



NEHAWU

National Education Health & Allied Workers' Union

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Brief description

NEHAWU was founded on 27th and 28th June 1987 by workers from the Education, Health, Government and Social Welfare sectors. The Union is affiliated to COSATU - Congress of South African Trade Unions, which is the biggest federation in the country with over 1.9 million members.

NEHAWU is based on the following core principles: Worker control of the union; Non-racialism; Worker leadership; Democratic decision making through mandates and report backs; Worker solidarity and International Solidarity.

Main activities

Our main activities includes to form a strong public sector union under one federation; to raise the working and living standards of workers; to provide protection for workers facing a threat to their livelihood; to organize and oppose divisions of working people on the basis of colour, nationality, race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, religion or creed; to promote solidarity and cooperation relations with international unions and other progressive organisations and to raise the social and class consciousness of our members against capitalist exploitation.

For more information contact Mr. Zola Saphetha, NEHAWU General Secretary

**Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Council
Universal Periodic Review Session: CUBA**

- 1.1. The National Education Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) is proud to be associated with Cuba and maintains strong solidarity ties with its people. We campaign for the lifting of the cruel economic blockade of more than 50 years. NEHAWU defends the right of Cuban to preserve the socialist economic system, which guarantees them, the maximum satisfaction of their basic material and cultural needs. We stands opposed to every attempt to undermine Cuban sovereignty and against the US' attempts to destabilise the Cuban economy and its interference in the internal affairs of the country.
- 1.2. We make this submission, based on our firm belief that the Cuban economic model is a superior model in which human rights can best be guaranteed. Our brotherly relations with the Cuban trade union federation CTC, with ordinary Cubans, for years, afforded us the opportunity to closely and comprehensively understand the Cuban human rights situation that ought to inform the council's conclusions of the periodic review. In this regard we make the following submissions:

2. The human rights situation in Cuba

- 2.1. Cubans enjoy the highest level of human rights due to its superior system of social and economic development, in which all the abominations resulting from the exploitation of one person by another are generally prohibited by the constitution.
- 2.2. Private ownership of the means of production invariably gives rise to relations of exploitation, which allow a handful of capitalist exploiters to own the lion's share of every country's wealth, leaving the majority of people with hardships and deprivation.
- 2.3. Cuba made tremendous social progress so that its citizens could fully enjoy human rights. But the 60-year-old cruel system of the U.S. economic, commercial, and financial blockade limits this progress as it deprives Cubans of achieving greater social progress.
- 2.4. Cuba has continued to work closely with organizations that promote global and non-discriminatory human rights. Of the 61 globally acknowledged international human rights treaties, it has ratified 44 of them.
- 2.5. On the foundation of maintaining and enhancing social equity and solidarity, it has furthered the improvement of the nation's legal and institutional framework by updating its economic and social model.
- 2.6. Since the Republic of Cuba's new Constitution was approved in 2019, the nation has undergone a significant legislative update that has improved the protection and defense of human rights.
- 2.7. Cuba reconfigured the equality clause and the principle of non-discrimination. It now includes expansive categories of groups that are vulnerable or susceptible to discrimination, such as age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, ethnic origin, and territorial origin, to strengthen the protection and promotion of human rights.

- 2.8. The new constitution strengthened the defense of women's rights, guaranteed the exercise of their sexual and reproductive freedoms, and shielded them from gender violence in all of its forms and locations.
- 2.9. The prohibition of torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, and the forced disappearance of people are given constitutional status.
- 2.10. Cuba introduced new rights, which include the right to access public information and to receive truthful, objective, and timely information; the right to water; the right to healthy and adequate food; the right to adequate housing and a safe and healthy habitat; and the right to a healthy and balanced environment.
- 2.11. With the blockade intensifying, Cuba increased access to information and communication technologies, including the Internet, simultaneously ensuring the constitutional protection of privacy and personal data of its citizens and the right to respect for their personal and family privacy, their own image and voice, their honor, and their personal identity.

