

The background image shows a street scene. On the left, a person wearing a dark face mask and a grey t-shirt is partially visible. On the right, a police officer in a blue uniform and cap is also partially visible. In the background, there are trees, a building, and a traffic sign. A dark semi-transparent rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the title and subtitle.

REPORT 2021

**"NEW PATTERNS OF
PERSECUTION OF HUMAN
RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN CUBA"**

**Center for Incident Reports
Foundation for Pan-American Democracy**



CONTEXT

From a human rights perspective, the year 2020 was significant for Cuba due to the deepening violations of human rights many times excused under the context of protection measures for the COVID-19 pandemic. In Cuba, persecution, threats, harassment and arbitrary detentions continue to be part of the government policies that are applied in order to neutralize the work of independent journalists, activists, human rights advocates and rebellious artists.

SYSTEMIC PATTERNS THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC

In the last year, the systemic patterns of human rights violations applied by the Cuban government as a government policy have experienced a boom and the practices with which they are carried out have evolved.

1. Use of health care centers and hospitals as places of reclusion and isolation, and arrests made for political reasons, under the guise of violations to pandemic protection measures.
2. Abuse of regulations associated with the prevention of COVID-19 to impose fines on journalists, communicators and citizens for documenting and reporting state abuses, as well as cutting off telecommunications services.
3. Police barricades around people's homes and acts of repudiation towards those of independent activists, political opponents, communicators and human rights defenders.
4. Arbitrary confiscation and obstruction of humanitarian aid and work carried out by civil society organizations, churches and independent citizens.



2020 IN NUMBERS

365

(...) arbitrary detentions have occurred in Cuba during the year 2020.

102

Victims denounced the State Security forces for prohibiting them from moving about the country freely. .

541

Victims suffered harassment via surveillance by State Security agents at their place of residence, along with other intimidation mechanisms.

296

People reported direct attacks or harassment against their person.

186

Acts of repudiation.

METHODOLOGY OF THE REPORT

Our Center for Incident Reports alone has recorded 714 incidents in 2020.

This figure is less than the actual total, and should be supplemented with the listings made by other organizations.

A COMPLIANT STATE

CRIMINALIZATION OF THE
WORK OF HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS AND CIVIL
SOCIETY IN GENERAL



CRIMINALIZATION

**43
THOUSAND**

OF HUMANITARIAN
AID BLOCKED

**15
THOUSAND**

PEOPLE IN EXTREME
POVERTY AFFECTED

MULTIPLE

GROUPS AND
MOVEMENTS HAVE
SUFFERED
PERSECUTION

The FDP Center for Incident Reports has repeatedly documented and reported its concerns regarding the various risky situations in which defenders work. Their circumstances are increasingly difficult, since they are subjected to a multitude of acts of repudiation, despite the fact that they are carrying out legitimate work. In the same way, the Center has denounced the confiscation and obstruction of 43,000 pounds of Humanitarian Aid made up of food and medicine as part of the regime's systemic pattern of repression. This humanitarian effort was organized by Civil Society inside and outside Cuban territory through the "Solidarity Among Brothers" campaign. The regime's blockade of the aforementioned aid affected more than 15,000 people who would have benefited from it.

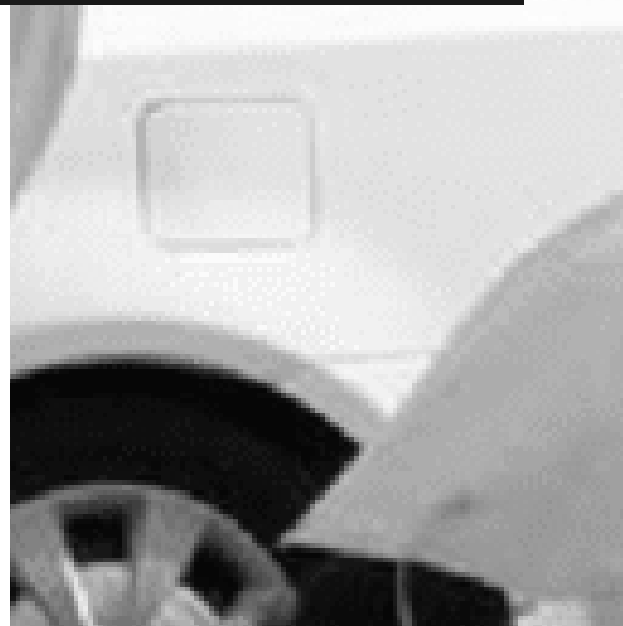
PERSECUTION

Various organizations, groups and movements have been victims of persecution since the beginning of the pandemic in Cuba. Threats against civil society and human rights defenders do not appear on television media or social networks. These threats are executed through the limitations the regime places on exercising the defense of human rights, arbitrary detentions or allowing other groups to violate private property and threaten the work of human rights defenders and independent civil society.



**THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS AN ESSENTIAL WORK THAT
MUST BE GUARANTEED, PARTICULARLY IN THIS PERIOD OF A
GLOBAL PANDEMIC**

Thus, through the FDP Center for Incident Reports, at least 28 incidents were verified related to the violation of due process procedures established in the fraudulently imposed Constitution in February 2019. The Center has recorded attacks on homes that threaten and put entire households at risk. An example of such an attack is demonstrated by the case of the Miranda Leyva family, wherein these attacks resulted in the partial destruction of their home. In this case, responding to our request, the IACHR issued a precautionary measure of protection for the victims, however it was completely ignored by the Cuban regime.





SYSTEMIC PATTERNS

DEVELOPMENT OF SYSTEMIC AND RECURRING PATTERNS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The policy of persecution and neutralization by the government of Cuba, against independent civil society, is contrary to the international principles and obligations of the State. These policies mainly violate the right to defend rights, as well as the right to assembly and association, in addition to violating other rights in the context of government actions against those who perform fundamental tasks to make the multidimensional crisis that exists in Cuba visible to the eyes of the world:

- 1. USE OF HEALTH CARE CENTERS AND HOSPITALS AS PLACES OF RECLUSION AND ISOLATION; AND POLITICAL DETENTIONS UNDER THE GUISE OF VIOLATING THE MEASURES IMPOSED TO MITIGATE THE PANDEMIC.**
- 2. ABUSE OF REGULATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PREVENTION OF COVID-19 TO IMPOSE FINES ON JOURNALISTS, COMMUNICATORS AND CITIZENS FOR DOCUMENTING AND REPORTING ABUSES BY THE STATE & CUT-OFFS TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES.**
- 3. POLICE SURROUND & BARRICADE HOMES AND CARRY OUT ACTS OF REPUDIATION AGAINST INDEPENDENT ACTIVISTS, POLITICAL OPPONENTS, ARTISTS, COMMUNICATORS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS.**
- 4. ARBITRARY CONFISCATION AND OBSTRUCTION OF HUMANITARIAN AID ORGANIZED BY INDEPENDENT CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS.**

TESTIMONIES

"(...) what Adrián Rubio and I have gone through since January 26, 2021 has been really worrying, Adrián came to visit me and I had a sick child. On 01/27/21 when we got up we already had surveillance outside the house (security agents), we thought it was for the commemoration of José Martí, but the surveillance has been uninterrupted until today on 01/31/21. Because the security agents do not allow us to leave the house, I have not been able to take my child to the hospital. For the first few days, the neighbors came to give us help for the children (Food and medicine), and for approaching the house, the State Security agents grabbed some neighbors and they were taken to the CAPRI and were fined 2,000 pesos. Security agents stood at the door of my house to take Adrián which I opposed. That night they did not let us sleep because they stood by the window to ask us to go out saying: "Anyell come out, what we want is for you to come out" and since my house is barred, they were banging on the gate and the dog would not let us sleep. This continued throughout the night and we were awake because the boy had a fever. We were desperate. It has not been easy and the neighbors pass by and do not look at us because they are afraid to look at us, greet us or ask how the child is doing. My mother cannot go out to look for things either for fear that they will take her to me, the interest is to catch me or Adrián, we are locked in here without being able to do anything. Brother Esteban Rodríguez came to visit us and brought us some food to see how long we can survive."



ANYELL VALDÉS CRUZ

San Isidro Movement

Anyell Valdés, has recounted the multiple attacks, abuse and harassment she has suffered in recent times as a victim.

