

THE COMMUNIST CUBAN REGIMES DISREGARD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL
HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZA-
TIONS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
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C O N T E N T S

REPRESENTATIVES

	Page
Opening Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Christopher H. Smith	1
Opening Statement of Subcommittee Ranking Member Susan Wild	4
Opening Statement of Representative Amata Radewagen	6
Opening Statement of Representative Kathy Manning	6

WITNESSES

Statement of Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Former Chair, U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee	8
Prepared Statement	11
Statement of Maria C. Werlau, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Free Society Project/Cuba Archive	16
Prepared Statement	18
Statement of Joseph F. Connor, Author and Advocate	26
Prepared Statement	30
Statement of Juan Pappier, Deputy Director, Americas, Human Rights Watch	36
Prepared Statement	38

APPENDIX

Hearing Notice	58
Hearing Minutes	60
Hearing Attendance	61

THE COMMUNIST CUBAN REGIMES DISREGARD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Wednesday, December 11, 2024

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN
RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:31 p.m., in room 2200, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SMITH. This hearing of the Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess at any point, and all Members will have 5 days to submit statements, extraneous material, and questions for the record subject to the length limitations in the rules.

I note the presence of a quorum, and I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

I would like to just make an announcement. Remind audience members that disruption of committee proceedings is against the law. Holding up signs or making verbal outbursts during the proceedings is a disruption, and will not be tolerated. Any disruptions will result in suspension of the proceedings until the Capitol Police can restore order.

Let me just begin with a very, very special welcome to the distinguished former House Foreign Affairs Committee chairwoman, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, for her amazing leadership over the course of 30 years as a Member of Congress, and as chairwoman, as chair of the Africa Subcommittee, Western Hemisphere—I mean, she did it all and did it with class.

I just want to thank her for her leadership, for her insights, the wisdom that she has displayed for all of us to follow over the years, especially in the struggle to protect human rights and liberty throughout the world, including and especially Cuba.

We are deeply honored, Madam Chair, to have you here providing the Congress and the new administration with a path forward. What do we do next? What steps need to be taken? So again, I can't thank you enough. We will benefit, as we always have, for everything that you have provided. So thank you.

And thank all of our other distinguished witnesses for being here. This will become the basis for our next steps as a committee, a subcommittee and for me and my colleagues. So I want to thank you for that. Again, Ileana, it is a delight to have you here.

You know, when he was appointed Ambassador—and that is Armando Valladares—to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, President Ronald Reagan said, and I quote him, “I have an impossible mission for you. Try to convince the U.N. that there are human rights violations in Cuba,” close quote.

Well, I traveled with Mr. Valladares to Geneva for a week to the U.N. Human Rights Commission. I was happy to carry his bags. I was so in awe of this man who had suffered so much and had done so with such grace. He got the U.N. Human Rights Commission to investigate the cruelty of Castro’s prisons. Missions went there; people were interviewed. Even though there was a statement made that there would be no retaliation, sadly, there was.

But it was a breakthrough of a very significant way that he was able to achieve that. I have read his book not once, but twice, “Against All Hope: A Memoir of Life in Castro’s Gulag,” and I encourage people to read it. A brilliant expose of what he and other political prisoners endured and did so with extraordinary courage, faith, and perseverance.

Mr. Valladares said, however, and I quote him, “I can tell you that the saddest thing was to see the indifference of the world toward the human rights violations in Cuba. That is, when my fellow inmates died, were being tortured, were murdered, disappeared, the world absolutely ignored it and didn’t want to listen.”

Well, we are here today to recommit ourselves to the noble struggle by the Cuban people to stand behind them and finally achieve freedom. For too long, the Cuban people have long suffered under communism, and now continues that suffering under the current president.

Ninety miles from American shores resides one of the most repressive and brutal regimes in the world. Ninety miles from the shores, the Communist Cuban regime remains ensconced in power, terrorizing and abusing the Cuban people. Ninety miles from our shores, the Communist Cuban regime remains a threat to the American people and our national security, but especially through their deepening partnerships with the Chinese Communist Party and the People’s Liberation Army.

Many still wish to speak of engagement without acknowledging the plain reality of the threat Communist Cuba poses to the United States, the world at large, and again, most importantly, to the Cuban people themselves. They yearn for freedom, and they are not free.

Today, too many people in the free world do not understand the reality of life in Communist Cuba. In Cuba today, political and economic freedoms do not exist. The Communist Party rules through violence and fear and attempts to control not just the economy, but all elements of society.

Civil society lives under heavy surveillance, harassment, and repression. It criminalizes all forms of dissent. It restricts what kind of jobs Cubans can take. It prohibits free movement to and from the island.

It is also a Tier 3 country, designated so by the President of the United States and through the Secretary of State and the TIP adviser because of its egregious violations of both sex and labor trafficking.

Today in Cuba, nearly 1,000 innocents are imprisoned for the offense of thinking differently from the official Communist Party line.

In Cuba, there is no private sector, doesn't exist. The security State ultimately controls all forms of activity on the island. Every dollar spent by a tourist ultimately benefits the dictatorship.

Every instance of American companies or politicians taking trips to Cuba to engage with State entities, such as healthcare providers, legitimizes the Communist regime, furthers their policies of human trafficking. Again, they are Tier 3. They are egregious violators. They are among the worst of the world. And, of course, terrorism and violent repression, delaying the arrival of the day when the Cuban people shall be free. And like—and like its close allies, Venezuela and Nicaragua, two other dictatorships, Cuba does not even pretend to hold elections.

This is the fifth hearing I have chaired on human rights in particular in Cuba, although we brought it up in many, many other hearings, as has our distinguished former Chief of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

The years may change, but the song, sadly, remains the same coming out of Cuba. It holds blatant disregard for the very concept of human rights, and the United States requires from us a firm policy. We need to do more, not less.

It is time that American politicians, including Members of this House, stop signaling to the Communist regime in Cuba that if they wait long enough, they will be able to redefine their relationships with the U.S. without lifting their boots from the throats of the Cuban people.

At one hearing I chaired in 2015, three human rights activists exposed the true reality of life, and they were very, very concerned about President Obama's so-called engagement. Two months earlier, President Obama had announced his new policy of engagement with Cuba after many months of secret negotiations with the Communists.

Obama's push to normalize relations involved a series of unilateral concessions. As the administration reopened the U.S. embassy in Havana, relieved sanctions, restored tourist flights from United States without stating any preconditions for improving the regime's awful human rights record.

2016, President Obama even visited the island. The first U.S. President to do so since the Communist revolution. In the days before, during and after his visit, the regime—this was their response—arrested hundreds of protestors. Human rights groups on the island begged Obama not to let himself be manipulated.

Instead, he infamously did the wave at a Havana baseball game with dictator Raul Castro after a joint press conference and welcoming ceremony alongside the Communist Party Politburo under the portrait of Che Guevara.

Normalization legitimized Castro's brutal dictatorship and made the human rights situation worse, not better. Active religious per-

secution skyrocketed and other repression increased. The year Obama visited the island, there were nearly 10,000 documented political arrests, 10,000.

I and many of my colleagues in Congress strongly oppose this naive and dangerous policy. I visited with the Cuban ambassador here in the District of Columbia. I said I wanted to visit the prisons. He told me—and it was going good. I thought it was a good conversation. He told me that the Cuban Government, however, will decide who I can see and who I can't see.

I asked whether other congressional delegations accepted those terms and conditions. He said, yes. I never got the visa, and I want to go still. I have asked over and over again, and I will continue to ask to go.

I, along with Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, introduced H.R. 1782, the Cuban Human Rights Act of 2015, to prevent a softening of U.S.-Cuban relations without improvements to its human rights record. It needs to be a quid pro quo.

Haven't we learned? You know, look at what we did with China? We give them most favorite nation status. Bill Clinton delinked it on May 26, 1994, a humans rights conditionality. Delinked it, infamously. And they said all they care about is profits, and China has been on a tear to destroy people and their livelihoods, and their human rights have been horrible.

I plan on introducing the Cuban Human Rights Act again when we begin, and I know I have been talking to our distinguished former chair to get her inputs as to what—what provisions it ought to contain. Instead of standing with the Cuban people and demanding an end to their oppression, that outstretched hand to their oppressors, there was a lost decade in the fight to promote liberty and human rights in Cuba.

Upon taking office, however, President Trump reversed many of these shortsighted policy which harmed the Cuban people, and rightly so. The new administration has before it a fresh opportunity to prioritize the recognition of human rights and the release of political prisoners in its dealings with the Cuban regime.

Today, our expert witnesses will shed light on the regime's human rights abuses. And, again, if you read the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, if you read the TIP report, it flies off the page how oppressive they are, but the policy has to match the actual record on the ground. And that is not always the case.

So I want to just thank you again. I would like to yield to my good friend and colleague, Congresswoman Wild, who is the ranking member of our subcommittee.

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER SUSAN WILD

Ms. WILD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to our witnesses. Thank you to our audience for being here.

I would like to begin on a personal note. At the last hearing of this subcommittee, which I, unfortunately, was unable to attend due to a meeting on the Ethics Committee, on which I am also the ranking member, I submitted written remarks for the record. In those remarks, I stated that in a few weeks, I will no longer serve as a Member of this body.

But to reiterate, it has been the greatest honor of my life to represent the people of Pennsylvania's greater Lehigh Valley in Congress over the past 6 years, and it has been a particular privilege to serve as a Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and as ranking member of this subcommittee. And, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your many courtesies and kindnesses in the time I have been here.

During my time in Congress, I sought to advance a vision of a foreign policy that reflects the best of who we are as a country and as a people; a vision centered on combating hunger, inequity, and disease, both here at home and around the world; a vision that defends universal rights and dignity; a vision that stands with workers and the labor movement whenever they come under attack; a vision that says that we can and must be a voice for prisoners of conscience who languish in prison cells the world over; a vision that says to all those whose rights and dignity are trampled on, you are not forgotten, you are not alone, we stand in solidarity with you.

That brings me to today's hearing and to the challenge we face when it comes to shaping a U.S. policy toward Cuba that vigorously defends human rights and human dignity in a way that is strategic and effective in alleviating the suffering of the Cuban people rather than contributing to it. Our approach to Cuba, which has remained largely constant for more than six decades now, with the exception of former President Obama's second term, has not delivered for the Cuban people.

This hearing begs the question, What is the end goal of U.S. policy toward Cuba, and what has our decades-old policy actually accomplished for the United States, let alone the Cuban people?

Today, the Cuban people, not the government, face a devastating humanitarian crisis which has been exacerbated by the U.S. embargo and other sanctions. The current U.S. policy provides the Cuban government with a ready-made talking point on which to blame every failure and crisis that occurs under its leadership.

As Human Rights Watch noted in a 2023 report, the U.S. embargo gives the Cuban government an excuse for problems, a pretext for abuses, and sympathy from governments that might otherwise condemn repressive practices. HRW has also noted that the embargo has imposed indiscriminate hardship on the Cuban population as a whole, and has done nothing to improve the situation of human rights in Cuba.

Rather than strengthening people-to-people ties, cultural exchanges, and commercial relations that could open a new market for U.S. exports and benefit businesses in both of our countries, our policy serves only to further distance Cuba from the promise of a free society. Rather than providing relief for the economic hardship facing the Cuban people, our policy only deepens the hardship faced by everyday Cubans. Rather than seeking to build a future rooted in diplomacy, a future in which we secure the release of political prisoners and advance our interests, as former President Obama began to do, the status quo under administrations of both parties has succeeded only in damaging the image of the United States throughout Latin America and elsewhere around the world.

I am determined to see the United States act in defense of human rights and dignity and seek justice for those like Mr. Connor who have suffered irreparable damage. That is why we must be at the table participating robustly in international fora, advancing our interests and defending our people through relentless engagement and tough, smart, and effective diplomacy. It is why we cannot retreat into a shortsighted and ultimately self-destructive unilateralism.

Let us stand with the Cuban people in engagement and partisanship and let us shape a U.S. policy toward Cuba that delivers results in advancing both our ideals and our interests.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much. I would like to—we have worked very closely together on so many issues, including trafficking. So thank you for that service.

Ms. WILD. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. I would like to now yield to Ms. Radewagen as much time as she would like to consume.

OPENING STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE AMATA RADEWAGEN

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Good afternoon. Talofa. Thank you, Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Wild, for holding this hearing on the human rights abuses of the Cuban Government. Human rights are something I care deeply about. They are universal, and all people should be treated with dignity. All people should have the right to freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom to elect their leaders and hold them accountable.

I have fought for these freedoms for my entire career. I look forward to hearing from each of you as we examine the Cuban regime's attack on these fundamental human rights.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so very much. Ms. Manning.

OPENING STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE KATHY MANNING

Ms. MANNING. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I, too, will be leaving this Congress at the end of this term, regretfully, because of the extreme gerrymandering in North Carolina.

Chairman Smith, I have enjoyed working with you greatly on this committee. I consider you a wonderful colleague and a friend. I have also enjoyed co-chairing the House Bipartisan Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism with you. We have worked closely on that committee as well and introduced very important legislation. I appreciate all your hard work to combat human rights abuses and discrimination against vulnerable people on this committee, on our bipartisan task force, and on the full Foreign Affairs Committee.

Let me also say for Ranking Member Susan Wild, I consider you a dear friend, and we will figure out together how to continue our important work from a different vantage point, not in Congress, but we will not give up our determination to fight for people who need our help around the world.

So thank you—thank you both. Thank you to the witnesses today.

And with that, I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so much, Kathy. It has been great working with you on so many issues, including combating trafficking issues.

I would like to introduce our panel.

Ms. WILD. Mr. Chairman, may I just correct one thing that I said. I have been told that the record should be corrected.

Apparently, I said—I meant to say, let us stand with the Cuban people in engagement and partnership and mistakenly said partisanship, which is definitely not what I intended to say.

So the correct statement is, let us stand with the Cuban people in engagement and partnership. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. I would like to introduce our witnesses, beginning with Dr. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, who served with distinction here in this body for 30 years as chairwoman on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, as I mentioned a moment ago. But previous to that, the Subcommittee on the Middle East in North Africa and Africa and just did a wonderful job in each of those roles. She passed many foreign policy issues, legislation that continue to enlighten and make a difference in today's world.

I want to thank her for that leadership, and again, we have become good friends over the years, and I can't thank her enough for her leadership and look forward to her testimony.

We will then have Maria Werlau, who is the co-founder and executive director of the Free Society Project, a nonprofit organization to advance human rights through research and scholarship. Its leading initiative, Cuba Archive Truth and Memory Project, focuses on transitional justice issues and human exploitation.

Ms. Werlau is a former second vice president of the Chase Manhattan Bank, and a long-time independent consultant specializing in advisories on Cuban affairs and other international issues. Her extensive publications on Cuba cover a wide range of topics, including international law, foreign investment, and economic issues.

