

July 12, 2021

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Yesterday, for the first time in 62 years, we saw thousands of courageous Cubans in more than 32 cities take to the streets in spontaneous protests against the Communist regime in Cuba. They are peacefully demanding “Libertad” from a Marxist regime that provides no political or economic liberty and no hope for the future.

The Cuban dictatorship has rejected every effort that would allow the Cuban people to prosper, including your previous efforts as Vice President. Despite the Obama Administration’s efforts to engage with the regime, the dictatorship continues to restrict travel for political opponents, siphon off the salaries of Cubans employed at foreign firms and severely limit the economic freedom of its citizens to own property and start a business. The current protests in Cuba are not just about current economic shortages. They are about the longstanding and deliberate actions taken by the dictatorship to stymie the economic prosperity and political freedom of the Cuban people.

In June 2020, the InterAmerican Human Rights Commission (IACHR) published a report on the widespread and systematic oppression on the island from 2017 to 2019. It describes a situation on the island that is the antithesis of American values. According to IACHR, Cuba “is the only country in the Americas in which there are no guarantees of any kind for exercising the right to freedom of expression.” The IACHR further stated that it “remains concerned about the serious limitations on freedom of opinion, expression, and the imparting of information and ideas.” Since November 2020, the dictatorship has cracked down on the peaceful gatherings of the Movimiento San Isidro (MSI). Despite initially agreeing to negotiate with MSI, the regime instead has used its security services to harass, intimidate and detain members of MSI. Even today, activists and journalists like Esteban Rodriguez, Maykel Osorbo, Carolina Barrero, Hamlet Iavastida, and so many others remain in detention for activities taken for granted in most of the world.

Now the Cuban people are suffering from what is among the world’s worst responses to the latest surge of the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 64 percent of Cuba’s total number of COVID-19 cases have occurred in just the past two months. Rather than take the necessary steps to address this surge, the Castro- Díaz-Canel regime wants to maintain its grip on power at all

costs. It continues to exploit Cuban doctors by forcing them to work overseas on foreign medical missions so that it can confiscate their paychecks. Rather than accept reliable internationally produced vaccines, the regime is trying to develop its own so it can sell to countries and further funnel money. This response makes it clear that this regime does not care for the lives and wellbeing of the Cuban people.

Thank you for recognizing these heroic protests as a “clarion call of freedom.” Now, I urge you to act on the spirit of your statement and take the necessary steps to support the Cuban people in their fight for freedom.

First, I ask that you clearly warn the regime that any effort to encourage mass migration will be viewed and treated as a hostile action against the United States.

Second, I ask that it become an urgent priority of the United States to facilitate open and free satellite internet access on the island of Cuba.

Third, I ask that you instruct the U.S. Department of State to engage with our allies in the European Union and the Western Hemisphere to coordinate a strong rejection and condemnation of the repressive actions taken by the Communist regime against the unarmed people of Cuba.

Fourth, I ask that the State Department be tasked with identifying those carrying out acts of violent repression inside of Cuba, and placing these individuals on a list banned from entering the United States.

Fifth, I ask that the United States make clear that it is prepared to provide COVID-19 vaccines, and other humanitarian assistance, to the people of Cuba, but only if it is delivered to and distributed by trustworthy and independent international organizations. We must not allow the regime to take possession of such relief and use it as a weapon to force the people of Cuba into compliance with the regime’s demands.

And finally, I ask that given the events of the last day, that your administration issue a clear and unambiguous statement that the current U.S. policies towards the regime implemented by the Trump Administration will remain in place.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', written in a cursive style.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator