

March 31, 2023

To: The United Nations National Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights

Re. Nov. 2023, 44th Session of the Human Rights Council (Universal Periodic Review)
Working Group

Human Rights in Cuba

The Victoria Friends of Cuba committee established in 1993, representing concerned citizens from Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, who advocate for human rights and promote ties with Cuba.

Cuba's progress on the issue of universal human rights has been the primary impetus of Victoria Friends of Cuba's efforts to forge closer ties and show our friendship with the country and its system. Cuba emerges to be leading the charge in such areas as education, health care, food security, women's rights, child development and the welfare of the elderly; particularly with regard to human rights.

The Cuban electoral system is an example of how human rights might be improved in other areas of the world. Without facing any intimidation or violence, on March 25, 2023, over 75% of Cuba's population exercised their right to choose their representatives. Young people under 35 will represent two out of every elected representative and women represent 55% of the electorate. Unlike many supposedly democratic nations where the deputies are bought and sold, Cuban candidates are given equal access to campaign resources.

On September 25, 2022, Cuba held its referendum on the new Family Code. The Code includes a variety of protective rights, which are informed by high moral values. It favors inclusion and protects institutions of a family nature. 67% of the population voted in favor of the Family Code making it one of the worlds most progressive.

The U.S. genocidal blockade against Cuba, which the U.N. General Assembly has voted against 30 times, is without a doubt the worst violation of human rights in Cuba - this, in addition to the U.S. torture facility situated on the illegally- occupied territory in Guantanamo, Cuba and established at the time of the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Without the criminal U.S. blockade, Cubans would not only have access to more food, medicine, health care, educational materials, housing and other basics of life, they would also have an increased overall level of human rights.

The Cuban economy came to a complete halt when the COVID virus restricted tourism - one of the island nation's main sources of income. Despite this, and having been materially disadvantaged while enduring a protracted blockade, Cuba was nevertheless able to autonomously carry out the research, development and production of five COVID

vaccines. Notwithstanding the U.S. blockade's restrictions and attempts to prevent Cuba from obtaining enough syringes, all Cuban citizens from the ages of two and up were vaccinated.

In addition to invading Cuba and imposing an economic blockade, the U.S. has spent hundreds of millions of dollars spreading misinformation about the island nation while also attempting to undermine the socialist system for which the Cubans have fought. Allegations of Cuban human rights abuses made by the U.S. based on untruths and lack of evidence have long been made and appear to be motivated by prejudice and ignorance.

One thing is certain; if the U.S. blockade against Cuba were lifted, Cubans would undoubtedly enjoy far more human rights.

It should not be acceptable that human rights be purchased or acquired based on one's wealth as they are in the majority of ostensibly democratic nations. Human rights must be equal for all.

The achievements and ongoing efforts of the Cuban government in the area of human rights should serve as an inspiration to most other nations.

Discussions on human rights must take into account the benefits and services that a country offers its citizens since those benefits and services are essential to the existence of human rights.

The reality that millions of children worldwide live in the streets is something that all of us are aware of. Cubans also know that none of such children exist in Cuba.

Yours sincerely,
Randy Caravaggio
Co-ordinator, Victoria Friends of Cuba