She has served as—task forces on the U.S.-Cuba relations for the Council on Foreign Relations and the American Enterprise Institute.

Then we will hear from Joseph Connor, who is an author and advocate whose father, Frank Connor, was killed in a terrorist attack by the Armed Forces of the National Liberation, FALN, in 1975.

Mr. Connor has testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senate Judiciary Committee. His writings have appeared in The Wall Street Journal, New York Post, L.A. Times, and The Washington Times.

And, again, a full—your full resumes will be made a part of the record.

And then we will hear from Juan Pappier, who is the Americas Deputy Director of Human Rights Watch. He supervises the organization's research and advocacy efforts, particularly for Latin America and the Caribbean. He has a decade of experience documenting and reporting human rights violations, including political repression and abuses related to armed conflicts, security policies, and attacks on the rule of law.

He has worked as a consultant for Chile's National Human Rights Institute, and we welcome him as well and look forward to all of your testimonies.

Mr. SMITH. Dr. Ros-Lehtinen.

STATEMENT OF ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Chairman Smith, and I thank you for the undeserved but lovely words bestowed upon me in my almost 30 years of service to the Congress. I am so proud to have worked alongside you on issues related to freedom, human rights throughout the world. So thank you so much for those words.

And Ranking Member Wild and Mrs. Manning, the House will be a poorer place without your strong voices in favor of freedom and human rights as well. So we wish you much success in your future ventures.

I have been a good friend of Mrs. Radewagen for the years that her service and my service coincided, and she has always been a strong voice for the freedom of the Cuban people. I am glad to say that—I am glad to hear that that voice has not diminished at all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will talk today about the need for international solidarity in support of the struggle of the Cuban people for freedom. Apparently, being for freedom is hard; hard for the people who are struggling against the oppressive authoritarian regimes of their own countries, of course. But apparently, it is hard for other countries to take notice, to care, or to overcome their own country's political or economic self-interest. Being for freedom seems to be hard.

But being for authoritarian regimes seems to be easy. Standing for values is hard. Ignoring values is easy. Authoritarian countries want to reinforce their authoritarian standards, so they seek no moral compass.

Democratic regimes, on the other hand, are based on certain moral concepts. Nevertheless, democratic countries seem to always have trouble finding their true north of their moral compass.

You have never found it difficult to get the true north of your moral compass, Mr. Chairman, and I am so glad that you mentioned the Cuban Human Rights Act of 2015. I congratulate you for introducing it at that time when it was difficult with that administration and power.

And when I served in Congress, I was proud to introduce, alongside you, that important bill because it sent a strong message that the U.S. would never ignore the Cuban regime's human rights violations.

Sadly, these years later, we are still at this same place, and I am quite pleased to hear that you will reintroduce this important legislation in the next Congress. We will stand alongside you, Mr. Chairman.

We all know about Cuba's oppressive regime. Our witnesses will speak about that. But we will never know precisely how many people longing for freedom and seeking a glimpse of humanity have died in their unsuccessful journeys in unseaworthy vessels in the Florida Straits filled with hope and terror and ending in tragic death. We will never know that number.

We understand the goals and the cruel motives of regime thugs in exploiting the Cuban population for their own selfish purposes. The lust for power, the greed for material dominance over others,

this has resulted in political dictatorships and exploitation of the masses for time immemorial.

Likewise, the passive tolerance of, and resulting legitimization of such regimes has led to their acceptance by others and the woeful habit of ignoring that oppression. This, the acceptance of oppressive regimes by nonoppressive regimes, is more difficult to understand than the motives and purpose of the oppressors themselves.

The motivation and the dictatorial nature of oppressive states to support other similar State regimes is obvious. They share dictatorial values, they have in common a self-interest in protecting their regimes. But why do democratic states tolerate and even aid oppressive dictatorial states in which abuses and persecution of dissidents is clear, and the risks which people take to escape those regimes is so high?

The U.S. Government, fortunately, has expressed its dissatisfaction and condemnation of the Cuban regime over the years through our sanctions, but the U.S. Government has, on occasion, exhibited weakness in its condemnation of the Cuban regime.

The failure to respond to the shootdown of the Brothers to the Rescue planes in 1996 in international airspace involving the deaths of three U.S. citizens and one U.S. resident was a regrettable sign of weakness by the Clinton administration.

Likewise, President Obama, as you alluded to in your opening statement, Mr. Chairman, doing the wave and eating ice cream cones with Raul Castro in Cuba at a baseball game, engaging in friendly conversation was lamentable fraternization which ignored the immorality of the Cuban regime and worked against the U.S. message of illegitimacy of the Cuban regime.

It also undermined the dissident movements on the island, such as the Ladies in White. While the Ladies in White risked jail and savage beatings on the streets of Havana, President Obama hobnobbed with their oppressors.

Just last week, as the International Republican Institute noted, another democracy activist in Cuba was killed in prison in Cuba, supposedly labeled a suicide—false—marking the fourth verified death of the July 11, 2021, protesters in State custody according to the watchdog group Justicia 11J, and the 72d documented prison death since 2023 according to the Cuban prisons documentation center.

Why have other democratic states tolerated and even embraced oppressive regimes? There is an idea of noninterference in internal affairs of another State serves as an excuse. Noninvolvement in internal affairs of other states is articulated, sadly, in the United Nations Charter. The Charter provides that “States shall not intervene”—this is a quote—“in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State,” Article 2, Section 7.”

And I use the word excuse because the noninvolvement concept does not override other principles of international law, especially those espoused in the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials after World War II. Countries which do not wish to condemn another country’s dishonorable or immoral treatment of its resident turn to the non-interference idea as an excuse. Not my job, they essentially say.

Another relevant characteristic of the international system is that a State acts based on its own interest, thus, the oppression of

others does not affect my interest. Think Rwanda genocide or the Cambodian genocide or, indeed, even the Holocaust.

Of course, this myopic definition of interest and the perception of threats ignores the dangers of the spread of oppressive doctrine. Such expansion of oppressive doctrine is a threat and should be perceived as involving another state's interest. But such perception requires leadership. It requires vision, and they are often in short supply.

We need such understanding about the threats posed by legitimizing oppression. Appeasement of oppression carries the same danger as appeasement of military aggression. But many democratic states see no benefit in taking a principled stand against oppression, at least they do not see the benefit sufficient to justify the reduction in trade, the loss of tourism. Those are opportunities for their own residents as visitors, whose trips are partly conducted on the backs of those who are oppressed.

Perhaps the greatest insight in this regard, Mr. Chairman, is that recognizing oppression and exploitation of people is psychologically distressing. We want to think that the world is better than it really is. And seeing the reality causes cognitive dissonance.

It is easier to be a Pangloss in Voltaire's "Candide," who always sees the world with incurable, excessive, and unrealistic optimism in this best of all possible worlds. But Pangloss's foolhardy optimism is unwarranted in this most dangerous of all possible worlds.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman and Members. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ros-Lehtinen follows:]

**The Need for International Solidarity in Support of
the Struggle of the Cuban People for Freedom**

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, December 11, 2024

Being for freedom is hard. Hard for the people who struggling against the oppressive authoritarian regimes of their own countries, of course.

But apparently hard for other countries to take notice, to care, or to overcome their own country's political or economic self-interest. Being for freedom seems to be hard.

But being for authoritarian regimes seems to be easy. Standing for values is hard; ignoring values is easy.

Authoritarian countries want to reinforce their authoritarian standards, so they seek no moral compass. Democratic regimes, on the other hand, are based on certain moral concepts. Nonetheless, democratic countries seem to always have trouble finding the true north of their moral compass. They use the nation-state system's characteristics ("sovereignty" and "domestic non-interference" concepts) as an excuse for ignoring suppression of human rights.

But sovereignty and non-interference with domestic affairs of other countries does not excuse a country's own actions which support authoritarianism.

We all know about Cuba's oppressive regime. Or, we should know, unless we live with our head in the sand. Other witnesses today will describe eloquently the suffering of the Cuban people. For my purposes today, I will simply reflect that we will never know precisely how many people, longing for freedom and seeking a glimpse of humanity, have died in their unsuccessful journeys in unseaworthy craft in the Florida Straits, filled with hope and terror and ending in tragic death.

We also understand the goals and cruel motives of regime thugs, in exploiting the Cuban population for their own selfish purposes. The lust for power and greed for material dominance over others have been the drivers of actions of immortal humans, with resulting political dictatorships and exploitation of the masses, for time immemorial. Likewise, the passive tolerance of, and resulting legitimization of, such regimes has led to their acceptance by others and the woeful habit of ignoring the oppression.

This – the acceptance of oppressive regimes by non-oppressive regimes -- is more difficult to understand than the motives and purposes of the oppressors themselves.

This tolerance of oppressive states by other states – indeed, making excuses for and even supporting such oppressive state regimes – is most difficult to understand and most disappointing.

The motivation of dictatorial and oppressive states to support other similar state regimes is obvious. They share dictatorial values and have a common self-interest in protecting their regimes.

But why do democratic states tolerate, even aid oppressive dictatorial states, in which abuse and persecution of dissidents is clear and the risks which people take to escape those regimes is so high?

The United States Government, fortunately, has expressed its dissatisfaction and condemnation of the Cuban regime over the years through sanctions.

But the US government has, on occasion, exhibited weakness in its condemnation of the Cuban regime. The failure to respond to the shootdown of Brothers to the Rescue in 1996 in international airspace, involving the deaths of

three US citizens and one US resident, was a regrettable sign of weakness by the Clinton Administration.

Likewise, President Obama doing the wave and eating ice cream cones with Raul Castro in Cuba at a baseball game, engaging in friendly conversation, was lamentable fraternization which ignored the immorality of the Cuban regime and worked against the US message of illegitimacy of the Cuban regime. It also undermined the dissident movements on the island, such as the Ladies in White. While the Ladies risked jail and savage beatings on the streets of Havana, President Obama hobnobbed with their oppressors.

In addition, several US elected officials have expressed support for the Cuban regime and even visited the regime, while political prisoners languish.

Just last week, another democracy activist in Cuba was killed in prison, marking the fourth verified death of July 11th 2021 protestors in state custody according to the watchdog group Justicia 11J and the 72nd documented prison death since 2023, according to the Cuban Prisons Documentation Center.

Why have other democratic states tolerated and even embraced oppressive regimes?

First, there is the idea of non-interference in "internal affairs" of another state serves as an excuse.

Second, the idea that states should act on their own self-interest, serves to encourage narrow-mindedness.

The first idea -- non-involvement in internal affairs of other states -- is articulated in the United Nations Charter. The Charter provides that states shall

not “intervene in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state....” (Article 2, sec. 7).

I say “excuse” because the non-involvement concept does not override other principles of international law, especially those espoused in the Nuremberg War Crimes trials after World War II.

Countries which do not wish to condemn another country’s dishonorable or immoral treatment of its residents turn to the “non-interference” idea as an excuse. “Not my job,” they essentially say.

Such states use the non-interference idea in a bait-and-switch methodology. The “Bait” is the non-interference idea. The “switch” is to apply the non-interference idea beyond its proper realm, so as to diminish its own sovereign powers and responsibility to exercise those powers in an honorable fashion.

Another relevant characteristic of the international system is that a state acts (and should act) based on its own interest. Thus, “the oppression of others does not affect my interests.”

Think – Rwanda genocide or Cambodian genocide or the Holocaust.

Of course, this myopic definition of interests and the perception of threats ignores the danger of the spread of oppressive doctrine. Such expansion of oppressive doctrine is a threat and should be perceived as involving another state’s interest. But such perception requires leadership and vision, which is often in short supply.

We need such understanding about the threats posed by legitimizing oppression. “Appeasement” of oppression carries the same dangers as appeasement of military aggression.

But many democratic states see no benefit in taking a principled stand against oppression. At least, they do not see benefits sufficient to justify the reduction in trade and the loss of tourism opportunities for their own residents as visitors whose trips are partly conducted on the backs of the oppressed.

Perhaps the greatest insight in this regard is that recognizing oppression and exploitation of people is psychologically distressing. We want to think that the world is better than it really is, and seeing the reality causes cognitive dissonance. It is easier to be a Pangloss, in Voltaire's *Candide*, who always sees the world with incurable, excessive, and unrealistic optimism in this "best of all possible worlds."

But Pangloss' foolhardy optimism is unwarranted in this "most dangerous of all possible worlds".

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so very much, Chairwoman, for that powerful testimony.

I would like to now recognize Ms. Werlau.

STATEMENT OF MARIA C. WERLAU

Ms. WERLAU. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and distinguished members of the committee for the opportunity and for caring.

My written statement focused on some of the Cuban regime's worst crimes, although it violates essentially all rights in the universal declaration of human rights. The human cost of the hemisphere's longest dictatorship ever, at least in post-colonial times, has impacted citizens of many countries aside from Cuba, including ours.

Comparisons pale with a regime that kills even defenseless children, and keeps its own version, almost identical, of the Berlin Wall at Guantanamo, lasting twice as long without receiving any attention, much less international outcry. It is impossible to do justice to so many horrors and its victims.

Today, Cuba's totalitarian military rulers, Communists only in name and Stalinist ways, hold on to power by sheer terror. They became apartheid capitalists in post-Soviet times, enhancing their usual monarchic privileges, but continuing to impose failed socialist central planning on the masses to preserve absolute control.

As a result, Cuba is a beggar State, a country of widespread ruin in a perennial State of crisis, its people in despair. The system is ideologically, morally, politically, and economically bankrupt, and its only foreseeable future is continuing decline.

The dictatorship, bent on remaining in power at all costs, allocates meager resources to building luxury hotels, setting the stage for a Russia-style transition. It hyper-funds a huge secret police for internal repression and a gigantic diplomatic intelligence and propaganda apparatus for international influence.

It expands its revolutionary model in neighboring Venezuela, Nicaragua, and beyond, has strong alliances with our enemies, such as Iran, North Korea, Russia, and China, and with criminal terrorist cartels. It infiltrates governments, including ours and around the world. It subverts democracies and even attacks our diplomats.

The international community offers the regime impunity, engagement, even support, appeasement at best. But the United States is exceptionally positioned to curtail its main sources of revenues. One, it's modern slavery; a state-run business exporting doctors, teachers, sailors, construction workers, and many others as commodities. Just the medical brigades raked in around \$31 billion in 2018 to 2022.

And two, aid from a growing U.S.-based diaspora, in remittances, merchandise, travel, telecom, and more, abetted by the loosened sanctions by executive order. Estimated at \$52 billion in the 11 years to 2019, this can only have grown with over 640,000 Cubans who poured through the border in 2022 to 2024 and around 100,000 granted humanitarian parole.