Note: Anyell Valdés and her family have also been the victims of acts of repudiation during the year 2020 as part of the harassment police inflict on to her person.

TESTIMONIES

"I am Iliana Hernández, a journalist for CiberCuba News and one of the those at the headquarters of the San Isidro movement. In a year of a pandemic, the regime has created a decree law that condemns Cubans with excessive fines ranging from 2,000 Cuban pesos and up to one year in prison for the alleged crime of spreading epidemics. The regime has also limited movement both throughout provinces and with a curfew. In Cuba there are places where you cannot enter or leave (localities, municipalities and provinces) there are also a curfew from 9:00 pm to 5:00 am in Havana and in other provinces it is from 7:00 pm to 5:00 am. They are part of the measures taken by the regime, as well as taking advantage of the pandemic to remove those of us who were gathered at the headquarters of the San Isidro movement in November 2020. At that time, the pandemic was used as a justification to bring officers dressed as doctors and to get us out of the headquarters by force. Journalists have been victims of internet blackouts, our internet service has been limited on several occasions, there are weeks when our internet is cut off every day anywhere between 8 or even 24 hours, we have been victims of arbitrary detentions including myself (Iliana Hernández). I was arrested when I was leaving my home on March 8, I was also one of those who had a home surrounded by police on February 24 this year. Also, there is harassment directed towards our family members for thinking differently, on December 9 I also suffered an act of repudiation. That day there was no condemnation of the people who did this to me, many had their masks poorly placed and no one was fined because this was an activity directed by a government official who is a regime sympathizer."



ILIANA HERNÁNDEZ

Independent Journalist for
CiberCuba

Note: As of the date of publication of this report (03.12.2021) Iliana Hernández was arbitrarily detained by State security agents. From the FDP Center for Incident Reports, we assume that this has some connection with the information provided for the present investigation.

TESTIMONIES

"During the past months the regime has continued harassment and persecution, especially against UNPACU and promoters of the Cuba Decide citizen campaign. From mid-July 2020 to mid-January 2021, the regime surrounded our national headquarters in the Altamira district of the City and Province of Santiago de Cuba. During that time, they carried out more than 120 violent arbitrary arrests and fined activists with justification that they had violated the security perimeter around our home, which is also the national headquarters of UNPACU. During that time, they illegally and arbitrarily confiscated food, medicine and money destined for people living in extreme poverty on several occasions. After 6 months they ceased to surround us after a hunger strike that my wife and I staged in protest over the continuous attacks and arbitrary detentions, and also over the illegal confiscation of food and medicine. We have been subject to violent arbitrary arrests and physical attacks carried out by individuals in the service of the State Security. The regime has been using the pandemic as a justification to arbitrarily detain our activists, harass them, prohibit them from leaving the home and imprison them. According to the police they have violated the rules to prevent them from being infected by COVID-19. As acts of repudiation, they have stoned our home and thrown toxic substances, pig excrement and others with unpleasant odors."



JOSÉ DANIEL FERRER

General coordinator of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU) and promoter of the Cuba Decide campaign

Note: At the UNPACU National headquarters, there is a food bank, so this action of the police surrounding the premises prevents access to all beneficiaries of said food bank.

There is evidence of the intentional act on the part of the officials to harm the citizenship by linking in one way or another with dissident groups, organizations and / or other movements. In the same way, access was prevented to those who constantly make donations for said food bank to operate.