3. The American blockade against Cuba

- 3.1. The unjust, illegal, immoral, and criminal US commercial, economic and financial blockade against Cuba is an affront to human rights for millions of Cubans.
- 3.2. It is a travesty, a flagrant and systematic violation of human rights, that a sovereign country of 11 million people, one of the few countries that uphold the social, cultural, and economic rights of citizens, guarantees the right to employment, education, health, housing, food security, and social protection, and has fulfilled the Millennium Development Goals, is subjected to a cruel blockade.
- 3.3. The root cause of the blockade is the desire to destabilize Cuba and engineer a regime change.
- 3.4. The criminal American blockade continues to impose hardships on the Cuban people and has affected the functioning of the Cuban economy by reducing income from exports of goods and services, access to fuel, and medical supplies.
- 3.5. We South Africans maintain that the US administration under President Biden's impervious attitude to global appeals for the lifting of the blockade is a disgrace to the legacy of Nelson Mandela, at whose memorial service the first steps to normalize relations between the US and Cuba were taken.
- 3.6. Many Americans are also affected by the blockade.
- 3.7. The speed with which Cuba could maximize the equality of opportunities, the redistribution of wealth, or social justice is severely hamstrung by the blockade. The persistence of blockade measures throughout the COVID-19 pandemic stalled humanitarian aid to many countries by Cuba and foreclosed the possibility of saving scores of lives from needless death due to the pandemic.
- 3.8. Cuba has deployed thousands of doctors, the Henry Reeve Medical Brigade, to help the world in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. It has more doctors providing quality healthcare

in several impoverished countries. Many of its scientists and engineers are placing their skills in the service of development. These are shared benefits of the Cuban Revolution.

- 3.9. NEHAWU stands firmly in solidarity with the Cuban people in their struggle for the right to self-determination and for the respect of their sovereignty and territorial integrity. We also call for the removal of all economic, commercial, and financial sanctions imposed by the US against Cuba.
- 3.10. We condemn the US's attempts to destabilize the Cuban economy and its interference in the internal affairs of the country
- 3.11. In the context of their right to a choice of their own social, political, and economic systems, Cuba far surpasses the level of social development of many countries, including that of the rich western world, in the extension of human rights guarantees. It is well known that production under socialist economies generally allows for a higher degree of development of the productive forces and their utilization in the service of the majority of the people, and as such the resources of the country are put to the service of the people and their basic material and cultural needs are maximally satisfied.
- 3.12. In Cuba no one suffers discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, or property, as laid down in the universal declaration of human rights. Its citizens find equal protection before the law and against any discrimination on the basis of these.
- 3.13. Citizens are guaranteed participation in the governance affairs of the country and the freedom to freely participate in and elect their representatives.
- 3.14. Freedoms of expression and opinion are constitutionally guaranteed and protected.
- 3.15. The right to work is guaranteed, and a high level of labor discipline is observed, in which the right to employment and participation in production are conditions for the common development of all.
- 3.16. Education is also a guaranteed universal right and is provided free of charge. South Africa is one country among many with contingents of Cuban-trained South African professionals working in various locations, especially the remotest parts of our country, performing lifesaving healthcare procedures. All of them are beneficiaries of free education, for which not a cent was ever paid.
- 3.17. In rural areas of South Africa, we have countless doctors, engineers, and medical professionals, including highly qualified scientists and specialists, involved in carrying out voluntary work safeguarding the lives of poor people rejected by the system of education and health for profit.
- 3.18. Children's rights are protected in Cuba. Children participate in all kinds of cultural and educational activities we can only dream of in our countries, without any discrimination. Through the Cuban educational system, libraries are made available both in schools and in communities, fully equipped with literature to broaden access.
- 3.19. Children take part in music, art, and other structured activities through the infrastructure provided by the state. These facilities are also fully staffed by professional educators and other staff.

4. Death penalty

- 4.1. Women have never received the death sentence in Cuba. The legislation forbids applying it to women and minors under the age of 25. These are instead commuted to 30 years or life. Since 2003, Cuba has not used the death penalty.
- 4.2. Four crimes no longer carry the death sentence as a result of the adoption of the new Penal Code. Only extremely severe crimes, such as murder, international drug trafficking, terrorism, and crimes against the state's security, are subject to it.
- 4.3. Cuba does not subject its citizens to cruel, inhumane treatment. It does not embrace targeted or arbitrary killings and extrajudicial executions, either in the homeland or on foreign soil, nor does it compel any other country to adopt similar measures.
- 4.4. Torture and forced disappearance are not sanctioned by any law or by any state organs or authorities. No one has suffered torture or forced disappearance in Cuba.

