



December 14, 2007

Raul Castro Ruz
Interim President of Cuba
c/o Cuba Interests Section
Embassy of Switzerland
2630 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20009

Your Excellency:

Human Rights First, an independent non-governmental human rights organization, welcomes the December 10, 2007 announcement by Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque that Cuba will ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) by March 2008. Mr. Perez Roque's statement also announced Cuba's co-operation with the U.N. Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review in March 2009. We applaud these important steps taken by the Cuban government and urge you to complete the signing and domestic ratification process as quickly as possible and to fully implement the provisions of these two treaties.

Human Rights First calls to your attention several articles of the ICCPR. Article 9 states, "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention." Article 19 states, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice."

Human Rights First considers that the detention by your government of 75 human rights activists in spring of 2003 breached these two Articles in that the activists were detained for peacefully expressing their opinions. As a state party to the ICCPR, Cuba will agree to abide by these provisions and should immediately release the 59 remaining activists still in prison. Cuba will also agree to account for possible violations of these provisions as part of the Universal Periodic Review process before the Human Rights Council. Furthermore, the protections on freedom of expression enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) are considered to be customary international law and therefore already binding on Cuba. We urge you to respect all of the provisions of the UDHR.

We were particularly concerned to hear about the violations of freedom of assembly that took place in Havana on December 9 and 10, 2007. The *Damas de Blanco*, relatives of imprisoned activists who protest their detention, held peaceful

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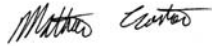
rallies to commemorate International Human Rights Day on December 10. These rallies were allegedly broken up violently by several *brigadas de respuesta rapida*, government-linked groups that often disrupt peaceful protests.

We welcome the announcement that Cuba will ratify the ICCPR and ICESCR and urge you to fully protect and uphold the rights contained in both treaties.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely,

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Matthew Easton
Director of the Human Rights Defenders Program

cc.
His Excellency Rodrigo Malmierca Diaz
Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations