

November 28, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20522

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As you know, the people of Cuba live under one of the most oppressive governments in the world. Two entities, the Ministry of the Interior (MININT) and the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR) are the strong hands of the authoritarian regime that arbitrarily detain, inhumanely torture, and extrajudicially execute dozens of the regime's perceived political opponents every year. Moreover, of the hundreds of the peaceful protesters detained by the regime since the historic protests of July 11, 2011, more than 45 are children under the age of 17. In order to finance this extensive apparatus of nationwide oppression, both MININT and MINFAR operate hotels, tourism agencies, marinas, stores and financial institutions.

The U.S. Department of State published the Cuban Restricted Entities List in 2017 to prohibit U.S. persons from engaging in transactions with MININT, MINFAR, and their affiliated companies. Unfortunately, since January 2021 when the list was last updated, MININT and MINFAR have established dozens of new hotels and companies that fall outside the scope of the Cuban Restricted Entity List. For example, Grupo de Turismo Gaviota, a hotel holding company owned by MINFAR, opened the Hotel Grand Aston in Havana in March 2022. Because Hotel Grand Aston is not included on the Restricted Entities List, it is possible for people, like Norah Jones, to organize so-called "educational visits" for American tourists to pay considerable sums of money to Gaviota and thereby fund the ongoing repression, the detention and the torture of Cuban children and political prisoners.

There is no reason for Americans to be complicit in the ongoing human rights violations against the Cuban people. I urge you to immediately update the List of Restricted Entities and Subentities Associated with Cuba in order to account for new hotels and facilities opened since January 2021 and close this glaring gap in our nation's sanctions policy on the communist regime in Cuba.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', is positioned above the printed name.

Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator