and labor rights.
- That the partial or total confiscation of workers' earnings abroad be prohibited, ensuring their free disposition.

**Justification:** Overseas labor missions, especially medical ones, have been used by the dictatorship as mechanisms of control and exploitation. These practices violate international standards of decent work. It is imperative that any form of labor contracting abroad strictly adhere to the international conventions ratified by Cuba and to fundamental human rights principles.

### **4. Employment without discrimination and fair wages**

#### **We demand:**

- The adoption of a national employment policy that prohibits all forms of discrimination based on ideology, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or economic status.
- The establishment of a dignified minimum wage adjusted to the real cost of living in Cuba and reviewed periodically.
- A requirement for wage scale transparency in both the public and private sectors.
- The elimination of forced labor and the promotion of fair and safe working conditions for all workers, in accordance with ILO Conventions 29 and 105.

**Justification:** Labor precariousness in Cuba is worsened by discriminatory policies, insufficient wages, and the persistence of coercive labor practices. It is urgent that the dictatorship guarantee the right to freely chosen employment, with dignified conditions, without discrimination, and with wages that ensure a decent standard of living for workers and their families.

## **5. Full recognition of the right to entrepreneurship and private property**

### **We demand:**

- The repeal of any legal or administrative provision that conditions private property on its "compatibility with the principles of socialism."
- The elimination of the "list of prohibited activities" that restricts private enterprise development.
- Free access to operating licenses for MSMEs without ideological filters.
- Constitutional recognition of freedom of enterprise and private initiative as fundamental rights.

Justification: The private sector has proven to be a fundamental pillar for the survival of thousands of Cuban families, providing employment, access to goods and services, and even better wages than the state sector. However, its development has been conditioned by political criteria that hinder its growth. Guaranteeing the right to entrepreneurship and recognizing private property as a constitutional right is vital to energize the national economy and ensure decent living conditions.

## **6. Comprehensive tax reform for the private sector**

### **We demand:**

- A significant reduction in taxes applied to MSMEs and self-employed workers during their first five years of operation.
- The elimination of income caps that limit the growth of enterprises.
- A progressive, transparent, and simple tax system that does not penalize job creation.
- The establishment of a fiscal incentives framework for productive activities, exports, innovation, and technology.

Justification: Excessive tax burdens, income caps, and lack of incentives discourage the formalization of productive initiatives. Instead of promoting job creation and economic growth, the current tax system acts as a punishment mechanism. It is necessary to establish a fair and efficient system that supports the consolidation of sustainable and competitive enterprises.

## **7. Guarantee of the right to free and independent trade union organization**

### **We demand:**

- The immediate legal recognition of ASIC and all autonomous trade union organizations created by workers.
- The prohibition of any form of state retaliation against independent unionists, their families, or their businesses.
- Freedom of association for all workers, without obligation to belong to the CTC.
- The guarantee of the right to collective bargaining and peaceful strike.

In reference to Case No. 3271 before the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association, we also demand:

- The immediate end to intimidation, arbitrary arrests, assaults, and surveillance of members of ASIC and other trade union organizations not affiliated with the dictatorship.
- Full reparation to the victims of trade union rights violations documented before the ILO.
- Full, direct, and unconditional cooperation by the Cuban dictatorship with the oversight mechanisms and demands issued by the competent ILO bodies.
- The establishment of an independent, institutional, and protected channel for the registration of autonomous trade union organizations.

**Justification:** The existence of a single official union in Cuba contradicts international standards of trade union freedom. Constant retaliation, detentions, and harassment against independent unionists, as evidenced in Case 3271 before the ILO, constitute serious human rights violations. It is essential to ensure free organizing spaces that truly represent the interests of workers.

## **8. End to harassment and guarantee of financing for entrepreneurship**

**We demand:**

- The repeal of regulations that allow license cancellations without due process or legal defense.
- The prohibition of inspectors being used as instruments of intimidation and economic repression.
- The establishment of independent oversight mechanisms to protect the rights of entrepreneurs and workers.
- The legalization of free access to foreign currencies, credit mechanisms, and private exchange houses.
- The allowance of direct investment from Cubans abroad and foreigners without residency requirements.
- The creation of microcredit and entrepreneurship financing funds with legal guarantees.

**Justification:** Testimonies gathered in various reports and independent media reveal a pattern of harassment against successful private businesses, often without clear legal cause, but due to political or discretionary motives. This is compounded by the shortage of foreign currency and the absence of formal and accessible financial instruments, forcing thousands of entrepreneurs to rely on informal and high-risk channels. A rule-of-law environment and a transparent system for capital access and financing are essential to boost economic development and attract national and foreign investment.

## **9. Total disassociation of the CTC from political control over labor**

**We demand:**

- The abolition of mandatory union affiliation with the CTC across all sectors.
- The removal of Communist Party members from CTC leadership positions.

- An audit of CTC finances by independent bodies.

**Justification:** The CTC does not operate as a genuine representative organization of workers but as an organ serving the ruling party. Its hierarchical structure, opaque financing, and role in political coercion distort the purpose of trade unionism as a tool for labor defense. It is urgent to return autonomy and social function to trade unionism.

## **10. Institutional transparency and fight against corruption and nepotism**

### **We demand:**

- The creation of public and binding accountability mechanisms for public officials.
- An independent financial and operational audit of GAESA to investigate resource diversion, institutional corruption, and abuse of power.
- A requirement for detailed and verifiable publication of the bank accounts, assets, and foreign investments of the Castro family and their close associates.
- The investigation and punishment of public officials involved in economic favoritism and illicit enrichment.
- Mandatory publication of the criteria used to authorize and oversee licenses and contracts.

**Justification:** Structural corruption and institutionalized nepotism are direct obstacles to economic development and the rule of law. Access to resources, licenses, investments, or privileged alliances based on political connections erodes trust in institutions. Transparency is an essential condition for a modern, democratic, and just Cuba.

## **CONCLUSION**

This list of demands is not a hostile declaration but a firm call for dignity, justice, and freedom. Cuba urgently needs a new social pact that respects its citizens as full subjects of rights. From ASIC, we reaffirm our commitment to decent work, democracy, and social progress. We invite all workers, entrepreneurs, academics, and free citizens to support this agenda.

### **Signed:**

National Secretariat of the Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba (ASIC)  
Colón, Matanzas, July 24, 2025

**“For a free, just, and prosperous Cuba”**