Enforcing the legally mandated sanctions in the Helms-Burton law and implementing additional measures under the Trafficking and Persons Victim Act and the State sponsors of terrorism des-

ignation would probably push the terminal patient to face its certain death.

Cuba's rulers could be forced to negotiate the peaceful transfer of power for a transition to democracy or flee the country counting on their large overseas assets, plundered systematically for decades. Otherwise, a protracted unraveling will likely lead to a worsening human rights humanitarian crisis with a growing potential for widespread turmoil and violence.

Measures that could be implemented very quickly are the travel and remittance sanctions of Helms-Burton; to combat the trafficking, sanctioning ministers of health of Cuba's partners, conditioning funding to PAHO, the Pan American Health Organization, and declaring Mexico in violation of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement; denying visa waivers to all travelers to Cuba, including Canadians; forbidding most technical, scientific exchanges and funding to all Cuban State institutions. There are many more. We are just not—out of time.

At the very least, these would combat exploitation and other nefarious activities, reinforcing Cuba's structural socioeconomic deformities and deny resources to the military monopoly. Anyhow, enforcement of our laws is essential to our democracy.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Werlau follows:]

**Prepared testimony by Maria C. Werlau
Executive Director of Cuba Archive / Free Society Project, Inc.
before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
hearing on “The Communist Cuban regime’s disregard for human rights”
December 11, 2024**

Since January 1st, 1959, for almost 66 years, the Cuban regime has committed egregious violations of, essentially, all human rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: of the right to life, freedom of thought, opinion, and expression, peaceful assembly and association, movement, conscience and religion, free choice of employment, just conditions of work, and due process of law, as well as to periodic and genuine elections, private property, privacy, forming trade unions, and more.

Many of these violations meet the definition of “crimes against humanity,” which has yet to been codified in a dedicated treaty of international law, but that is generally understood as inhuman acts directed against a civilian population deliberately committed knowingly by a government against its own subjects and characterized by their widespread or systematic nature, often involving state or organizational policy.¹

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, of 1998,² which reflects the consensus among the international community, provides a list that includes the following crimes against humanity that committed systematically by the Cuban Communist regime: murder; enslavement; deportation or forcible transfer of population; imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty; torture; persecution against identifiable groups based on political, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, or gender grounds; enforced disappearance of persons; apartheid; and other inhumane acts intentionally causing great suffering or serious injury to body or mental or physical health (such as forced labor and indoctrination of minors, family separation, denial of medical care and housing, deliberate impoverishment, and others). For reasons of space, I will focus on just a few.

I. Violations of the right to life.

Cuban victims of death and disappearance are estimated in the tens of thousands, but are in the many hundreds of thousands when accounting for the Cuban Communist regime’s numerous international armed interventions and brazen subversion of democracies in several continents and, in particular, in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Cuba Archive, the non-profit organization I co-founded in 2001, is developing a comprehensive record of the cost in lives of the Cuban revolution on a case-by-case basis, which is available in real time in an online database.³ Through December 7, 2024 we had documented 8,172 individual cases of death or disappearance attributed to agents of the Cuban State. We believe that the actual number is many times higher, but field work and access to official records is impossible in totalitarian Cuba

¹ See “Crimes Against Humanity,” Definitions of Genocide and Related Crimes, Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, United Nations.

² The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is the international treaty that founded the Court and establishes its governing framework. Adopted at the Rome Conference on 17 July 1998, it entered into force on 1 July 2002, thereby creating the International Criminal Court (ICC). The United States is not a member.

³ Database of Deaths and Disappearances, CubaArchive.org/database.

and enhanced documentation efforts are not possible with our minimal resources. The undercounting is particularly extreme in several categories including extrajudicial killings, deaths in prison, and the murder of civilians attempting to flee.

The Cuban regime's open disregard for human life continues in full display and, over six decades, has impacted not just Cubans but also citizens of many countries. 8 U.S. citizens have been executed by firing squad, 11 otherwise killed extrajudicially, 1 forcibly disappeared, and 8 killed in terrorist attacks sponsored or supported by Cuba (including Frank Connor,⁴ father of Joseph Connor, a witnesses at this hearing).

Mass firing squad executions in 1959 into the 1960s helped consolidate the Communist regime through sheer terror and effectively crushed the resistance.⁵ Since the late 1990s, there has been an unofficial moratorium on applying capital punishment, but the Penal Code establishes the death penalty delivered by firing squad for many causes including a very expansive definition of acts against "the security, independence, or integrity of the state" and the socialist order.⁶

The fact is that the Cuban regime has found and continues to find many ways to kill.

To date, Cuba Archive has documented 1,324 extrajudicial killings (actual or suspected) since January 1, 1959. Just this past November 30th, 30-year old political prisoner Manuel Guillén was beaten to death at the Combinado del Este prison of Havana, reported, as usual, as a suicide by hanging. His body showed clear signs of a brutal beating. Guillén was serving six years in prison for having filmed and distributed videos of nationwide mass demonstrations of July 11, 2021; he had refused to work for State Security within the prison.⁷

At least 13 political opponents have died since 2011 in circumstances suspected as extrajudicial killings, including Cuba's two main opposition leaders, Laura Pollán,⁸ of the Ladies in White, in 2011 and Oswaldo Payá,⁹ of the Christian Liberation Movement, in 2012.

171 extrajudicial killings have ensued in exit attempts from the national territory. In Cuba, it is a crime to leave without prior government authorization and Article 59 of the Penal Code punishes attempts to do so with years of prison,¹⁰ in violation of Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹¹ But, it is also punished with death. Since the start of the Communist regime, Cuban authorities have historically shot at, sunk vessels by ramming or throwing sandbags from small aircraft, and used other means of violence to prevent citizens from "escaping." These acts have been

⁴ "Frank Thomas Connor," <https://cubaarchive.org/database/?caseid=1324>; and "U.S. citizens killed or disappeared by Cuba's communist regime, 1959 to date," May 1, 2022, Work-in-progress, Cuba Archive, <https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/U.S.-citizens-updated-5.1.2022-1.pdf>

⁵ Cuba Archive has 3,083 firing squad executions, of which 2,737 occurred in 1959-1969, the first ten years of the revolution.

⁶ Ley 151/2022 "Código Penal" (GOC-2022-861-O93), Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, Gaceta Oficial No. 93 Ordinaria de 1ro de septiembre de 2022, Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba, Ministerio de Justicia.

⁷ "Manuel Jesús Guillén Esplugas," <https://cubaarchive.org/database/?caseid=11756>

⁸ "Laura Pollán Toledo," <https://cubaarchive.org/database/?caseid=207>.

⁹ "Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas," <https://cubaarchive.org/database/?caseid=430>.

¹⁰ This violates Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that states: "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country."

¹¹ Art. 13. "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country."

perpetrated on defenseless individuals of all ages, including dozens of minors. Several massacres are well documented; the latest occurred in October 2022 on the northern coast of Cuba's Pinar del Rio province, when Cuba's Border Guard rammed a vessel carrying 23 people and killed eight persons, including the 2-year old child Elizabeth Meizoso.¹²

At least 30 Cuban citizens have been sentenced and put to death by firing squad for attempting to leave the country "illegally," including:¹³ in 1963, three Protestant ministers forcibly repatriated after fleeing by boat to Anguilla Key, Bahamas; in 1981, three brothers, ages 19 to 25, captured in a Special troops raid of the Vatican Embassy in Havana, where they had sought asylum;¹⁴ in 2003, three young men who attempted to hijack a passenger ferry to escape Cuba.

Cuba also has a nearly identical version of the Berlin Wall and lasting more than twice as long,¹⁵ preventing citizens from reaching the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo. Barbed wire, high fences, mine fields, watch towers, dogs, and armed sharpshooters with orders to fire were complemented in the 1990s with a sea wall at Guantánamo Bay. The sea and land wall have taken hundreds, perhaps thousands, of victims who've lost their lives or limbs, eyesight, or paid with years of prison.¹⁶ This intentional and systematic killing of unarmed citizens attempting to escape their country arguably fits the definition of the crime of genocide.

II. Forced labor / trafficking in persons of exported temporary workers, mostly in medical missions.¹⁷

My personal involvement in this issue is extensive and especially based on many direct interviews with doctors and other workers who have served in Cuba's international missions. In 2009, I began to earnestly investigate and denounce this as a unique form of modern slavery in violation of numerous

¹² "Elizabeth Meizoso," <https://cubaarchive.org/database/?caseid=11477>; "Nos partieron la lancha al medio: Hablan desde Cuba sobrevivientes del hundimiento de lancha en Bahía Honda, América TeVé, Oct. 31, 2022." "Eso no fue accidente, fue asesinato", 14yMedio, Nov. 1, 2022. Also see "Extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances of civilians attempting to flee Cuba," op. cit.

¹³ "Extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances of civilians attempting to flee Cuba," Cuba Archive, November 21, 2022, <https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Killings-and-forced-disappearances-in-exit-attempts.pdf>. Also see individual case records at [CubaArchive.org/database](https://cubaarchive.org/database).

¹⁴ [CubaArchive.org/database](https://cubaarchive.org/database) (all records have the sources of the information). Also see "Submission For the Universal Periodic Review of Cuba of May 2018," NGO Submission for the United Nations Human Rights Council, Oct. 5, 2017, prepared by Cuba Archive / Free Society Project and co-submitted with Cubalex and The Human Rights Foundation Center for Law and Democracy, <https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Right-to-Life-UNHRC-UPR.pdf>

¹⁵ The Berlin Wall existed from August 1961 to November 1989. Over 100,000 citizens of the German Democratic Republic, GDR (Communist Germany) tried to escape across the inner-German border or the Berlin Wall between 1961 and 1988. More than 600 were shot and killed by GDR border guards or otherwise died during their escape attempt. At the Berlin Wall alone, at least 100 were shot and killed, accidentally killed, or killed themselves when they were caught. ("Victims of the Wall," https://www.berlin.de/mauer/en/history/victims-of-the-wall/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

¹⁶ Cuba's Berlin Wall still stands: killings and disappearances of persons fleeing towards the U.S. base at Guantánamo," Cuba Archive, Nov. 10, 2014, <https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Cubas-Berlin-Wall-Still-Stands-11.10.2014.pdf>

¹⁷ This section primarily takes, at times literally, from a report written by the author from extensive investigations since 2009: "Overview of Trafficking in Persons in Cuba's Medical Brigades," Free Society Project /Cuba Archive, Nov. 15, 2023,

<https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Overview-of-TIP-in-Cubas-Medical-Brigades-11.2023.pdf>

international standards and agreements, including the Trafficking in Persons Protocol (2003).¹⁸ In 2010, I published the first of several academic papers that have followed, presented at a conference in July 2010,¹⁹ and an Opinion Editorial in *The Wall Street Journal*.²⁰ In 2016, I testified in this Committee on the trafficking.²¹ Over the years, the international community has become increasingly aware that this is a practice similar to slavery, which is universally accepted as a “crime against humanity” when committed by public officials against any person.

In fact, the Cuban government runs a global business that exports Cuban workers as “commodities” and generates the largest official source of revenues of the Cuban State. Doctors, nurses, medical technicians, teachers, sports trainers, musicians, entertainers, sailors, I.T. specialists, military experts, repressors, scientists, agronomists, architects, construction workers, geologists, tobacco rollers, and others from myriad fields are sent on “internationalist missions” of 2 to 3 years. They can be called into duty at very short notice and are systematically exploited overseas as modern slaves in partnership with governments, international organizations, and private entities that sign “confidential” (secret) agreements with Cuba’s Ministry of Health or specialized State agencies, such as Comercializadora de Servicios or Antex (the later only in Angola). Cuba typically receives payment from host governments entering into bilateral agreements with entities of the Cuban State; in certain cases international agencies or third countries pay the bill. Cuba retains between 97% to 80% of the wages paid per worker.

Aside from the labor exploitation, workers are subject to many other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatments, such as long enforced family separation and the prohibition from entering Cuba for at least eight years and confiscating wages held in savings if “deserting” a mission.²²

As of September 2021, Cuba had 327 state enterprises exporting services;²³ details are lacking, given the usual lack of transparency from Cuban entities, but the so-called “medical internationalism” reportedly generates from 55-75% of the revenues. In May 2023, Cuba was reporting around 22,000 medical workers serving in around 58 to 59 countries from over 605,698 workers who had served until that date across five continents.²⁴

¹⁸ The Trafficking in Persons Protocol is a supplement to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>

¹⁹ Maria C. Werlau, “Cuba-Venezuela’s Health Diplomacy: The Politics of Humanitarianism,” Cuba in Transition: Volume 20, Nov. 2010.

²⁰ Maria C. Werlau, “Cuba’s Cash-for-Doctors Program,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 16, 2010.

²¹ Maria C. Werlau, Testimony to the U.S. Congress, Washington, D.C., Mar. 22, 2016. U.S. House of Representatives’ Hearing of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations Committee on Foreign Affairs, “Get it right this time: a victims-centered trafficking in persons report.”

²² An undetermined number, allegedly up to 20%, of the Cuban doctors reportedly decided to remain in Brazil when Cuba removed the entire mission in November 2018. (For more information on Cuba’s temporary workers’ program, see <https://nosomosdesertores.com> and “Fact Sheet: Cuba’s export workers,” op. cit.)

²³ “MINCEX: Cuba tiene muchas potencialidades para incrementar exportaciones,” *Cuba Debate*, Oct. 12, 2021.

²⁴ Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, X, May 23, 2023, <https://x.com/DiazCanelB/status/1660991669112537090>; “Cuba denuncia que EE. UU. lanza convocatoria con fondos millonarios para fomentar campaña contra colaboración médica, Granma, Jul. 22, 2023; Cuba denuncia que EE. UU. lanza convocatoria con fondos millonarios para fomentar campaña contra colaboración médica, Granma, Jul. 22, 2023 <https://www.granma.cu/cuba/2023-07-22/cuba-denuncia-que-ee-uu-lanza-convocatoria-con-fondos->

Cuba also uses these “brigades” to advance its geostrategic, political, and economic goals, deriving capital that translates into myriad benefits: strengthened ties with host nations, international support including votes in international organizations, opportunities to spy and recruit agents for Cuba’s intelligence services, assistance, loans, investments, access to needed imports and markets for Cuba’s exports. The workers sent overseas in any capacity may be officials of Cuban intelligence or recruited clandestine agents; when not, they must still do the bidding of Cuban intelligence (serving as informants and/or agents of influence, etc.) or face reprisals.

These labor arrangements date back to the early 1960s, when Cuba started to export workers to allies. Over time, the scheme in the medical and educational fields attained the acquiescence, support, and even the participation of many democratic governments and international agencies such as the *World Health Organization* and the *Pan American Health Organization*. A huge number of Cuban collaborators sent to Chavez in Venezuela starting in 2003 and, by 2005, export services net of tourism had become Cuba’s primary source of revenues. In 2018-2022 Cuba reported \$31 billion in revenues from “health and social service” exports and medical export services generated \$4.9 billion in 2022.²⁵ These revenues are not used to help the people of Cuba. According to Cuba’s Office of National Statistics, in 2018 to 2022 just .6% to 2% of the reported export services were invested in social services including health.

Cuba: Health service exports & Investments in social services incl. health

US\$ millions

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Exports of health and social services	\$6,398.5	\$5,382.2	\$3,997.9	\$4,349.9	\$4,882.2
Investment in social services incl. health	\$51.5	\$27.7	\$40.4	\$557.4	\$789.3
% of invest. in social services incl. health	1%	0.60%	1%	2%	2%

Source: Statistical Yearbooks, Cuba’s National Office of Statistics and Information.

The Cuban regime and its international networks --agents of influence, allies, and friends--diligently glorify the practice²⁶ as “solidarity” and “humanitarianism,” promoting its global expansion through intense diplomatic, intelligence, and propaganda efforts.

III. Many other egregious violations

The totalitarian Cuban regime has brought upon millions of Cuba exile, family separation, forced expatriation, indoctrination, untold miseries, and despair, denied their right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services (Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Enforced socialist central planning

millonarios-para-fomentar-campana-contra-colaboracion-medica (Actual numbers are impossible to verify and are reported inconsistently by Cuban officials and official agencies.)

²⁵ Anuario Estadístico de Cuba, Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, www.one.cu.

²⁶ See one well-funded US-based effort at <http://medicc.org/ns/> and one of several books with this approach: John M. Kirk & H. Michael Enisman, *Cuban medical internationalism: origins, evolution, and goals* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

for the masses (always with exclusive privileges for the ruling elite) quickly destroyed a thriving economy and middle class and turning Cuba into a parasitic state that today receives aid from even tiny St. Vincent and the Grenadines. As of October 2024, Cuba held at least 1,117 political prisoners in terrible conditions including at work camps subjected to forced labor. Over 550 are still incarcerated for their involvement in the July 11, 2021 mass peaceful protests all over Cuba.²⁷

Since 1986 Cuba's external debt is in moratorium and it has defaulted time and again on restructuring agreements despite massive debt forgiveness. Today, the country is a land of widespread misery and despair, with a wrecked infrastructure, continually declining agricultural and industrial production, with a huge deficit in housing as buildings and houses crumbling to the ground on top of its inhabitants. Migration crisis, fertility crisis, sanitary crisis, demographic crisis, a terrifying number of suicides... It presents a desolate panorama whose only foreseeable future is continuing decline.

The rulers, now open capitalists of an enclave and apartheid system loosen and reimpose restrictions so-called economic "reforms" at will, as there are no judicial guarantees for the entrepreneurs or investors, national or foreign. In fact, many citizens of Canada, Britain, Spain, Chile, and other countries have been imprisoned for years under fabricated charges without due process of law.

Meanwhile, Cuba has consistently acted against the United States and regional and global security.²⁸ It has apparently allowed or participated in attacking US and Canadian diplomats with sonic devices. It has undermined and subverted democracies and directly intervening in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Bolivia to impose its authoritarian model. The Cuban regime is like a cancer that has spread its insidious ways, with a revolutionary plan for regional expansion today called "the Bolivarian Alliance." It has solidified political, military and strategic alliances with Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, Belarus, Vietnam, and the likes, to challenge and defeat the United States. It continues supporting and harboring terrorists and criminals from the U.S., Spain, Colombia, and many other countries. It has participated in drug trafficking and many other illegal international activities.

As the citizens, forced into poverty, lack even basic food, medicines, and essential services, the regime devotes massive resources to build hotels,²⁹ for internal repression, and to fund a huge diplomatic-intelligence-propaganda apparatus for international influence. No other country of similar economic standing or size comes close to this investment, in fact, very few larger and much richer do.

Cuba's huge network of around 126 embassies, 20 consulates, and 20 representations, includes a mission to the UN New York of 45 diplomats, entirely disproportionate to its economy and size. Most, if not all, the embassies have embedded intelligence centers dedicated to recruiting agents and managing a gigantic global army of spies, collaborators, and propagandists: journalists, government officials, artists, scientists, academics, etc. to advance Cuba's goals. The Directorate of Intelligence's

²⁷ "The Cuban regime keeps more than 550 demonstrators from July 11th imprisoned," CiberCuba, Nov. 28. 2024.

²⁸ The author has written and presented extensively on this issue. Here publications on this topic include Maria C. Werlau, *Cuba's intervention in Venezuela: a strategic occupation with global implications*, Free Society Project, 2019.

²⁹ 12.6 - Volumen de inversiones por clase de actividad económica, Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, República de Cuba.

prime objective is to advance Cuba's interests by countering the U.S. Cuba is estimated to have at least 5,000 intelligence relations in the U.S.³⁰ and over 1,600 in Latin America and the Caribbean.³¹

Fidel Castro considered propaganda "the main food of the revolution"³² and, from the beginning of the revolutionary regime, prioritized building a synchronized propaganda apparatus under the ideological department of the Cuban Communist Party. Prensa Latina, one of two news agencies, has a staff of around 500 and 1,000 freelancers in 400 offices internationally, and operates in six languages in multiple print, television, radio, and digital sites.³³ Cuba also funds a vast and unique international solidarity network it has built over decades that, according to its reports, has 1,649 friendship associations in 150 countries, 73 alumni associations in 62 countries, and relationships with 60 peace organizations in 57 countries. In 2023, it created 109 "Parliamentary Friendship Groups" to influence foreign policy within parliaments worldwide: 34 in Europe, 21 in the Americas/Caribbean, 28 in Africa & Middle East, and 26 in Asia.³⁴

It is no surprise, then, that Cuba's Communist dictatorship enjoys impunity and even worldwide support despite its egregious human rights violations and threats to global peace and security. With its parasitic socialist economy in perennial crisis, it receives extensive unconditional aid from governments and international organizations.

U.S. policy recommendations: a path forward

The Cuban regime expends massive global efforts to blame the U.S. embargo for everything that goes wrong in Cuba; some just argue that because "economic sanctions on Cuba have not worked," they should be eliminated. Since 1992, Cuba has presented an annual resolution to the UN General Assembly on the "necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba." It's a cheap shot against the U.S. that receives overwhelming global support, and is inconsequential to everyone but the forgotten people of Cuba. But this and other such pronouncements are totally silent on what the international community is willing to do regarding its "responsibility to protect" the oppressed people of Cuba. The U.S. remains the only country willing to pressure for change in Cuba with something more than empty words. In fact, even empty words are lacking. I cannot recall any General Assembly resolutions on any of the egregious human rights violation or international interventions by the Cuban regime.

Since 2005, the UN enshrined its responsibility to protect "should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity." The intervention may be by peaceful means such as

³⁰ "Estimated Number of Cuba's Intelligence Relationships Dedicated to Working Against the United States," Cuba Archive, Dec. 2021, <https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Intelligence-relations-in-US-12.2021-update.pdf>

³¹ "Relaciones de Inteligencia de Cuba en Latinoamérica y el Caribe," Cuba Archive, Dec. 2021, <https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Relaciones-de-Inteligencia-Latinoam.pdf>

³² "Un grave alerta de Guaicaipuro Lameda," Las Armas de Coronel, Mar. 11, 2016 <https://lasarmasdecoronel.blogspot.com/2016/03/un-grave-alerta-de-guaicaipuro-lameda.html>

³³ Maria Werlau, *Cuba's intervention in Venezuela*, op. cit.

³⁴ Nuria Barbosa León, "Cuba, un faro de solidaridad," *Granma*, Dec. 27, 2022, <https://www.granma.cu/mundo/2022-12-27/cuba-un-faro-de-solidaridad-27-12-2022-19-12-34>

diplomacy, mediation, or sanctions and, as a last resort, through collective action through the UN Security Council, including the use of force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.³⁵

Actually, the Cuban regime is rewarded by the vast majority of the international community for its misdeeds. On November 15th, 2023, Cuba was [elected](#) to the Executive Board of UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) for 2023-2027.³⁶ On October 10th, 2023, 76% of the General Assembly's possible votes (146 of 192), to sit at the [Human Rights Council](#) for a second 3-year term, responsible for "the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe." In 2022, Cuba was elected to three subsidiary bodies of the UN Economic and Social Council, in 2021 to the International Labor Organization's Governing Body (2021-2024), and in 2020 to the Executive Boards of the Pan-American Health Organization (2020-2023), UN Children's Fund, UNICEF (2020-2022), and World Food Program (2020-2022).

Many have called --and some continue to call-- for engagement and appeasement of Cuba's rulers. But if anything has not worked it is that. An ever revolving door of presidents, former presidents, kings and queens to be, parliamentarians, ministers, business leaders, scientists, and heads of international organizations from all over the world have paid court to the criminal Cuban dictatorship with official visits, "dialogue," unilateral concessions, massive debt forgiveness, continuing financial and material aid, free transfer of scientific and technical support, red carpet treatment of its leaders at major capitals, and even awards and nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. Yet, since the official dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, which led to Cuba's opening to foreign investment and a tourist industry focused on capitalist visitors, at least 401 have been killed extrajudicially,³⁷ thousands imprisoned, and millions pushed into exile.

What would likely work is if existing US laws are fully enforced that call for isolation and pressure on the Cuban regime to stop oppressing its people and threatening our national security. Many U.S. laws have been eroded by executive mandate or ignored. First, it is the right thing to do, second, it is the usual second line of defense short of an armed intervention, and third, it could be the final blow to an evil regime that has enslaved its people and is a threat to our country, the region, and the world. Indeed, multilateral sanctions would be best, and this great democracy should push to elicit them, but the fact is that the U.S. alone can greatly impact Cuba's primary sources of revenues.

The list of current legislation in place includes the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (also known as "Helms Burton law"), the Trafficking in Persons Victims Act (TVPA), and additional measures under the State Sponsor of Terrorism designation and the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act.

³⁵ About the responsibility to protect, Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/genocide-prevention/responsibility-protect/about>; Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 16 September 2005, 60/1, 2005 World Summit Outcome, United Nations, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_60_1.pdf

³⁶ "Díaz-Canel hails Cuba's election to UNESCO Executive Board," Cubanew/CAN, Nov. 16, 2023 <http://www.cubanews.acn.cu/cuba/22967-diaz-canel-hails-cuba-s-election-to-unesco-executive-board>

³⁷ Cuba Archive Database, op. cit.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so very much. Mr. Connor?

STATEMENT OF JOSEPH F. CONNOR

Mr. CONNOR. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, committee members, fellow witnesses, and everyone watching.

My name is Joe Connor. Since the Communist revolution, the Cuban government has been an abuser of human rights, domestically in Cuba and in the United States. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person.

Cuba violated the Connor family's human rights, specifically the rights of our father, Frank Connor, and other Americans to live. Our father, 33-year-old Frank Connor, and three other innocent men, Alejandro Berger, Jim Gezork, and Hal Sherburne, were murdered while scores were injured and maimed on January 24, 1975, 50 years ago next month when the Marxist Cuban-fueled Puerto Rican terrorist group Armed Forces for National Liberation, FALN, blew up New York's historic Fraunces Tavern during a lunchtime crowd—a crowded lunchtime.

The FALN appointed themselves my father's judge, jury, and executioner profiling, targeting, and savagely murdering reactionary executives, as they put it, in their Communiqué No. 3 that day. The Connor family had planned to celebrate my 9th and my brother's 11th birthdays that very night.

Fraunces Tavern was targeted by the FALN, who paid lip service to Puerto Rican independence, but, in reality, sought to impose a Cuban-style socialist regime in Puerto Rico. They chose it for its proximity to Wall Street, and for its storied reputation as the birthplace of American liberty. Alexander Hamilton and the Sons of Liberty met there. General George Washington bade farewell to his officers at the end of the revolutionary war at Fraunces Tavern.

Between 1974 and 1983, the FALN claimed responsibility for over 130 bombs in U.S. and Puerto Rico, including another deadly bombing on August 3, 1977, when Charles Steinberg was murdered at the Mobil Oil Building in New York. Incredibly, I worked in that building four decades later.

That same day in 1977, an FALN bomb threat caused the first evacuation of the World Trade Center. That is how serious these guys were. Though never prosecuted specifically for the Fraunces bombing, the unrepentant terrorists served only 18 years of prison sentences ranging from 55 to 70 years. As Hillary Clinton geared up for her 2000 Senate run and was looking to connect with New York Hispanic community, Bill Clinton granted clemency to the FALN, a blatant political gesture orchestrated by then-Attorney General, Eric Holder.

One of the FALN leaders, Oscar Lopez Rivera was so dedicated to his Marxist cause and his comrades that he refused the 1999 Clinton clemency. Although in 2017, he accepted an unprecedented second Presidential clemency from Obama-Biden in their last days in office.

Shortly after his release on May 18, 2017, Cuban President Raul Castro released a message to Lopez Rivera congratulating the terrorists with all the honors and affection you deserve. William Mo-

rales, chief bomb maker, was not offered clemency by Obama or Clinton.

Morales likely built the deadly device used at Fraunces and Mobil Oil. On July 12, 1978, which would have been my dad's 37th birthday, Morales blew off part of his face and nine of his fingers when the bomb he was crafting exploded in his Queens bomb factory. The apartment contained explosives, incendiary devices, mixtures, tools, FALN communiques, and even the copy machine used to make those communiques, including the January 4one.

Morales was captured, tried, convicted, and sentenced in 1979 to up to 99 years, 10 Federal, 89 in New York State in prison, but escaped from Bellevue Hospital in May 1977 with the assistance of other radicals who called themselves the Revolutionary Armed Task Force.

During the State trial, Morales boasted, No jail is going to hold me forever. They can put a thousand of us in jail, they are not going to hold us forever. That is what I have to say. Morales was right.

Through an FALN investigation run by the Chicago Terrorist Task Force, Morales was located in Puebla, Mexico, in 1983. When the Mexican police closed in, he and an accomplice killed the Mexican police officer. Morales was arrested, charged with being accessory to murder and imprisoned in Mexico.

In 1988, defying President Reagan's extradition demands, the sympathetic Mexican government allowed Morales safe-haven to Cuba, where he remains a guest of the regime, along with scores of murderous, felonious fugitives, such as Victor Gerena and Black Liberation Army cop killer Joanne Chesimard.

On May 2, 1973, Chesimard and two accomplices opened fire on two New Jersey State troopers during a motor vehicle stop. Chesimard and her accomplice wounded one State trooper and executed Werner Foerster at point-blank range. After a 6-week trial in March 1977, Chesimard was found guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison.

