

An Open Letter Regarding the Deteriorating Humanitarian Situation in Cuba

We, the undersigned voluntary bar associations of the Florida Bar, are increasingly concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Cuba. As President Biden stated, the Cuban people—at great peril to themselves—are sounding a “clarion call for freedom and relief.” The Cuban Regime has responded to this call by resorting to violence and systematically violating human rights. As a result, and as associations promoting the rule of law, we too respond to the call and ask that those freedom-loving individuals in positions of power do the same.

While the question of what can be done is daunting, after more than a half century of brutal dictatorship, the time to act is now. Below is what we ask of those seeking to support the Cuban people.

First, we must amplify the voices of the Cuban people. It is important that the clarion call be heard worldwide. Indeed, in order to shield the visibility of its brutal retaliatory tactics, the Cuban Regime has thwarted the ability of the Cuban people to share and receive information on the island. It is critical that the international community continues to share and amplify the voices of the Cuban people via social media, mainstream media outlets, and in international forums. We call upon domestic and international media agencies to join this effort immediately.

Second, we petition the international tech community, democratic governments, and human rights organizations to find ways to reconnect the Cuban people to their global support system. The Cuban Regime has cut electricity, phone service, and internet access on the island. It is imperative that the international community assist in providing the means for the Cuban people to access, share, and receive information that is not filtered through the repressive governmental apparatus.

Third, we ask democratic governments and international agencies to take immediate action and send, distribute, and monitor the receipt and distribution of humanitarian aid directly to the Cuban people. To the extent possible, we ask that individuals make charitable contributions to those entities which take up this call. During the current health pandemic, the Cuban Regime has seized aid arriving at its ports. It has also warped the lagging development of its own vaccine into a misplaced show of force and irresponsibly neglected the large-scale acquisition of effective vaccines against the COVID-19 virus for the Cuban people. As a result of the Cuban Regime’s crumbling physical infrastructure, lack of access to medical care, and its inadequate preparation, a mounting healthcare crisis is killing Cuban citizens. It is crucial that pressure be placed upon the Cuban Regime to accept humanitarian aid and provide it directly to the Cuban people under the watchful eye of appropriate Non-Governmental Organizations.

Fourth, we call upon the international community, human rights commissions, democratic governments, and international agencies to continuously monitor and document these human rights abuses with the express intent of holding the Cuban Regime accountable for its actions. The Cuban Regime is unlawfully detaining citizens of all ages (including minors) with no formal charges pending, in direct contravention to all recognized notions of due process in international law. The Cuban Regime has sanctioned violence-led retaliation efforts against its citizens—participants in peaceful demonstrations. It is forcibly removing Cuban citizens of all ages from public streets and

from their homes without informing their families of their status or intended relocation. It is paramount that documentation of the multitude of human rights abuses committed against the Cuban people by the Cuban Regime and its actors is undertaken.

Fifth, we entreat members of the Cuban Regime’s police, militia, military, and regime-sponsored neighborhood watch committees to put down their weapons—their guns, their batons, their wooden bats, their rocks, their radios, their telephones, their fears—and to join their neighbors, their fathers, their mothers, their brothers, and their sisters in the peaceful resolution of acute discontent, mistreatment, abuse, neglect and criminal action by the Cuban Regime against the Cuban people. The Cuban Regime obligates the Cuban people to support its endeavors under threat of force, violence, and compulsion. Its practices thrive in an environment of fear of retribution that has existed for more than 6 decades. It is essential to note that in its desperation to regain control of a discontented populace, the Cuban Regime will continue to pit neighbor against neighbor, father against son, mother against daughter, and brother against sister. It is imperative that people peacefully unite to bring an end to this hateful regime. Enough is enough.

As members of the Florida Bar, we owe much to the freedoms and opportunities that the United States has provided. As practitioners, we recognize the importance of, and value respect for, human rights and the rule of law. We cannot and should not turn a blind eye to what is happening so close to our shores—where these fundamental democratic ideals are in such short supply. We ask that action be taken consistent with what we have outlined above, and welcome further engagement from those who likewise hear this clarion call for freedom and relief.



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