



# GUYANA PEACE COUNCIL

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31<sup>st</sup> March, 2023

The Guyana Peace Council (GPC) is pleased to offer the following comments on the Universal Periodic Review as submitted by the Cuban government.

On the issue of human rights in general, the GPC commends the Cuban government on the progress made to achieve the fullest enjoyment of human rights and the fundamental freedoms of its citizens. The approval of a new constitution and the updating of key legislation in 2019 has reinforced the treatment and protection of human rights of the Cuban people.

The GPC has taken note of the improvement of the country's legal and institutional framework and the updating of the economic and social framework has been deepened on the basis of preserving and strengthening social justice and solidarity.

The Guyana Peace Council is cognizant of the several acts of solidarity extended to Guyana and for that matter several other developing countries in critical areas such as education, health, engineering, technical training, creative arts among others. This was particularly evident during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic and more recently in the earthquake in Turkey and Syria where Cuban doctors and medical personnel were dispatched in disaster mitigation efforts.

Of significance to note is that all of that is done in an environment of severe economic challenges due to a punishing economic, commercial and financial blockade for more than six decades, which is a serious and systematic violation of the human rights of the Cuban people. It is also a violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter and the rules governing free trade.

***In Pursuit of Peace***

*Established in 1974. Founder: Cheddi Jagan  
Affiliated with The World Peace Council, Athens Greece*

On the issue of the freedom of opinion, expression and the press, the GPC has taken note of the fact that such freedoms and rights are protected by the Constitution and the laws of Cuba. These freedoms are exercised by all Cubans without discrimination as enshrined in article 54 of the Constitution.

The same is applicable with respect to freedom of association and peaceful assembly. Other freedoms such as religious freedom and respect for religious and cultural diversity are not only encouraged but also protected by law.

On the question of democracy, it is a fact that Cuba has embraced a different model of democracy compared to western countries based on multi-party system. Cuba, however, has the right to embrace any model based on its history and culture and one that is consistent with the norms and aspirations of the Cuban people. Of interest to note is that the power of all representative bodies is exercised on the basis of democratic elections and are renewable. Those elected have the duty to give periodic reports on their performance and can be removed for non-performance. This accords fully with the principle of accountability for those who hold elective office.

The GPC has also taken note of the new electoral law in force since 2019 which increases the protection of the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs. As with all democracies, the democratic processes in Cuba is evolving to new and higher forms of democracy where those seeking elected offices are judged on the basis of merit and ability and not by the size of their purse or media access.

Other notable aspect\$ of the governance system in Cuba is the administration of justice, one in which no one can be deprived of liberty, except by the competent authorities and where everyone has the right to have legal assistance from the very beginning of the process. There is also the full independence of judges and the right to fair trial.

There is also trade union freedom with broad legal-regulatory framework for the promotion and protection of workers' rights.

With respect to social rights, it is an acknowledged fact that Cuba has one of the most advanced education and health systems in this hemisphere. Both health and education are a fundamental right and provided free of cost from nursery to university levels.

Despite its ethnic and cultural diversity, no individual is discriminated against on the basis of race or ethnicity. This right to equality is fully incorporated in the country's legal system.

The rights of women, persons with disabilities, the elderly and children are also protected by law. There is full gender equity and family obligations are encouraged and respected.

The above are some of the elements of the state of human rights in Cuba which are commendable given the economic and financial embargo imposed by the United States. This is a drag on the full economic potential of Cuba.

The Guyana Peace Council takes this opportunity to call on the United States to end its embargo on Cuba forthwith.

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