On November 2, 1979, Chesimard, aided by armed individuals posing as visitors, like Morales, escaped from what is now the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women, and fled to Cuba where she has been a guest of the Communist regime.

Soon after Morales's flight to Cuba in the early 1990's, I began my campaign to have Morales and Chesimard returned to American justice, writing letters to the Justice Department, making contacts with the NYPD, State Department, Joint Terrorist Task Force. Meeting only frustration, I persisted, expanding with communications to Presidents George W. Bush—George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, New Jersey State Senate—Jersey Senator Bill Bradley, New York's Cardinal O'Connor, and Mayor Giuliani. During this campaign, I quickly realized how closely Cuba and the FALN are connected.

For the sake of brevity in my testimony, I will only provide certain highlights. Details are in my written testimony, and for additional information, please see retired FBI agent Rick Hahn's definitive history of the FALN, "Terror's Dawn," and my book with Jeff Ingber, "Shattered Lives," both sent to the committee previously.

And just a couple of examples, President Castro met with—from “Shattered Lives” in our book, President Castro—Fidel Castro met with Puerto Rican-born Cuban intelligence officer Filiberto Ojeda and encouraged him to form a Puerto Rican armed resistance, which Cuba would help train.

In 1974, Ojeda was in the U.S., and he began—he established the FALN, along with former MIRA members, and supported logistically by the Cuban intelligence services.

In October 19—October 27, 1975, communique left at the site of the FALN’s bombing of the Standard Oil Building in Chicago read: The FALN welcomes the support given the Puerto Rican National Liberation struggle at the solidarity conference in Cuba. We especially acknowledge the moral support given to our organization by the Cuban people and government in a speech made by Prime Minister Fidel Castro. But the history of Cuba supporting Puerto Rico through Marxist, through terrorism goes back decades before the FALN, and the Weather Underground, who was also involved.

In September 1979, President Carter, as a significant humanitarian gesture, commuted the sentences of four imprisoned Puerto Rican nationalists who were convicted of a 1954 armed assault on the Capitol Building that left five Congressmen shot and wounded.

After their release, the freed prisoners jointly embarked on a victory tour, appearing in Chicago, New York, and Puerto Rico. They claimed they had no remorse and could not rule out future violence in the name of Puerto Rican independence. Not long after, they returned to Havana as honored guests of Fidel Castro.

In 1983, a \$7 million Wells Fargo robbery in Hartford, Connecticut, was another demonstration of the ongoing links between Puerto Rican Marxist and Cuba. Some of these \$7 million went to purchase of a motor home used for sneaking FALN terrorist Victor Gerena into Mexico. Masetti, one of the people involved, waited at the border and helped disguise Gerena, handed him a Cuban passport, and arranged his flight from Mexico City to Havana. Cuba kept about half the stolen money according to conversations the FBI intercepted among Los Macheteros members.

Despite my efforts and Cuba’s sponsoring of terrorists, the Obama administration removed Cuba from the State Sponsor of Terror list. On July 1st, 2015, President Obama announced the establishment of formal relations with Cuba before actually visiting the Marxist State in March 2016.

As Obama announced the Cuba visit, I immediately began receiving texts, calls, and emails from reporters who knew our family’s long-standing fight for justice. Ironically, I answered those requests from Joint Base Guantanamo Bay. You see, I am a 9/11 family member, too. My cousin Steve Schlag was murdered on 9/11 as I saw the planes hit. He was my dad’s Godson. And I was in Guantanamo Bay at that time witnessing the pretrial hearings of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and the other terrorists.

Our family has continued to fight through this endless injustices directed at my dad. Along with fighting the reprehensible clemencies ending Oscar Lopez Rivera’s 2011 parole bid by facing him at the Federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana, we also successfully forced the City University of New York in 2013 to close down the disgusting Guillermo Morales/Assata Shakur Student Center on

campus. CUNY had a student center named for two convicted terrorists, one of whom was complicit in my father's murder, and my father went to CCNY.

Incredibly but not surprisingly, in November 2017, only 10 months after his second Presidential clemency, Lopez was received as a honored guest in Havana where he paid tribute to the late commander in chief, Fidel Castro, and Che Guevara, was decorated with the order of solidarity.

Our families fought for Morales's extradition to the U.S. for decades to hold Cuba responsible for their role in our father's death and in protecting members of the terrorist group who murdered him.

In 2024, following lobbying by our family, the Frank Connor Werner Foerster Justice Act was introduced by Senator Marco Rubio, co-sponsored by Senator Rick Scott. The Walter Patterson and Werner Foerster Justice and Extradition Act was introduced in the House of Representatives in 2023. We currently have a documentary film on these issues.

The Connor and Patterson Acts both call out Cuba for stomping on American's human rights for supporting and sponsoring terrorists. They demand the return of Morales, Chesimard, Gerena and others to face justice and to keep Cuba, human rights violator, on the State Sponsor of Terror list.

We call on President Biden and President-Elect Trump to secure the return of Morales and the other terrorists and guarantee Cuba ends its systemic human rights violations so Frank Connor's life will be remembered for justice. Cuba must first end their sponsorship of terrorists by returning Morales, Chesimard, Gerena and all before the U.S. considers their removal from the State Sponsor of Terror list.

Thank you, Joe Connor.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Connor follows:]

Joseph F. Connor
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
December 11, 2024

Since the communist revolution, the Cuban Government has been an abuser of Human Rights domestically in Cuba and in the United States. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that “everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.” Cuba violated the Connor family’s human rights; specifically the right for our father Frank Connor and other Americans to live.

Our father, 33-year-old Frank Connor, and three other innocent men, Alex Berger, Jim Gezork and Harold Sherbourne were murdered, while scores were injured and maimed, on January 24, 1975, (50 years ago next month) when the Marxist, Cuban fueled, Puerto Rican terrorist group [Armed Forces for National Liberation \(“FALN”\)](#) blew up New York’s historic [Fraunces Tavern](#) during a crowded lunchtime. The FALN appointed themselves my father’s judge, jury, and executioner, profiling, targeting, and savagely murdering, as they put in [Communique #3](#) standard Marxist language, “reactionary corporate executives”. The Connor family had planned to celebrate my 9th and my brother’s 11th birthday that very night.

[Fraunces Tavern was targeted by the FALN](#) — who paid lip service to Puerto Rican independence but in reality sought to impose a Cuban-style socialist regime in Puerto Rico — for its proximity to Wall Street and for its storied reputation as the birthplace of American liberty. Alexander Hamilton and the Sons of Liberty met there. General George Washington bade farewell to his officers at Fraunces after the Revolutionary War.

Between 1974 and 1983, the FALN claimed responsibility for over 130 bombings in the U.S. and Puerto Rico including another deadly bombing on August 3, 1977 when Charles Steinberg was murdered at the Mobil Oil building in New York (incredibly an office building I worked in four decades later). That same day in 1977 an FALN bomb threat caused the first evacuation of The World Trade Center.

Though never prosecuted specifically for the Fraunces bombing, the unrepentant terrorists served only 18 years of prison sentences ranging from 35 to 70 years. As [Hillary Clinton geared up for her 2000 New York Senate](#) run and was looking to connect with New York’s Hispanic community, Bill Clinton granted clemency to the FALN, a blatant political gesture orchestrated by then-[deputy attorney general Eric Holder](#). One, leader [Oscar Lopez Rivera](#), was so dedicated to his Marxist cause and his comrades that he refused the 1999 Clinton clemency; although in 2017 he accepted an unprecedented second presidential clemency from Obama / Biden. It was one of the administration’s last acts in office. Shortly after his release, on May 18, 2017 Cuban President [Raul Castro released a message to Lopez Rivera congratulating the terrorist](#) “...with all the honors and affection you deserve...”

[William Morales](#), chief FALN bomb-maker, was not offered Clinton or Obama clemency. Morales likely built the deadly devices used at Fraunces and the Mobil Oil building. On July 12, 1978, which would have been my dad's 37th birthday, Morales blew off part of his face and nine of his fingers when a bomb he was crafting exploded in his Queens bomb factory. The apartment contained explosives, incendiary mixtures, tools, FALN communiqués, and even the copy machine used to make the FALN communiqués, including the [January 24, 1975, communiqué](#) found after the Fraunces bombing.

[Morales was captured, tried, convicted, and sentenced in 1979](#) to up to 99 years (10 federal, 89 NY State) in prison but escaped from Bellevue prison hospital with the assistance of other radicals who called themselves the Revolutionary Armed Task Force. During the state trial, Morales boasted: "No jail is going to hold me forever. They can put 1,000 of us in jail. They are not going to hold us forever. That's what I have to say." Morales was right.

Through a FALN investigation run by the Chicago Terrorist Task Force, Morales was located in Puebla, Mexico, in 1983. When the Mexican police closed in, he and an accomplice killed a Mexican police officer. Morales was arrested, charged with being an accessory to murder, and imprisoned in Mexico.

In 1988, ignoring President Reagan's extradition demands, the sympathetic Mexican government allowed Morales travel to Cuba, where he remains a guest of the regime along with scores of murderous and felonious fugitives such as [Victor Gerena](#) and Black Liberation Army cop killer [Joanne Chesimard](#) (aka Assata Shakur).

On May 2, 1973, Chesimard and 2 accomplices opened fire on 2 New Jersey State troopers during a motor vehicle stop. Chesimard and her accomplices wounded 1 State trooper and executed State Trooper Werner Foerster at point-blank range. After a 6-week trial in March 1977, Chesimard was found guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. On November 2, 1979, Chesimard, aided by armed individuals posing as visitors, like Morales, escaped from what is now the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women and fled to Cuba where she has been given safe haven by the communist regime.

Soon after **William Morales'** flight to Cuba, in the early 1990s I began my campaign to have Morales and Chesimard returned to American justice, [writing letters](#) to the Justice Department and making contacts with the NYPD, State Department, and Joint Terrorist Task Force. Meeting only frustration, I persisted, expanding with communications to Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley, New York's Cardinal O'Connor, and Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

During this campaign I quickly realized how closely Cuba and the FALN were connected.

For additional detail, please see retired FBI agent Rick Hahn's definitive history of the FALN, ***Terror's Dawn*** and my book with Jeff Ingber ***Shattered Lives***, both previous sent to the committee.

From *Shattered Lives*:

“...Fidel Castro met with Puerto Rican born, Cuban intelligence officer, [Filiberto Ojeda Ríos](#) and encouraged him to form a Puerto Rican armed resistance group, which Cuba would help train. Ojeda Ríos returned to Puerto Rico in 1969 to organize and lead the first of Puerto Rico’s new militant political groups, the Movimiento Independentista Revolucionario Armando, aka “MIRA” After dozens of successful guerilla actions in Puerto Rico and New York City, MIRA was disbanded by police in the early 1970s based on information provided by an informant who had infiltrated the group.

“In 1974, Ojeda Ríos was arrested in Puerto Rico, but after being granted bond, he fled to New York, where he worked in the Cuban mission to the U.N. While immersed in that supposed peace-promoting environment, Ojeda Ríos established the FALN along with former MIRA members, supported logistically by Cuban intelligence services...To a greater extent than other Puerto Rican *independistas*, the FALN developed links to domestic terrorist groups, which were facilitated by Cuba. The FALN partnered with and was greatly influenced by the militant, left-wing Weathermen group (also known as the “Weather Underground”), which took its name from a Bob Dylan lyric, “You don’t need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows.” FALN members were acquainted with the book *Prairie Fire: The Politics of Revolutionary Anti-Imperialism*, written and published covertly in 1974 by [Bill Ayers](#), Bernardine Dohrn, and others, which functioned as the Weathermen’s ideological manifesto and vision for the impending world revolution.”

In Hahn’s *Terror’s Dawn* the various FALN communiques are studied in detail. The last paragraph of the first communique referred to an [October 27, 1974](#) demonstration in support of Puerto Rican independence at Madison Square Garden held the same night as 5 FALN bombs exploded and read,

“Finally, the FALN supports the demonstration at Madison Square Garden on October 27 in support of the independence of Puerto Rico. We view this as a significant step in the formation of an anti-imperialist front in the United States, which will support and fight for the national liberation of Puerto Rico, and educate the American people to the murderous and genocidal policies of the Yanki capitalists throughout the world.”

As Agent Hahn puts it, “Following up on the communiqué’s reference to the Puerto Rican Solidarity Day function, the FBI sought to identify who had rented Madison Square Garden for the rally. The names were familiar to the FBI. The persons who signed the contract were known in the FBI files as persons with links to the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, a support organization for the Weather Underground who commenced a bombing campaign in the U.S. They were also among those identified with the Cuban sponsored “Venceremos Brigades”, an operation of the Cuban government which recruited young, idealistic American youth on U. S. campuses to travel to Cuba, ostensibly to assist in harvesting sugar cane and other humanitarian tasks. In fact, the Brigades were thought to be a propaganda and intelligence tool of the Cuban government. The organization was used to create a community sympathetic toward communist Cuba in the U.S. It was also believed to be a recruitment and indoctrination farm for Cuban intelligence, which strove to exploit smart, idealistic, left-leaning American youth.

"The (communiques') language convinced many that, indeed, the FALN was an operation of Cuban intelligence, designed to disrupt and embarrass the US. The timing of the bombings was also suspicious, for on October 30, 1974, just days after the first bombings, the 16 member United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization, a committee whose function was to encourage self-determination for all countries, was to hear the case of Puerto Rico. The issue of whether Puerto Rico was a US colony and should be declared as such was pressed by Cuba against the desires of the US...All of this made Cuba high on the list of suspects. It was theorized the FALN could be the product of the Cuban Government, utilizing a few Cuban trained Puerto Rican recruits."

An October 27, 1975 communique left at the site of the FALN's bombing of the Standard Oil Building in Chicago read,

"The FALN welcomes the support given the Puerto Rican National Liberation struggle at the solidarity conference in Cuba and the meeting of Non-aligned nations in Peru in September. We especially acknowledge the moral support given to our organization by the Cuban people and government in a speech made by Prime Minister Fidel Castro in August in which he said that the Cuban government would do all it could to support the FALN."

But the history of Cuba supporting Puerto Rican Marxism, through terror goes back decades before the FALN and Weather Underground.

"In September 1979, President Jimmy Carter, as a "significant humanitarian gesture," commuted the sentences of four imprisoned Puerto Rican Nationalists—Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Ivan Flores, and Oscar Collazo— (who were convicted a 1954 armed assault on the Capitol Building that left five congressmen shot and wounded) to time served. It later was alleged that the clemency was offered as part of a secret agreement with Fidel Castro that secured freedom for CIA agents imprisoned in Cuba.

"The freed prisoners jointly embarked on a "victory tour." Appearing at rallies in Chicago, New York, and Puerto Rico, they proclaimed they had no remorse and could not rule out future violence in the name of Puerto Rican independence. Not long after their return to Puerto Rico, the four visited Havana as honored guests of Fidel Castro."

The 1983 Wells Fargo robbery in Hartford Ct was yet another demonstration of the ongoing links between the Puerto Rican Marxist movement and Cuba. From *Shattered Lives*:

"Jorge Masetti, a former Cuban diplomat who would defect to the United States, testified that, weeks before the robbery, he delivered \$50,000 to the Macheteros (sister group to FALN) on orders from his superiors in Castro's Department of the Americas, the Cuban agency created to support revolutionary movements. Some of the money went to the purchase of a motor home used for sneaking (FALN terrorist Victor) Gerena into Mexico. Masetti himself waited at the border and helped disguise Gerena, handed him a Cuban passport, and arranged his flight from Mexico City to Havana. Cuba kept about half the stolen money, according to conversations the FBI later intercepted among Los Macheteros members."

Despite my efforts and Cuba's sponsoring of terrorists, the Obama administration removed Cuba from the State Sponsor of Terror list. On July 1, 2015, President Obama announced the establishment of formal relations with Cuba before actually visiting the Marxist state in March 2016. As Obama announced his Cuba visit, I immediately began receiving calls, texts, and emails from reporters who knew our family's longstanding fight for justice. Ironically, I answered those requests from [Joint Base Guantanamo](#), Cuba. You see, I am one of [the 9/11 family members fortunate enough to observe the pretrial hearings at GTMO](#). My cousin, father's godson [Steve Schlag, was murdered on 9/11 as I witnessed the attacks](#) from my downtown office window only minutes after commuting through the World Trade Center and exactly two years after the FALN terrorists walked out of prison.

Our family has continued to fight through endless injustices directed at us and Frank Connor. Along with fighting the reprehensible clemencies, ending [Oscar Lopez Rivera's 2011 parole bid](#) by facing him at the Federal Prison in Terre Haute, Indiana, we also successfully forced [City University of New York to, in 2013, close down](#) the disgusting [Guillermo Morales / Assata Shakur](#) (Joanne Chesimard) Student Center on campus. CUNY had a student center named for two convicted terrorists, one of whom was complicit in my father's murder...*and my father attended City College out of high school!*

Incredibly but not surprisingly in November 2017, only ten months after his second presidential clemency, [Lopez Rivera was received as an honored guest in Havana](#) where he paid tribute to the late Commander in Chief Fidel Castro and Che Guevara and was decorated with the Order of Solidarity.

Our family has fought for Morales's extradition to the U.S. for decades; to hold Cuba responsible for their role in our father's death and in protecting members of the terrorist group who murdered him. In 2024, following lobbying by our family the [Frank Connor / Trooper Werner Foerster Justice Act](#), was introduced by Senator Marco Rubio, co-sponsored by Senator Rick Scott. The similarly intended [Walter Patterson and Werner Foerster Justice and Extradition Act](#) was introduced in the House of Representatives in 2023. We currently have a documentary film, [Shattered Lives](#) on the subject set for release.

As I testified at the 1999 Senate hearing on Clinton Clemencies, the FALN and their Cuban patrons took away my father's life; never allowing him to see his sons play sports in high school, never allowing him the pride of being a part of his boys' college graduations; to be at their weddings, meet his daughters-in-law. They took from him the joy of being father and a grandfather. They took from my mother the promise of growing old with her first love.

They stole from his mother, Irish immigrant Margaret Maloney "Grandma" Connor, her only child; the pride and joy of her life who working in facilities at the old Morgan Guaranty Trust Company, got her son Frank a safe job out of high school at the bank, unlike his friends who worked in the subway or became New York City cops or firemen.

The Connor and Patterson Acts, both call out Cuba for stomping on Americans' human rights, for supporting and sponsoring terrorists. They demand the return of Morales, Chesimard, Gerena and

others to face justice and to keep Cuba, the human rights violator, on the State Sponsor of Terror List.

We call for President Biden and President Elect Trump to secure the return of Morales and the other terrorists and guarantee Cuba ends its systemic human rights violations so Frank Connor's life will be remembered for Justice.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so very much, Mr. Connor. Juan?

STATEMENT OF JUAN PAPIER

Mr. PAPIER. Mr. Chair, ranking members, Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to appear before you today.

Let me start by expressing my solidarity with the Cuban people, with the victims of repression there, and with Joseph Connor whose family has been seeking justice for 50 years. The Cuban Government continues to repress and punish virtually all forms of dissent and public criticism in Cuba.

Prisoners Defenders, a rights group, reports that 919 political prisoners remain behind bars in Cuba, and 229 others are under house arrest or other restrictions on liberty. According to Colectivo 11J, over 500 people who were arrested in connection with the landmark July 11, 2021, demonstrations remain in prison.

Human Rights Watch interviewed more than 170 people involved in those protests, including victims, their relatives and lawyers. We also reviewed case files, verified videos and photos and obtained forensic evidence. Detainees arbitrarily have been held incommunicado for weeks and sometimes months. Some were beaten, tortured, and subject to other forms of treatment.

Prosecutors in Cuba continue to frame peaceful actions as criminal behavior. Many protesters have been prosecuted for sedition and sentenced to disproportionate prison terms of up to 25 years in prison. People are convicted on unreliable and uncorroborated evidence, such as statements solely from police officers or alleged odor traces found in rocks, allegedly odor from the defendants.

I would like to draw this subcommittee's attention to some specific cases.

Jose Daniel Ferrer, the leader of the unrecognized political opposition party UNPACU, who remains in prison since July 11, 2021. His family has reported he suffers severe health problems and has reportedly been beaten. He has announced he is on a hunger strike for 7 days now.

Artists Luis Manuel Otero Alcantara and Maykel Castillo, who remain in jail since July and May 2021, respectively. They have been sentenced for participating in protests and publishing a meme, among other alleged crimes.

32-year-old Luis Robles, who was sentenced to 5 years in prison for protesting with a sign saying, "Freedom. No more repression." He is being held in La Lima prison in Havana.

Cuban authorities have also passed legislation to dismantle the limited civic space that allowed the 2021 protest to occur. This includes a new criminal code and abusive legislation on telecommunications and social communication.

In addition to political repression, Cubans endure a severe economic crisis. The country has faced three nationwide electricity blackouts in the last 2 months, and people suffer frequent blackouts in some places for up to 20 hours a day.

The Cuban Government acknowledged in July that they only have regular stock of 30 percent of the basic medicines in the country. A recent survey of 1,100 people by the Cuban Observatory of Human Rights found that seven out of 10 Cubans interviewed

skipped one meal per day, and 61 percent struggled to buy essential elements to survive.

As a result of increased poverty and political repression, Cubans are leaving the country in unprecedented numbers. The Cuban Government acknowledges that the country lost 9 percent of the population between 2020 and 2023 to immigration, and independent reports indicate a total figure may be much higher.

Mr. Chair, let me be clear about this. The human rights situation in Cuban is dismal, and the Cuban Government is solely responsible for the abuses it commits. At the same time, the long-standing U.S. policy of isolation has done nothing to improve this. Rather, the U.S. policy has been counterproductive.

We continue to believe that the embargo—and may I add the State Sponsor of Terrorism determination—have provided the Cuban government with an alleged excuse for its problems, a supposed pretext for its abuses, and a way to garner sympathy abroad with governments that might otherwise have been willing to condemn the country's repressive practices more vocally.

Any additional general sanctions on Cuba are likely to harm the population, which is already suffering severe deprivations, and to drive even larger migration flows.

Instead, we urge this Congress to take steps toward a new approach on Cuba, one that progressively replaces the embargo with targeted sanctions against officials responsible for human rights violations; one that focuses on garnering support from governments in Latin America and Europe to push, to press multilaterally in a coordinated and strategic manner for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Cuba; and one that prioritizes empowering Cuban civil society.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Peppier follows:]

House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

Hearing
on
“The Communist Cuban Regime’s Disregard for Human Rights”

December 11, 2024 - 2:00 p.m.
2200 Rayburn House Office Building

Statement of Juan Pappier
Americas Deputy Director
Human Rights Watch

Mr. Chairman, Committee members:

Thank you for the invitation to appear before this Subcommittee to discuss the dismal human rights situation in Cuba.

The Cuban government continues to repress and punish virtually all forms of dissent and public criticism.

Prisoners Defenders, a rights group, reports that 919 political prisoners remain behind bars in Cuba and 229 others are under house arrest or other restrictions on liberty. According to Colectivo 11J, over 500 people who were arrested in connection with the landmark July 11, 2021, demonstrations remain in prison.

Human Rights Watch interviewed more than 170 people detained during the 2021 protests, their relatives and lawyers. We also reviewed case files, verified videos and photos, and obtained forensic evidence.

We documented dozens of cases of arbitrary arrests. Detainees have been held incommunicado for weeks, and sometimes months. Some are beaten, tortured, or subjected to ill-treatment, including sleep deprivation.

Prosecutors continue to frame actions such as protesting peacefully as criminal behavior. Many protesters have been prosecuted for “sedition” and sentenced to disproportionate prison terms of up to 25 years. People are convicted on unreliable or uncorroborated evidence, such as statements solely from security officers, or alleged “odor traces” of the defendants found on rocks.

I’d like to draw this Subcommittee’s attention to some specific cases:

- José Daniel Ferrer, the leader of the unrecognized political opposition party UNPACU, who remains in jail since July 11, 2021. His family has reported he suffers severe health problems and has been repeatedly beaten.
- Artists Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara and Maykel Castillo, who remain in jail since July and May 2021, respectively. They have been sentenced for participating in protests, and publishing a meme, among other alleged “crimes.”
- Ibrahim Domínguez Aguilar, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison for urging other protesters to take to the streets in Contramaestre. He remains in jail at the Boniato prison in Santiago de Cuba. His family has reported that he has been severely beaten.
- 32-year-old Luis Robles who was sentenced to 5 years in prison for protesting with a sign saying “Freedom. No More repression.” He is being held in La Lima prison in Havana.

Cuban authorities have also passed legislation to dismantle the limited civic space that allowed the 2021 protests to occur. These include a new criminal code, and abusive regulations on telecommunications, and social communications.

In addition to political repression, Cubans endure a severe economic crisis. The country has faced three nation-wide electricity blackouts in the last two months and people suffer frequent blackouts, in some places for up to 20 hours a day.

There are acute shortages of food and medicine. The Cuban government acknowledged in July that they only have regular stock of 30% of the basic medicines in the country.

A recent survey of 1,100 people by the Cuban Observatory of Human Rights found that 7 out of 10 Cubans interviewed skipped one meal per day, and 61% struggle to buy essential elements to survive.

As a result of increased poverty and political repression, Cubans are leaving the country in unprecedented numbers. The Cuban government acknowledges that the country lost 9% of the population between 2020 and 2023 to immigration. Independent reports indicate the total figure may be much higher.

Mr. Chair, the human rights situation in Cuba is dismal and the longstanding US policy of isolation has done nothing to improve it.

Rather, the US policy has been counterproductive. The embargo and the State Sponsor of Terrorism Determination have provided the Cuban government with an alleged excuse for its problems, a supposed pretext for its abuses, and a way to garner sympathy abroad with governments that might otherwise have been willing to condemn the country’s repressive practices more vocally.

Any additional general sanctions on Cuba are likely to harm the population—which is already suffering severe deprivations—and to drive even larger migration flows.

Instead, we urge this Congress to take steps towards a new approach that progressively replaces the embargo with targeted sanctions against officials responsible for human rights violations, focuses on garnering support from governments in Latin America and Europe to push multilaterally and in a coordinated manner for human rights in Cuba, and prioritizes empowering Cuban civil society.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much for that testimony, all four of our very fine witnesses. I do have a few questions, and then I will yield to my colleagues, then I have some additional questions hopefully before we have any votes.

The situation is dire, and I think it is getting worse. You know, we have had hearings here on Nicaragua and what they are doing to the church and what they are doing to Daniel Ortega is—I met him in 1984. He has only gotten worse. I met him in Nicaragua in 1984 when he was commandant, and his repression is just without—without end in terms of what they do to innocent and excellent people in their own country.

Now, let me just ask you—before I go any further, Frank Calzon is here. I want to thank Frank for his many years of great work.

I was at the U.N. Human Rights Commission 1 year, and he was there as well, and we were working with the diplomats on a Cuba resolution. And he had brought fresh information about child sex trafficking and how horrific that is. You know, we know that in this country, you get up to life imprisonment under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act if you sex traffic a child. And I am the author of that bill, so I believe very strongly in its implementation.

Well, Frank was working that information around, and a van pulled up, some thugs from the government got out, and they attacked him. I mean, this is in Geneva now. This isn't in Havana. This is in Geneva. So there is a—there is an ability to extend their long reach of hate toward people outside the island, and I think we have to be very much aware of that.

On trafficking as well, you know, Ileana and I worked very hard to get Liu Xiaobo in 2010 named as the Nobel Peace Prize winner, the great Chinese human rights activist. And I remember so vividly, we had dinner with a number of the parliamentarians that actually make the choice who is going to be the Nobel Peace Prize winner.

So I spent the—much of my time literally about Liu Xiaobo, but he already got it, about Cuba. And I asked him about—and three of them that were at our table told me these are the people who actually pick the Nobel Laureate. They said, Well, they have got great healthcare, and they send all of their workers overseas, thousands of them, to do work in other countries.

Well, the TIP report this year—and I said, you know, they coerce them. It is labor trafficking. We knew it then, we know it now. Well, the TIP report for this year says that there is 22,000 such workers, 75—let me get the right—75 to 95 percent of their salary is taken by the Communist dictatorship. So they are working basically for free under threat of coercion and retaliation against their own families.

So, hopefully, this myth that somehow they are doing wonderful humanitarian work abroad is exploded. If anyone wants to speak to that, I just—you know, that is this year's TIP report that points that out. It is ongoing. But it is 75 to 95 percent of that.

And then there is a lot of children who are left behind with that. Child sex trafficking continues to be a real problem. And in every category, protection, prosecution and prevention, this year Cuba got worse. And that is right from the U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons office.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. You are so correct, and Michael Moore popularized this idea of this great healthcare system in Cuba in his documentary, *Sicko*, which is a complete farce. And people in Cuba are so desperate to come to the U.S. to finally get the cures and the operations and the surgeries that they need, but it is a great myth.

The regime has been wonderful in making sure that they can promote this, this myth. It is a lie. And they make a pretty penny on trafficking, on trafficking with people, and their doctor's program is a prime example of that as you point out.