5. **Democratic System**

- 5.1. The Cuban economic model is regularly updated, accompanied by the introduction of new laws strengthening human rights. These laws improve public participation and popular consultations in making decisions. Criticism is allowed, including of government and any democratic institution.
- 5.2. The right of citizens to effectively participate in the political affairs of the state is guaranteed. In this case, the citizens' democratic public participation record of many western countries is far surpassed by Cuba.
- 5.3. Elections within the socialist framework and principles imply more power for the electorate, including the right to recall elected representatives and demand accountability from the public representatives.
- 5.4. Sectoral participation of individuals in mass organizations is allowed, enhancing the quality of interest group participation.
- 5.5. The safety of all Cuban citizens is prioritized, including during periods of natural disasters. The state has a strong attitude towards mobilization for the rights of people to life and human dignity. Mortality rates borne from natural disasters are unprecedentedly low and the polar opposite of those registered in several rich countries.
- 5.6. The right to food is fully guaranteed. In many capitalist countries, this right is a preserve of the rich. Women's rights to housing and social protection have fully materialized. Cuba is a leading country in many spheres and in entrenching social, cultural, and economic rights for its citizens. Cubans have a right to employment, alongside education and health. This is irrespective of the impact of the aggressive anti-Cuban blockade by the United States. Cuba contributed immensely to the expansion of healthcare services in Africa and many other poor parts of the world.

6. **Elections**

6.1. Elections are held periodically, with citizens of legal age unrestricted in their participation. Voting is free, equal, universal, secret, and direct. Any person can be elected to office, regardless of financial means. The Communist Party of Cuba is not an electoral party. It does not have candidates for elections, nor does it participate in any way in electoral proceedings.

6.2. Recently, Cuba celebrated the general elections of the deputies to the National Assembly of People's Power which had a participation of more than 6 million people, that represents 75.92% of the electoral roll, despite the countless subversive actions of the US imperialism to harm the participation of Cubans in their elections.

7. Access to justice

7.1. No illegal prison camps exist in Cuban territory, and the country holds no prisoners on an indefinite basis without charges or trial. It observes its international legal obligations to respect the privacy rights of foreigners. Unlike many developed countries with pervasive human rights violations, Cuba does not:

- Subject migrants to inhumane treatment, including the use of lethal force.
- Engage in labor trafficking.
- Use solitary confinement.
- Does not trial juveniles as adults, uses life sentences against juveniles, and has them incarcerated in adult institutions.
- Criminalize homelessness.
- Apply racial profiling.
- Use nonconsensual administration of "coercive health practices" such as psychiatric medication and electric shock.

8. Trade union freedoms

8.1. A legal framework exists to promote, protect, and guarantee worker and trade union rights. Workers can freely associate and establish their own unions to freely advocate for the improvement of their working and living conditions. They have the right to engage in collective bargaining with their employers. Workers participate meaningfully in the affairs of the state, including the development of various plans and state budgets.

8.2. Trade union leaders organize freely without restraint. They are free from employer interference in the performance of their duties.

9. **Socio-economic rights**

- 9.1. Cuba firmly entrenches the right to health, to education, to medicine, to arts and culture, and affirms freedoms for artistic creation, against racial discrimination, for women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.
- 9.2. Women's rights to health, including sexual and reproductive health and family planning, are recognized, protected, and guaranteed. Women's rights to education, art, and culture are recognized, as are their rights to dignified employment and equal pay for equal work.
- 9.3. Women enjoy the right to technical, professional, and cultural advancement, job training and apprenticeship, as well as social security and assistance. Working mothers are entitled to maternity leave and social protection for up to one year.

10. **No foreign interference by Cuba**

- 10.1. Cuba respects the principle of equality among all states and their sovereignty. It has never waged illegal wars against any country. Cuba has no offshore military bases operating in other countries. It has never invaded other countries or participated in the invasion of other countries or overthrown governments around the world. It has not carried out mass terrorist activities against civilians to maintain the supremacy of its social system or ideas.
- 10.2. We denounce any attempt to impose on Cuba a different political way of life under the pretext of adherence to human rights. We condemn the US economic, commercial, and financial blockade and call for its unconditional lifting.