TESTIMONIES

"(...) It is so that they know the abuses that I suffered for being an activist and opponent of the authoritarian regime. On April 12 I was arrested on a public street for having my mask on my jaw because I had been smoking a cigarette. They detained me and took me to the police station, where I took off my clothes as a form of protest, because I did not agree with the way they detained me, so I began to protest. For demonstrating against the system, they accused me of disobedience, contempt, resistance and spread of epidemics. I was sentenced for a year and a half when I got to the prison. I entered the prison on June 4, 2020, and when I arrived at the prison, I went on a hunger strike. I suffered repression by the police, beatings that led to me trying to take my life twice. The first time I tried to hang myself, I was beaten by the second-in-command of the unit and a legal registration guard. And the second attempt was that I stuck myself with a needle also due to the repression since I suffered beatings in the cell, and I suffered repression by the prisoners, by the guards and the prisoners yelled at me, 'Oppositionist! Fuck you, because of you the prison is so bad!' and things like that. I did not have much medical assistance; on hunger strike they did not give me adequate treatment, they simply took me to psychiatry, 13 days in a psychiatric ward completely surrounded by crazy people where they had me sedated with diazepam and two (unintelligible word) every time I screamed, every time I got upset, my dad, my mom, and my husband called to find out about me. I saw the intrigue they had and wanted to see them but they never let me. They tied me up in the psychiatry ward, they tied me to the bed as if I were a psychiatric patient. I was on a hunger strike for thirteen (13) days and what I want to denounce is that I suffered repression, and now recently, last Wednesday, March 10 (2020), they released me I did not know why they released me, because I was in a closed regimen under conditional freedom that I have to serve nine (09) months and six days I have 9 months remaining, which I must comply with since I am still imprisoned and I have to appear on March 29, 2020 before the prosecution judge carrying an offer of employment. We have been subjected to violent arbitrary arrests and physical attacks carried out by individuals in the service of the political police. The regime has been using the pandemic as a justification to arbitrarily detain our activists, harass them, prohibit them from leaving the home and imprison them. According to the police they have violated the rules to prevent them from being infected by COVID-19. As acts of repudiation, they have stoned our home and thrown toxic substances, pig excrement and others with unpleasant odors."



KEILYLLI DE LA MORA

UNPACU activist, promoter of Cuba Decide and member of the Citizen Consensus Movement of the City of Cienfuegos

Note: Beneficiary of the Precautionary Measure of protection through resolution 37/2020 granted by the IACHR on July 17, 2020

TESTIMONIES

"Good morning my name is Maykel Castillo Pérez, Cuban rapper and one of the 15 people who were gathered in San Isidro to ask for the release of our friend Denny Solis, from there we were violently removed on the night of 11/26/2020 under the guise of COVID violations. Some of us on a hunger strike and were very weak. Days prior to the gathering we went to police stations and read poetry, outside of them we were always detained, some of them with the justification of the spread of an epidemic. They use this justification to criminally prosecute people who think differently. The repression against me and every Cuban citizen who says anything about the regime in Cuba is constant -- house arrest for a whole month, cameras in the immediate vicinity, constant arbitrary detentions, sometimes with violence. While I was handcuffed once, Luis Manuel Otero and I received a beating in front of the Cuba Chacon-Habana Vieja police station by approximately 10 policemen, we were handcuffed. That same night they also threw the curator and activist of the San Isidro movement, Anamelys Ramos to the floor with a blow, none of these arrests or citations were mediated by legal orders, and the police and State security agents repeatedly fail to comply with sanitary measures, they place themselves above the law and morals, these violations become more serious when they organize acts of repudiation where they mobilize people from the neighborhoods with deception and coercion and gather them outside our houses to shout things, to offend us, sometimes to throw objects like acid and things like that. The violence of these acts pits Cubans against each other, and in recent weeks they have even violated the privacy of homes, sometimes with children inside (...) as a sign of protest, I sewed my mouth shut and went in that state to the police station. I dedicated this action against police violence and for the liberation of another political prisoner, Silvio Portal Contrera."



MAYKEL CASTILLO

Cuban Rapper

EXERCISING TOTAL CONTROL AS A STATE POLICY

The multidimensional crisis and the constant persecution against Cuban dissident thought is exacerbated in times of pandemic, so its effects have a differentiated impact on the Cuban population, who have suffered isolation and being forgotten by the international community for years. The country is fighting the pandemic amid a serious restrictive context.

The Cuban regime takes advantage of the state of emergency and uses it as an excuse for the systemic violation of human rights in Cubans.

Research shows the existence of a regime marked by political repression through ancestry, systemic patterns and development of already existing patterns. Throughout the pandemic, the patterns of persecution by the government and the criminalization of those who have been fundamental actors in combatting the health emergency perpetuate the continuous and systemic violation of human rights on the island.

The systemic patterns of persecution applied by the regime are not new, however they have taken on a new form and now manifest themselves as policies that function to exercise total control.

From the FDP Center for Incident Reports, we express our concern before the various international organizations for the protection of Human Rights, due to the escalating situation in the midst of the pandemic of within the island.



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