

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. RES. 287

Commemorating the second anniversary of peaceful protests in Cuba on July 11, 2021, condemning the ongoing acts of repression and human rights violations against the Cuban people by the Cuban regime, and calling for the immediate release of all arbitrarily detained Cuban citizens.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 11, 2023

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. CARDIN, and Mr. SCOTT of Florida) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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## RESOLUTION

Commemorating the second anniversary of peaceful protests in Cuba on July 11, 2021, condemning the ongoing acts of repression and human rights violations against the Cuban people by the Cuban regime, and calling for the immediate release of all arbitrarily detained Cuban citizens.

Whereas July 11, 2023, marks 2 years since tens of thousands of Cuban citizens took to the streets to protest peacefully and call for the respect of their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms and the end of communist dictatorship in Cuba;

Whereas the demonstrations on July 11, 2021, were the largest peaceful protests witnessed in Cuba in more than 25 years, with courageous Cuban men, women, and youth taking to the streets in at least 50 different cities and towns across every province to affirm a profound aspiration for democratic change and to denounce repression and corruption by the Cuban regime;

Whereas the demonstrations followed decades of grievances from the Cuban people regarding the dictatorship, arbitrary repression, and severe mismanagement of the country, including shortages of food and basic medicine, and frequent power outages;

Whereas 2 years after the demonstrations, repression by the Cuban regime against Cuban citizens has reached the highest rate in recorded history, with thousands of arbitrary arrests, hundreds of politically motivated convictions, and credible allegations of torture and other abuses related to such protests, including—

(1) charges against approximately 800 Cuban citizens, including 115 protestors between the ages of 16 and 20, with sedition and other illegitimate charges;

(2) the sentencing of more than 550 Cuban citizens, including more than 20 underage protestors, many of whom have been sentenced to prison terms up to 30 years; and

(3) the subjection of the majority of prisoners to inhumane conditions, including intentional deprivation of medical care, sleep, food, and other basic necessities;

Whereas, according to the Cuban human rights organization Justicia 11J, as of the end of 2022, more than 600 protestors from the demonstrations remain arbitrarily detained for exercising their fundamental freedoms, includ-

ing the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly;

Whereas international human rights organizations have condemned the Cuban regime for violating human rights and fundamental freedoms and have called for the immediate release of peaceful demonstrators, including organizations and individuals such as—

(1) Human Rights Watch, which assessed that the Cuban regime committed systematic human rights violations in response to massive antigovernment protests in July 2021 with the intent of punishing protesters and deterring future demonstrations;

(2) Amnesty International, which has called on the Cuban regime to guarantee the human rights of Cuban prisoners of conscience and hundreds of other individuals arbitrarily detained for exercising their human rights;

(3) former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, who has called on the Cuban regime to release protesters and several journalists arrested at various demonstrations and denounced the excessive use of force by the regime; and

(4) the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which has condemned state repression and the use of force during peaceful social protests in Cuba and urged the regime to engage in dialogue to address citizen demands;

Whereas Cuba has some of the most restrictive laws on freedom of assembly and freedom of the press in the world, which have only further intensified since the demonstrations on July 11, 2021, with the passage of amendments to Penal Code of the Republic of Cuba on December 1,

2022, which limit freedom of expression online by criminalizing the sharing of undefined “fake information”;

Whereas the peaceful protests in 2021 continue to inspire numerous protestors across Cuba seeking to advance the fundamental rights of the Cuban people, such as the May 8, 2023, protests in the town of Caimanera;

Whereas, since July 11, 2021, the Cuban regime continues the systemic repression of protestors, particularly the selective and deliberate criminalization of individuals who exercise their rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association by speaking up against government policies and the arbitrary suspension of internet communications, according to a May 12, 2023, statement by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights;

Whereas the report entitled “2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cuba”, published by the Department of State, details “significant human rights issues” in Cuba, including credible reports of extrajudicial killings, restrictions on freedom of movement, restrictions on freedom of religious expression, unreasonable restrictions on political participation, and state-sponsored forced labor practices;

Whereas, according to the nongovernmental organization Prisoners Defenders, the Cuban regime continues to detain an estimated 1,048 political prisoners;

Whereas, on June 12, 2023, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights concluded that there was “serious and sufficient” evidence to hold the Cuban regime responsible for the 2012 murders of Nobel Peace Prize nominee Oswaldo Paya and activist Harold Cepero, and called on the Cuban regime—

- (1) to make full reparation for the murders;
- (2) to initiate a prompt investigation to identify the responsible actors;
- (3) to pursue accountability measures against such actors; and
- (4) to undertake structural reforms to protect human rights defenders in the Cuba; and

Whereas, despite gross and systemic efforts to violate the human rights of the Cuban people, Cuba remains a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, a position the Cuban regime uses to prevent scrutiny on the human rights records of other authoritarian regimes: Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2               (1) commemorates the second anniversary of  
3       the largest peaceful protests against the communist  
4       dictatorship in Cuba;

5               (2) expresses solidarity with the brave people of  
6       Cuba who participated in the peaceful demonstra-  
7       tions on July 11, 2021, and were subsequently arbi-  
8       trarily detained and sentenced;

9               (3) commits to supporting the people of Cuba  
10       in their aspirations to transition to democracy under  
11       a government that respects human rights and demo-  
12       cratic freedoms;

13              (4) calls on the Secretary of State—

14                      (A) to advocate for the immediate release  
15       and humane treatment of all political prisoners

1 and democratic protestors arbitrarily detained  
2 in Cuba in the aftermath of the peaceful dem-  
3 onstrations on July 11, 2021;

4 (B) to continue supporting independent  
5 Cuban civil society groups and democratic activ-  
6 ists;

7 (C) to call for—

8 (i) the recognition of the June 12,  
9 2023, decision of the Inter-American Court  
10 of Human Rights, holding the regime re-  
11 sponsible for the murders of democratic ac-  
12 tivists Oswaldo Paya and Harold Cepero;  
13 and

14 (ii) accountability for the murders;  
15 and

16 (D) to work with member states of the  
17 United Nations to deny Cuba a second consecu-  
18 tive term on the United Nations Human Rights  
19 Council; and

20 (5) urges democratic governments and legisla-  
21 tures in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the Car-  
22ibbean—

23 (A) to speak out against the ongoing re-  
24 pression facing the Cuban people and call on  
25 the Cuban regime to immediately release all po-

1           litical prisoners and democratic protestors arbi-  
2           trarily detained in Cuba in the aftermath of the  
3           peaceful demonstrations of July 11, 2021;

4           (B) to publicly recognize the June 12,  
5           2023, decision of the Inter-American Court of  
6           Human Rights, finding the Cuban regime di-  
7           rectly responsible for the murders of democratic  
8           activists Oswaldo Paya and Harold Cepero, and  
9           call on the Cuban regime to implement the rec-  
10          ommendations in the decision; and

11          (C) to hold the Cuban regime accountable  
12          for violent repression and other human rights  
13          violations in the aftermath of the July 2021  
14          protests, including by committing to deny Cuba  
15          a second consecutive term on the United Na-  
16          tions Human Rights Council.

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