

## RESOLUTION ON CUBA

The government of Cuba maintains a high degree of police repression against peaceful opponents who demand respect for human rights and the existence of civil society. This representation tends to take the form of brutal raids and arbitrary arrests of hundreds of non-violent activists, who are often kept incommunicado for periods of up to several days at secret prison facilities of the State Security Department, where they can be tortured and threatened, with the use of different methods damaging to their physical and moral integrity. An example of this is that of the 'Damas de Blanco' (Women in White), Cuban women who were awarded the Sakharov Prize to Freedom of Conscience in 2005 for their struggle for human rights in Cuba.

Independent journalists who demand the right to full freedom of expression face constant harassment and persecution, while the lack of freedom of expression and censorship affect not only independent and opposition journalists, but also journalists who are registered as official and members of the official Cuban Journalists' Union (UPC). With regard to the above, at a UPC Conference held in Santa Clara, Villa Clara Province, in June 2016., a letter was distributed denouncing censorship, low salaries and political persecution within the State journalistic media. The document also declares that 'censorship exists and hinders the exercise of revolutionary journalism'.<sup>1</sup> This refers to the protest against the leaders of the Cuban Communist Party who demanded that members of the union cease their contributions to the digital magazine *On Cuba*, as the ideas expressed in those works are considered 'over-critical' and 'do not benefit the country's interests'.

The Cuban Government has maintained the currency of Law 88 on Protection of Cuban National Independence and Economy of 1999, which establishes custodial sentences of up to 20 years and has been used against dissidents who have publicly demanded the right to freedom of expression.

**In view of the above, the Assembly of Delegates of PEN International, meeting at its 82nd World Congress in Ourense, Galicia (Spain), 26th September to 2nd October 2016, urges the Cuban government to:**

- Cease harassing and arresting independent journalists, writers and bloggers for peacefully demanding the right to freedom of expression and the establishment of 'civil society';
- Guarantee freedom of expression to all journalists and bloggers, including those working for state media and officially-registered unions and allow them to raise concerns about poor working conditions and low pay in the media in which they practise their profession;
- Revoke Law 88 of 1999 so that independent journalists and writers may make use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and any potential future forms of media;
- Comply with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which establishes that: 'All individuals are entitled to freedom of opinion and expression ... and to receive information and opinions, and the right to disseminate them ... by any means' and ratify, without further delay or

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.diariodecuba.com/cuba/1467390785\\_23531.html](http://www.diariodecuba.com/cuba/1467390785_23531.html)

reservation, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, which Cuba signed in 2008.

