



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report on “**Repressive patterns and tactics by the Cuban State against freedom of association**” reveals an alarming situation regarding the right to freedom of association, marked by the implementation of repressive laws that severely restrict civic freedoms, such as Decree-Law No. 370 and Decree-Law No. 35, which criminalize dissent and limit expression in the digital space. Despite the international commitments assumed by the Cuban State, legislative and constitutional reforms have deepened the restrictions, consolidating the Communist Party as the only permitted political entity and limiting the ability of civil society to organize independently. The document highlights the importance of an international response to pressure towards substantial changes that guarantee respect for human rights in Cuba, highlighting the need for a hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to make these violations visible and seek concrete solutions.

The state repression in Cuba against members of civil society organizations and activists, particularly during the years 2022 and 2023, illustrates a continuation and in some cases an intensification of strategies aimed at silencing, intimidating and penalizing any form of dissent or criticism of the regime. This pattern of harassment is manifested through a wide range of repressive tactics, which include arbitrary detentions, surveillance, threats, harassment, denial of basic rights and medical care in prison, use of violence, manipulation of the judicial system, and restrictions to communication. These actions not only infringe the fundamental human rights of the affected individuals but also impose a chilling effect on civil society, severely restricting the space for critical discourse and collective action in Cuba.

The severity of the repression is exacerbated by legal and practical barriers that limit the right of association, evidenced by the implementation of regulations in the field of telecommunications that restrict freedom of association, as well as the use of forced expatriation as a method to dismantle opposition groups. Despite the international commitments assumed by the Cuban State to recognize the work of civil society and guarantee freedoms of expression, assembly and association, its actions that include legislative and constitutional reforms have deepened the restrictions, consolidating the Communist Party as the only political entity allowed and severely limiting freedom of expression, especially on political issues.

The record of 5,685 repressive events between January 1, 2022, and December 31, 2023, with a significant impact on members of independent civil society organizations, reflects the magnitude of the state repressive response and the harassment tactics used during this period. This figure demonstrates the State’s considerable attention to the suppression of civil society and underlines the urgency of addressing the human rights situation on the island.

The impact of repression is not only limited to the political and social sphere, but also disproportionately affects women activists, who face physical and psychological violence, arbitrary detentions, communications blackouts, and discrimination. The absence of a Comprehensive Law against Gender Violence and shelters for victims, together with the lack of awareness campaigns and government inaction



regarding official statistics on femicides, highlights the gap in state protection and the critical need for the work of organizations and activists in the fight against gender violence.

Cuban authorities employ multifaceted strategies to neutralize leadership within civil society and the political opposition, resorting to tactics that include forced exile, imprisonment, stalking, harassment, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, and selective internet shutdowns. These actions, directed against key figures of organizations such as Cubalex, the San Isidro Movement (MSI), and the Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU), demonstrate a systematic pattern of state repression. The expulsion of leaders and their teams into exile, the construction of criminal cases to criminalize their activities, and the imposition of criminal sanctions accompanied by torture are methods used to dismantle and demoralize dissent. This repressive approach not only seeks to silence critical voices through intimidation and punishment but also to undermine any potential for alternative leadership that could challenge the state. Despite threats and pressure, both in Cuba and in exile, the resistance of these leaders and organizations underscores their commitment to the fight for human rights and freedom of expression in a context of growing social conflict and restrictions on civil liberties.

During 2023, the Ladies in White (Damas de Blanco), an opposition group in Cuba, faced systematic repression by the Cuban state, including tactics such as short-term arbitrary detentions, criminalization, and constant surveillance. These repressive measures have led to a drastic decrease in the number of its members, going from 243 in 2013 to approximately 50 active today. The harassment of the Ladies in White has been recognized by international bodies and documented by UN human rights mechanisms, which have sent multiple communications to the Cuban State about the violence and repression against the group and their families. The persecution includes impediments to attending mass and other activities, frequent arrests and the use of violence.

The Christian Liberation Movement (MCL) has also faced persecution from the Cuban government, which includes intimidation and harassment of its members. The organization, founded in 1988 and internationally recognized, has been the target of state tactics to discourage and penalize its work for democracy and human rights in Cuba. Notable incidents include the suspicious death of its founder, Oswaldo Payá, in 2012, and the arbitrary arrest and sentencing of MCL's second National Coordinator, Eduardo Cardet, in 2016. Despite Dr. Cardet's release, he remains vulnerable and subject to acts of harassment and threats, reflecting the widespread repression against defenders of democracy on the island.