The first thing that they do is that they separate the families. If you are a doctor and you go to wherever, Venezuela, you will go, but your family has to stay behind in Cuba. As soon as you get to the country, Venezuela, they take your passport. So you are not free to leave. There is no—no opportunity for you to seek asylum. Then they garnish your wages.

I mean, we have words for that, indentured servitude, slavery. But for some reason, the regime has been able to get away with glamorizing this and making it seem as if that is a humanitarian mission.

And Venezuela—I am just using that as an example—pays the regime for every one of those workers. Now, that doctor doesn't get the majority of the funds. It gets very little of those funds. So the regime makes money for every medical professional that they send abroad.

And for a while, one of our previous administrations, they had a great program that allowed these Cuban doctors and nurses to seek asylum in various embassies. And by doing so, then they were able to come to the U.S. That was taken away, but it was a very successful program because these folks know—these doctors, these medical professionals, they know that they are being trafficked, they know that they are being exploited. That is what you have to do in a dictatorship.

There is no freedom. This concept of—that you have freedom in a dictatorship, you know, they control where you live, where you work, where you study, everything. And we have got to remember that above it all is a one-party system. You cannot have a political party other than the Communist Party. There is no such thing as freedom of choice.

They don't even bother having elections because it is—you know, at least Maduro goes through the charade and then the opposition wins, and Maduro says, no, that was not a legitimate election. In Castro's Cuba, they just—they do away with that. No election. They will have—you know, you have the choice of one person, one party, and that does not an election make.

But, yes, indentured servitude with their medical program is one of those myths that they have. They do it for humanitarian reasons, and that it is—that the Cuban people are happy with their healthcare program. Nothing could be further from the truth. But that is part of the myth that they have been able to successfully promote internationally.

And, no, those—that Nobel Prize committee, would they ever recognize a true freedom fighter, of which there are many who are

sacrificing what little they have, their very lives, to speak for freedom.

And, you know, I referenced the July 11 movement. It was a massive protest throughout Cuba. Many of them have lost their lives, many of them were killed, the rest were jailed, and others are exiled, as Ortega has done in Nicaragua when he threw out 200 of—of priests and human rights activists. They just get rid of the opposition.

And that is one of the perks of being—living in a—being a dictator in a dictatorship. You get to do whatever you want, and people will just turn a blind eye. They don't see it. They don't see what they don't want to see.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. No, I thank you.

Yes.

Mr. PAPPIER. Mr. Chair, with Human Rights Watch, we have produced an entire report about the abuses against these doctors in medical missions in Cuba, and the Cuban economy gets \$6 billion to \$8 billion a year through these medical doctors. This is the highest source of income of foreign currency to Cuba, higher than remittances or tourism. And I have personally interviewed some of these doctors who fled Venezuela. And because they are not allowed to take their own passport with them, they are given an official passport, which only takes them so far.

They are forced, when they come to the United States, to come through Darien Gap and risk their lives in that very dangerous jungle. I interviewed them there. And they told me about the abusive regulations they are subject to when they are on medical mission. These regulations establish who they can talk to, what kind of things they can say, what they cannot say, who they are allowed to meet during their mission. And as you mentioned, they pocket their money on average 85 percent, in some cases more.

Mr. SMITH. Just very briefly, I was the sponsor of the Global Magnitsky Act, and it really was derived from the Belarus Democracy Act, which I wrote in the year 2004, sanctioned individuals and sanctioned so they can't get a visa and they can't do business here. There are only three Cubans that are on the Global Magnitsky—I mean Cuban leaders. There should be a large number of abusers that are on that list, so we have got a call for that as well. And I think that is what you were getting at in terms of more targeted, so that is something for the new administration.

I have other questions, but I will yield to Ms. Wild.

Ms. WILD. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to ask you, Mr. Pappier, to comment on the impact of sanctions on the Cuban population. I know that we are alone—not alone, but we are isolated in terms of our position in the United States on this embargo. I think the only other country that voted with the United States on this was Israel.

And I would like to know, from your perspective—and then I am going to ask Ileana Ros-Lehtinen also to comment on the same—how you believe that it unnecessarily hurts everyday Cubans.

Mr. PAPPIER. Thank you for your question, Ranking Member. First, let me say, I agree with you that the United States is isolated on this issue. The policy of isolation toward Cuba has isolated

the United States. It has not isolated Cuba. And I think the votes in the U.N. General Assembly are very clear on this. Since 1992, the General Assembly has voted condemning the U.S. embargo every year. And by promoting this policy, you have been given a platform for the Cuban Government to present itself as a victim instead of allowing the world to see that they are perpetrators of gross—

Ms. WILD. OK. I am just going to ask you to direct your answer—I don't want to hear about what the U.N. General Assembly has done. I am aware of it, and I have read about it. I would like to hear from you—what you know about the impact of the embargo on citizens on an everyday basis.

Mr. PAPIER. Absolutely. Let me draw your attention to the—there is a report by the U.N. Secretary General on November 1, 2023, where every agency of the United Nations analyzing the impact that the embargo and the sponsor of terrorism determination has both on the Cuban economy as a whole and on their own capacity to provide humanitarian assistance.

So in that report, for example, UNICEF, the U.N. agency in charge of children; World Food Program, in charge of food, they all mention that they have limitations in their capacity to provide humanitarian assistance because of the embargo and because of the State sponsor of terrorism determination.

I would say that the social economic catastrophe that we have today in Cuba is not exclusively because of the embargo. There are other factors, including the severe mismanagement of the economy by the Cuban regime, and external factors, such as the collapse of the Venezuelan economy and the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is definitely exacerbated by the embargo and the State sponsor of terrorism determination.

Ms. WILD. Would you care to comment on that?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Yes. I would say, point No. 1 is that the real embargo that is taking place in Cuba is the embargo that the regime imposes upon its people where they don't have freedom of press, they don't have political parties, they don't have election, they don't have—they are not free to dissent from the government. It is a one-party system.

When it comes to the embargo that the Cuban people feel is being imposed unfairly by the United States, the Cuban people are voting by coming here to the United States in every way possible. They have been fed a diet of anti-U.S. rhetoric since the day that they were born. Those are their official books that they have in school saying the American people and the American government hate you, wants to keep you hungry, wants to keep you sick, and it is all the cause—the root cause is the embargo.

And they will nod, but they will try to do—you know, this table would last 2 minutes in Cuba because it would be a raft trying to come to the United States. They—

Ms. WILD. Well, just help me understand—

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Sure.

Ms. WILD [continuing]. Then how the decades of U.S. policy, other than that second term that I mentioned of President Obama, has advanced the cause of the Cuban people. How has it helped them?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Well, because doing the right thing, even if you are by yourself, even if no one else is imposing an embargo, even if it is just us, it is still the right thing to do. And to reward a regime that is able to get everything that it wants from 200 countries throughout the world, and yet there is only the United States that is causing this great pain for the Cuban people, you can get everything that the Cuban people want from all of the other countries that have incredible trade without any restrictions.

So if there is lack of food in Cuba—and there is—it is not because of the United States; it is let's have all of these wonderful countries contribute more food. You know where it goes? To the regime. And what does the regime do? It sells it to other countries.

And you will often find, all of these great foodstuffs from Canada, let's say, one of the greatest trading partners and tourism partners of the Castro regime, their goods will be sold on the—in the markets.

Ms. WILD. The other thing I would point out, you mentioned before the number of Cubans that want to come to the United States, and obviously there is a limit on the number of Cubans who will be able to come to the United States. I am not sure that any administration would welcome people who, by your words, have learned to despise the United States, and I think future chances of coming here are even less than they have had.

So, you know, if—as a subcommittee that cares deeply about both global health and human rights, I am struggling with this issue. And I understand what—the right is right answer, but at the same time, it has been many decades and it hasn't accomplished anything that I can see. Do you want to comment further?

And then I am going to yield, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. PAPPIER. I think if the U.S. continues to do the same thing, it will produce the same results, and the results are more oppression, more poverty, and more migration. That is what the situation in Cuba is right now and will continue to be as long as this policy continues.

Ms. WILD. I guess the problem I have is that, as you stated, all these other countries are providing goods and so forth. So how effective is our embargo? Is it just, we are doing it from—to use your words, because right is right or because we actually think we can accomplish something with it?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. We wish that there were more international solidarity, so what we are asking is for other countries to join us, not for us to say, oh, we are doing this all by ourselves. Let me join the folks who are keeping the regime in power.

Ms. WILD. But wouldn't that just hurt the Cuban people more?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. It doesn't hurt—the Cuban regime has everything—gets everything it needs from all of the countries in the world. Everybody is trading with Cuba. There is an abundance. They have it, and they can provide it to the Cuban people. They choose to do other things with the food and the medicine that they get. There is no embargo on food. There is no embargo on medicine. You can collect them in your neighborhood and ship it to Cuba tomorrow.

There is no problem whatsoever. You fill out a little card like this—and I am not even exaggerating—saying, this is foodstuff and

medicine, and I am sending it to the people of Cuba. And you can fill a whole bin and send it over there. The problem is, it won't get to the Cuban people. It will get to the regime, they will sell it, they will give it away, and they pay no price for it. But the Cuban people are not fooled. They know we are a generous country.

Ms. WILD. OK. I do just want to ask one more, if I may, Mr. Chairman.

Again, back to you, Mr. Pappier, what programs and initiatives, if any, have been the most effective in promoting human rights and civil liberties in Cuba?

Mr. PAPIER. I don't think there has been much success because, as you mentioned, the policy for 60 years has been pretty much the same except for the 2 and a half years under the Obama administration. And I would say, the limited results in that policy, the fact that the 2—in 2 and a half years the policy did not produce a political reform in Cuba is not a fact to go—is not a reason to go back to a policy that has failed for decades.

What is needed as a policy is multilateral support. And the reason why there is no multilateral support, the reason why other countries join the United States in condemning Venezuela, join the United States in condemning Nicaragua, but do not join the United States in condemning Cuba is the embargo. The embargo creates a distraction and impedes them with the lateral efforts that are necessary to press for a democratic transition in Cuba.

Ms. WILD. Thank you. I yield.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Mrs. Radewagen?

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is so good to see you, Madam Chairwoman. We have discussed Cuban political prisoners today, but the regime also holds Americans in prison. Many of you know the case of Alina Lopez, an American who was unjustly and arbitrarily arrested in Cuba in 2017. She remains trapped in Cuba today under house arrest and unable to leave the island. Her mother in Miami just recently passed away. I mean, it is a heartbreaking and cruel case. Congress strongly calls on Cuba to release Alina. Are you familiar with this case? Why is Cuba detaining innocent Americans? How can we get her home?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. I thank you, Mrs. Radewagen, for bringing this important case up. And like most authoritarian regimes or terrorist organizations, they understand the value that Americans place in a human life. And so the fact that she—that an American or a Cuban American is being held unjustly in jail, they want to get something in return for her, just as the terrorists in—that we have seen in the Middle East have done so. They hold hostages under false claims of accusations, and they want to see how can we bargain, when can we get for this life.

They place no value on human life, and this is just another sad example. There is so many people who are languishing in Cuban jails and whose names won't—we will never know. But anyone who speaks out or dares to threaten the regime in any way is thrown in jail, and then they will see what they can get for it.

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Ms. Werlau, please describe your organization's Truth in Memory Project in further detail. Why is it so important to record and commemorate the names and faces of those killed or disappeared by the regime in Havana?

Ms. WERLAU. Thank you for the opportunity. The Truth in Memory Project records the loss in lives attributed to the Cuban revolution. It starts with the Batista dictatorship up until now, and it covers the loss of life on all sides of the political spectrum.

We have around 11,500 individual records of victims, and it is important because, of course, this tells a story of a very undercounted horror, because as you mentioned, the Balseros will never know. Death in prisons, you know, are very undercounted, extrajudicial killings. But it personalizes the suffering of the Cuban people and others who have paid the price of this terrible saga that Cuba is living under.

We also have two other projects, one is based on the export of the Cuban labor, the medical missions that started in 2010. We started publishing reports. There is many reports on what was described here that is even worse than what is reported sometimes. I have interviewed dozens of doctors. Just 3 weeks ago, a doctor who was sent to Guinea-Bissau told me that they had found out Cuba was paying \$10,000 a month for her service, and she was getting \$250. So that is technically like 97 percent of the salary.

Our third project is based on Cuba's interventions, how Cuba has spread its model, infiltrated governments. And I think, if you allow me the opportunity to tie in what was discussed here before about why the embargo has not worked, I would say the opposite: Engagement has not worked. The whole world has engaged Cuba. There is a revolving doors, Presidents, kings, kings-to-be, ministers, human rights activists for over six decades trying to convince the Cuban regime to dialog about human rights, to bring about reforms. That hasn't worked either, because those totalitarian regimes do not succumb to dialog or to end treaties.

And what we have is a United Nations system that is morally bankrupt, that has abandoned the Cuban people with a cheap shot at the United States with an annual declaration against the embargo that says nothing. But in terms Cuba, the dictatorship of Cuba sits in the U.N. Human Rights Council, is elected to the executive body of numerous United Nations entities. And nowhere have I seen any resolutions against any human rights violations of Cuba, much less what the United Nations is going to do with its responsibility to protect the oppressed people of Cuba.

So I think what explains what we are seeing, Congresswoman—and we have multiple reports on this—is a Cuban regime that expends its resources on 126 embassies in the world, more than Spain, more than Canada. They each have an intelligence center. Cuba has almost 1,700 solidarity groups around the world that it funds, parliamentary friendship groups. This is a totalitarian bankrupt nation of Cuba. How do you explain that? That is what explains that they buy, influence, sway opinions, manipulate perceptions so that people think that it is because of the U.S. embargo that there is a totalitarian criminal regime for 60-something years oppressing the Cuban people.

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Ms. Manning?

Ms. MANNING. Thank you, Chairman Smith, for organizing this hearing.

And thank you to our witnesses for being here, especially our former colleague, Chairwoman Ros-Lehtinen. We are so glad that you are here with us, and thank you for all the work you have done in the past and continue to do.

I want to commend Chairman Smith, and I want to echo your demand that Cuba should return Joanne Chesimard, a fugitive who murdered a New Jersey State trooper in 1973.

I also want to acknowledge a constituent and good friend in my district, Bobby Mendez in Chastogee (ph), whose family suffered terribly under the Castro regime.

After the revolution, Bobby's father was thrown in jail as a political prisoner. He watched his neighbor's children being shot and killed in front of him on their front lawn. And he and his mother, who is a journalist, were forced to flee the country.

After many years, Bobby's mother was told that her husband had died in prison. She was devastated, but she subsequently remarried and tried to build a new family for Bobby. Imagine her heartbreak when years later her first husband was released and searched for his wife and son. And what should have been a joyful family reunion was a cruel blow to all with a devastating and long-lasting impact that Bobby still talks about today, as the entire family was broken.

