

Press Statement
Richard Boucher, Spokesman
Washington, DC
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Cuba: Human Rights Situation

In March 2003, the Castro regime unleashed a sweeping crackdown on independent civil society activists, ultimately condemning 75 to prison sentences averaging 20 years.

The world denounced the Cuban government's repression, and the United States, the European Union and others took steps to encourage the Cuban regime to release these prisoners of conscience. These measures have ensured that the Cuban regime knows the world is watching.

Unfortunately, the repression in Cuba continues. Some of those still in prison, like Oscar Elias Biscet and Luis Enrique Ferrer Garcia, have gone on hunger strikes to protest their detention. Others, like Nelson Aguiar Ramirez and Ferrer, have been repeatedly beaten while in prison. Secret police beat trade unionist Lazaro Gonzalez Adan before jailing him on charges of "disrespect." Even those seven seriously ill political prisoners who have been released are subject to daily harassment, re-arrest and lengthy interrogations. In October, the regime took the extraordinary step of expelling three members of European national parliaments merely because they were planning to meet with opposition members.

The United States condemns the Cuban regime's abuse of advocates of peaceful change and reform. We call on the regime to cease its repression and release all political prisoners. Only a Cuba where fundamental freedoms are respected and independent civil society flourishes will be positioned to make a peaceful transition to democracy.

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