The Citizens Committee for Racial Integration (CIR) has also been the target of repression for its work against racial discrimination in Cuba. CERD has expressed concern about harassment and intimidation towards human rights defenders and civil society leaders addressing racism and the rights of people of African descent. The coordinator of the CIR, Juan Antonio Madrazo Luna, has been subject to arbitrary arrests, mobility restrictions and Internet cuts, which have limited his ability to interact with international human rights protection systems. These repressive tactics have intensified at times of greater political tension, such as during protests





and elections, evidencing the Cuban State's determination to stifle any opposition and silence the defense of human rights in the country.

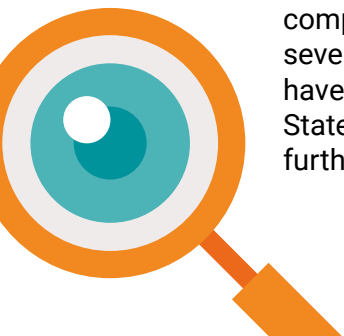
Between 2022 and 2024, repression in Cuba has escalated to new levels, with 352 documented events involving direct victimization of relatives of activists and people detained for political reasons, particularly those related to the July 11 protests. This state strategy not only focuses its repressive action against activists but, in a calculated manner, extends its reach towards their families, maximizing suffering and seeking to dissuade any form of opposition or activism. Such an approach has resulted in a devastating impact, for the individuals directly involved and for their loved ones and their communities, thus amplifying the cost of dissent.

Repression manifests itself in various forms that seek to punish activists and send a clear warning message to society about the consequences of opposing the regime. This pattern of repression is based on the lack of communication and isolation of people deprived of liberty, the denial of legal rights, constant harassment and threats, precarious living conditions, forced exile, and a profound psychological and emotional impact on the victims and your families. Cases such as that of Yoel Montano Alpízar, Jorge Cervante García, Brenda Díaz García, and the Miranda Leyva family, among others, illustrate the depth and complexity of this repressive strategy, which not only seeks to punish individuals directly involved in opposition activities, but also also exercise broader psychological and social control.

The attacks are characterized by their diversity and cruelty, impacting intersectionally through racism, ageism, gender violence, vicarious violence, and homophobia, showing clear patterns of increase in violence as families become more visible in their opposition. This shows a deliberate effort by the Cuban State to undermine the social fabric and community solidarity, crucial for the sustenance of opposition movements. Repression is also aimed at demoralizing and sending a deterrent message to society, showing the serious consequences of any form of resistance.

The data presented, including the repressive incidents against members of Cuba in Mourning (Cuba de Luto), highlight the extent and variety of tactics used by the State to intimidate, control, and punish. The consequences of these practices are devastating, both individually and collectively, perpetuating a cycle of fear and repression that transcends generations. This repressive approach of the Cuban State reflects a systematic attempt to stifle any form of dissent, using violence and fear as tools of social and political control. Documenting these patterns is crucial to understanding the depth of repression in Cuba and the urgent need for international solidarity and actions aimed at protecting human rights and supporting the victims of these oppressive practices.

Our report reveals an alarming reality of systematic human rights violations within the country's prison system. Although the number of women affected is smaller compared to men, the experiences reported by female detainees are particularly severe, especially for those who are mothers, part of the LGBTIQ+ community, or have special medical needs. The lack of transparency on the part of the Cuban State, which has not offered updates since 2013 on the female prison population, further aggravates this situation.





Women in Cuban prisons face extremely precarious living conditions, with inadequate food that puts their health at risk, lack of hygiene, and an insufficient supply of drinking water and for cleaning. These conditions, which violate minimum standards for the treatment of prisoners, are aggravated by the systematic denial of adequate medical care, especially critical in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Harassment and repression, including the use of punishment cells, communication bans, and beatings, highlight a pattern of abuse of power and institutionalized violence aimed not only at punishing but also silencing and controlling female detainees.

The profound negative impact of these conditions on the mental health of prisoners, leading to episodes of acute stress, nervous breakdowns, and in extreme cases, suicidal ideation, underscores the urgent need for psychological care and emotional support. Furthermore, the imprisonment of women for political reasons and inhumane detention conditions affects not only imprisoned people but also their families and communities, highlighting the broad social consequences of these repressive policies.

The lack of updated information and the opacity surrounding detention conditions reflect an absence of transparency and responsibility on the part of the Cuban State, hindering monitoring and advocacy efforts by human rights organizations and the international community. This scenario underlines the urgency of concrete actions to address these systematic abuses. It is imperative that the Cuban State improve prison conditions, ensure access to adequate medical care, and cease harassment and repression against female prisoners. Likewise, the international community must intensify pressure and scrutiny on Cuba to guarantee the protection of the human rights of all detainees, reaffirming the global commitment to justice and human dignity.

The institutional and vicarious gender violence exercised by the Cuban State, especially against mothers and caregivers involved in activism, has manifested itself in an alarming way through coercion, intimidation, banishments and threats to take away custody of their children. This type of violence, which can be considered a form of torture or cruel treatment, constitutes a serious violation of human rights. Human rights defenders, activists and independent journalists turn out to be the most affected by these repressive practices, which seek to inhibit their activism and silence their voices.

The Cuban Family Code, by allowing the deprivation and suspension of parental responsibility for vague and broad reasons, opens the door to state discretion and arbitrariness. Vicarious violence, carried out by both authorities and individuals, manifests itself in repressive actions such as illegal official summonses, arbitrary detentions and interrogations with techniques of torture and mistreatment, directed at the families of activists as a means of pressure and punishment.

Cases such as that of the girl Leadi Katalaya Naranjo and the family of the opposition member Marisol Peña Cobas illustrate how this violence extends to the most vulnerable, with summonses for interrogations and threats of family separation. These practices not only seek to punish activists but also instill fear and hopelessness in those who might consider joining the fight for human rights.





The absence of specific laws against gender-based and vicarious violence, coupled with failure to carry out due diligence in investigating threats and acts of violence, perpetuates a cycle of impunity. The increase in femicides and the lack of adequate protection for victims highlight the vulnerability of women in Cuba, both inside and outside the political sphere.

As for the Ladies in White, the hostility and physical and verbal attacks by the authorities and groups related to the regime underline the environment of repression and discrimination they face. These women are subjected to mistreatment differentiated by their gender, identity, sexual orientation and race, in an attempt to discourage their participation in social protest activities and silence their demands for justice and human rights.

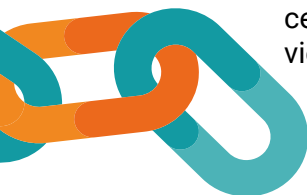
The situation in Cuba requires urgent attention from the international community and human rights organizations. It is crucial to increase pressure on the Cuban government to end vicarious violence and repression against women activists, guarantee the protection of the human rights of all people, and commit to a process of change towards justice and respect for dignity. human.

In conclusion, the state repression in Cuba against members of civil society organizations and women activists during 2022 and 2023 demonstrates a systematic and continued strategy by the government to repress any form of dissent, undermining the social and political fabric of society. independent civil society and limiting the ability of the population to exercise their fundamental rights. The persistence and evolution of these patterns of repression underscore the need for a sustained and coordinated international response to address the human rights situation in Cuba, support activists and Cuban civil society, and pressure the Cuban government to comply with its demands. international obligations regarding human rights.

**Ladies and gentlemen of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights**, today we address you to present an urgent and necessary request in light of the serious situation that Cuba is going through in relation to the right of association. This fundamental right is severely compromised, with systematic and widespread violations that disproportionately affect women, groups and independent civil society organizations. These restrictions not only hinder the full exercise of their fundamental rights but also restrict their ability to organize and participate freely in spaces and discussions of general interest.

The intimidation, threats and acts of violence directed against family members and members of organizations such as Cubalex, Movimiento San Isidro, Damas de Blanco, among others, constitute a flagrant violation of human rights principles and the American Convention on Human Rights. This climate of fear and persecution undermines diversity of thought and citizen participation, generating a deterrent effect in society.

Particularly concerning is the disproportionate impact of these repressive practices on women, especially political activists and dissidents. The use of vicarious violence and inhumane detention conditions are just examples of how restrictions



on freedom of expression and association constitute specific forms of gender violence, increasing vulnerability and risk for women in our country.

Faced with this alarming situation, we ask this honorable Commission:

Issue a public statement demanding that the Cuban State immediately release the people persecuted, imprisoned, and forced into exile for exercising their right of association.

Recognize the limitations on the right of association in Cuba and its effects against activists and their families, through follow-up resolutions.

Demand that the Cuban State comply with its international obligations regarding human rights, particularly with respect to life, liberty, personal integrity, and protection against arbitrary detention.

Include our documentation in chapter IV.B of your 2023 annual report, detailing the specific cases presented.

Request an Extraordinary Session of the OAS Permanent Council to present this situation and the violations of fundamental human rights in Cuba.

Urge other human rights protection organizations to speak out on the serious situation of freedom of association in Cuba.

With these actions, we seek not only to make visible and denounce the human rights situation in Cuba but also to obtain the support and intervention necessary to guarantee the protection and respect of these fundamental rights. We count on your commitment and support in this fight for justice and human dignity.

**Thank you very much for your attention.**