It is hard to believe that all these years later the cruelty of the Castro—and now the Daz-Canel—regime replete with its human rights violations continues. And my heart goes out to all the Cuban families who have suffered and continue to suffer under the cruel Cuban regime.

And, Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen, as you know, my dear friend—our dear friend and colleague, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, has made valiant efforts to help free Cuban political prisoners Maykel Castillo Perez and Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, and they have been unjustly imprisoned since the Cuban regime's crackdown on the July 11, 2021, pro-democracy movement.

And like my good friend, I urge both President Biden and President-elect Trump to continue to seek freedom for these political prisoners, along with hundreds of other political prisoners illegally jailed by Cuba's secret police. How can we do more to prioritize their plight?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Congresswoman, and thank you for your years of service. We will miss you. And I know that you have been very active, especially in the Jewish community and the federations to build that solidarity, and many of your mission groups go to Cuba and help the—

Ms. MANNING. Yes, they do.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN [continuing]. Families there, so we thank you for that.

Debbie Wasserman Schultz, an amazing champion for the cause of a free and democratic Cuba, as is Frederica Wilson, as is Lois Frankel, and before—Ted Deutch is now the head of the AJC. We have been blessed in our Florida delegation to have such incredible

bipartisan support in favor of freedom, human rights, and all the goodness that we enjoy here in this beautiful country. May all the enslaved people in the world have it, and especially my native homeland of Cuba.

I think that there is more that we can do, and each one of us can be that Ambassador of truth and hope. We can do whatever little thing that we can in our own communities and in our own way to shed light, to give—in your vaulted position, to give a 1-minute speech on these Cuban prisoners who are not known. There is some who are very, very well known, and there is some who just languish in jail and they think that no one hears them.

To be able to write a letter to the editor, to your local paper, to be active in your church and synagogue and bring up their case and help them in Cuba; there is just a lot that every person can be that beacon of hope. And I never underestimate the power of an individual in making that amazing change.

So we are blessed to have that kind of bipartisan delegation in Florida, and New Jersey has it as well, and many other places.

But everyone can do more. Each day we should rise up and say, “How can I make this a better place in my neighborhood, in my school, in my community, and for oppressed people elsewhere?” Because we are all one island, and we are all interconnected.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. And what happens elsewhere impacts us all.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you so much.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Ms. MANNING. Let me move to the other end of the table for my second question, because I want to get one more in before we have to go for votes.

And as I said, I strongly oppose the tyrannical regime, the Castro regime now the Daz-Canel regime. And I share the frustration that my good friend and colleague Representative Wild was expressing, and I think many Americans feel the same way. We are just concerned that the many, many years of the embargo just has not brought about the political and economic reforms that the Cuban people deserve.

So, Mr. Pappier, let me just ask you, what else can Congress and the administration do to bring about the change and also to help improve the daily conditions for the Cuban people?

Mr. PAPIER. Thank you for that question. To bring about a reform change in Cuba you need, broadly speaking, two things: One, you need multilateral support; and, second, you need an empowered civil society in correlation of force with the Cuban Government. The embargo, sadly, has impeded both. It has impeded multilateral efforts, and it has imposed this criminal hardship on the Cuban people.

We need to end this policy of isolation, think afresh—start afresh on Cuban policy, start working with Latin American governments and European governments to press strategically, multilaterally the Cuban Government, and replacing these general sanctions with targeted sanctions against the specific individuals and the specific companies, I may add, who are responsible for the atrocities that are being committed in Cuba.

Ms. MANNING. So that is unlikely to happen in the next administration. Are there any other steps that we could take?

Mr. PAPIER. Sadly, I think the efforts of the United States on Cuba are very much undermined by the policy of the embargo. There are other efforts you can take, but the embargo undermines your capacity to produce change, undermines your capacity to find allies to push for these reforms to happen. I would be happy and encouraged for targeted sanctions against those people responsible.

I would encourage you to give more civility to specific individual cases of political prisoners, including some of the ones I mentioned, and to work multilaterally with other governments. But I fear that the embargo creates a whole destruction and makes it very difficult to create this multilateral coalition for democracy and human rights in Cuba.

Ms. MANNING. So I suspect we could go back and forth from one end of the table to the other end of the table. We could agree on the goal that we want; we just simply can't agree on how we can get there. So with that, I will thank you all for being here today, and I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Just a couple final thoughts and questions.

Oh, did you want to—please, Maria.

Ms. WERLAU. She is prodding me to answer you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Yes.

Ms. WERLAU. So I think, with all respect to my colleague, and I think we share the same goal, that is wishful thinking. Yes, the embargo is a distraction. Look at how we are talking about this. But to blame the embargo for a totalitarian regime that commits egregious crimes against humanity for six decades is wanting to be blind about a situation. This is not about individuals; this is a whole system of way of life, and it is a dynasty, it is their successors.

Yes, I believe, of course, multilateral sanctions would be best, but the world ignores Cuba. And it is too late. The Cuban system is imploding. The main sources of revenue from Cuba are in our hands to cut to get that regime to recognize, face the reality, and allow for a transition to democracy. Nowhere in those propositions to sit in dialog with Cuba or find a multilateral position is there any solution to this. None of these countries are presenting this. It is too easy to push it on to the United States and to forget the Cuban people. I think we have the obligation to finally see this through.

What we have not done is applied the sanctions, the so-called embargo has been diluted by executive mandate for many, many years. And the border is porous. This is constantly allowing an inflow of people who are sending money to Cuba, traveling back to Cuba, having claimed a legitimate fear of persecution, calling, sending aid. The embargo has not been enforced, and right now it is at the tipping point.

So that is what I believe. Maybe there will be more suffering. There should be a humanitarian assistance multilateral program to aid the Cuban people, but feeding the regime and its conglomerate is only going to prolong the failed system that oppresses the people that there is no way out of this economic crisis, because it is a parasitic, bankrupt economy. Thank you.

Ms. MANNING. Well, one thing we have learned in the past 2 weeks is that you never know what is going to bring down an oppressive, horrific regime, so maybe we can all hope that in the new year we are surprised in Cuba, just like we have been surprised in Syria.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Yes.

Ms. MANNING. With that, I really do yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Let me just ask a couple final questions. I am all for multilateral sanctions, but as the distinguished chairwoman said, if we have to go it alone, we ought to. I supported apartheid sanctions. There were many people who thought that that would be injurious to the people of South Africa, but I thought the horrendous apartheid system needed to be confronted, and thankfully over time that did jettison that off the face of the Earth.

We need allies. I am shocked when I talk to other diplomats and other Members of Congress and parliaments what a naive view they have about Cuba, especially as it relates to the—for the foreign—the people that they deploy elsewhere for medical reasons. You know, you tell them 75 to 95 percent of that money is going to a dictatorship. That is—that is trafficking, and that is what the TIP report says. It is trafficking, indentured servitude, as you said, Ileana.

One of the things that grabbed me when I read Armando Valladares' book, and then talking to people who have been imprisoned in Cuba, we have had Dr. Biscet, we've had so many people come and testify over the years, and it was that torture is given in those prisons. One of the things that Armando Valladares talked about was they took the prisoners, put them into human waste, submerged them; it went through their ears, their nose, their eyes. They all got infections. It was totally degrading. I mean, what evil dictatorship does that? And it was so bad that when Armando Valladares' wife gave birth to their children, he couldn't change the diapers. He had PTSD on that.

Now, I have written four laws on combatting the problem of torture. They are called the Tortured Victims Relief Act. And it is all about the PTSD. We have got hundreds of thousands of Americans, or people in America, who come from all over the world, who have been in prisons all over the world and have been tortured. They need help. What do you say to a dictatorship that is doing this every day, as we meet here, they are being tortured so horrifically?

Valladares talked about the Ho Chi Minh polls. They made sure that you didn't sleep. They would go in there and start hitting you, and they called them Ho Chi Minh polls. And that is just one of many. China, maybe more than anyone else, has perfected the cruel art of torture. I have had many hearings on that. I chair the China Commission.

So what did we do there? We delinked human rights from trade on May 26, 1994. That was Bill Clinton. I joined, with Nancy Pelosi, in deploring that, because we just gave away the store. And look what they have done ever since.

They are callous when it comes to military capability, threatening not just Taiwan but hegemony throughout that region, but even us. I mean, China really is very strong these days. And we did it. It wasn't the Europeans; we did it, through a false sense

that if you just trade more and lift the sanctions and the linkage to human rights, they will matriculate from dictatorship to a democracy. Nothing—I will sell you the Brooklyn Bridge if you really believe that, and I don't think any of you believe that.

The International Red Cross has not been there since 1988. Why aren't they there talking to people, chronicling what is going in terms of the use of torture. So to lift the embargo, we need to get more allies, make a new effort to get others to join us. First it was the Soviets and then it was European Union and others who just continually offer life lines to this cruel dictatorship.

So I think the next administration ought to try very hard to get others to say—you know, and it goes for places like China as well. We have learned that lesson. I can't tell you how many people have told me they wish they had voted—because we had votes on it, on PNTR, permanent normal charity relations—don't—they wish they could have that vote back, because they realize it didn't work out. It has gotten worse in terms of genocide against the Uyghurs and everything else. Nobody there from ICRC since 1989. I mean, what does that tell you?

So with all due respect to my good friends and colleagues, and to you, Juan, I don't believe that lifting the sanctions—I think we need to double down on that, get other countries to join us. So I would ask that we, you know, look at that very seriously.

I believe in targeted sanctions, but I also believe, like I did with apartheid, I was, you know, criticized for that by some. You are going to hurt the South Africans. Yes, but they need to be free of that racial prejudice that is being levied against them.

So anyone want to comment on that?

But we have got to renew our efforts to expose this cruelty. This hearing is the beginning of a new effort. And, again, having the distinguished chairwoman, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, here, who is—nobody speaks stronger or better about it.

And just let me say one other thing. The enablers of this country, I had a Reverend Walker come when Elian Gonzalez was abducted from his home—and Marisleyxis, and the others, couldn't believe it when people with guns came in and extracted him. Well, I had a hearing on it. And we had a Reverend Walker from my own State, and he goes, you know, I want to tell you, my favorite scripture is Matthew 25. When I was in prison, did you visit me? And he goes, I visited the people in the prisons. So I said, OK. Do you visit political prisoners? And I had a whole list of people that—and he said—he hesitated.

Lincoln Diaz-Balart, he had joined us on the panel. He goes, will the gentleman yield? I said, of course. He said, name them. Name one political prisoner that you visited. He didn't have anybody. Next thing you know, he was walking out the door to catch a plane. He did not want to—I mean, stop enabling. I am not saying that to you guys. I am saying it to those who just look the other way.

Torture is the cruellest thing. I don't know how anybody overcomes that, you know, and we know from the PTSD that they suffer. And this regime gets A-plus for their horrible use of torture. I mean, they do it very well, as do the Chinese Communist Party. So double down on sanctions.

Yes?

Mr. PAPIER. Mr. Chair, thank you. Just to—first of all, to clarify to Maria's comments with all due respect, I made very clear in my statement that the Cuban Government is solely responsible for the atrocities for it commits. It is solely responsible for those atrocities.

I share your concerns about torture in Cuba. We have documented them extensively. Here are reports of torture that we have documented of people that day on July 11 demonstrations. And I have also in preparation for this hearing listened to some of the hearings on Cuba in the past 10, 15 years. And I have always listened to something along the lines of what you just mentioned, Mr. Chair, with all due respect. If only we wait a little bit more, if only we pressure a little bit more, we post a little bit more of sanctions maybe that will produce results. It hasn't produced results for 60 years.

Mr. SMITH. But with all due respect—

Mr. PAPIER. We need to try something different.

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. We thought that with China. When delinking occurred under Bill Clinton, May 26, 1994, Republicans and Democrats alike said, this is going to lead to, you know, improvements. It only got worse, and it got significantly worse.

So I think we need to realize it only makes them stronger, more effective, and richer. The bad guys become richer. And it doesn't help the average person, and it certainly doesn't cause a change in politics, because for them, you know, make sure Colonel So-and-So is running this business over there and making money hand over fist.

Maria, did you want to—

Ms. WERLAU. Mr. Chairman, can I share a story with you for the record. Randall Robinson, the architect of South Africa sanctions, I heard him speak at Columbia University in the early 2000's and then I went over to talk to him. There was the journalist, the reporter for Radio and TV Marti was recording this.

So I asked him, so, if you are so—he was talking about how sanctions had been so important, how they were right even when they weren't effective and then they were.

So I said, so why is your stance on Cuba so different? Because it is notable that many human rights defenders have the opposite stance with respect to sanctions on Cuba that they would have on the Pinochet regime, the South Africa regime, et cetera. Well, you know what he said? He said, oh, no, because there are no human rights violations in Cuba.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Wow.

Mr. SMITH. Yes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. That takes my breath away.

Mr. SMITH. That is astonishing.

Mr. Connor, just if I could ask you, you wrote Secretary Blinken earlier this year requesting that your father's killer, Willy Morales, be extradited to the U.S. Did you get a response?

Mr. CONNOR. No. I contacted Secretary Blinken, Jake Sullivan, my New Jersey Senators and got no response from anybody.

Mr. SMITH. And one last question to you. I know you are trying to get the city, University of New York, to take down the naming of the center.

Mr. CONNOR. Yes.

Mr. SMITH. I mean, they are naming it after Joanne Chesimard and Morales, and it is just absurd.

Mr. CONNOR. They named the student center called the William Morales Assata Shakur student center, and this had been reported years ago, and I went up there—

Oh. Yes, they had a student center called William Morales Assata Shakur at City College of New York, and it had been supposedly taken down in the early 2000's. And on a hunch, which I have had over the years, I called them years later and, sure enough, it was open. So I went up there by myself with my phone and camera and I started taking pictures. I have sent them to some of the guys on the committee here.

And then I called the school and said, you know, I am going to go public with this, that you have a student center named for terrorists. And my father went to CCNY, and I didn't see anything there in his honor. So they fought me a bit, which I was a little shocked. And then they said, well, yes, it is this freedom of speech thing, but we are going to compromise. We are going to take it down, and we are going to say that it is because, you know, we need that space for the—for education.

So when they went to do it, a near riot broke out, and cops were called in. And it was basically filled with like these guys from like the 1960's who were still living their 60's and 70's weather underground crap and had infiltrated there, and were using that—they weren't even students, most of them.

They were using that center for their own—you know, these guys, my age type. They are old. And they cleared them out. And to my knowledge, it has not been reopened, but it was really a slap in the face that they would do something like that, but not a surprise. This is what goes on in academia. Well, what passes for academia.

Mr. SMITH. Chairwoman, would you like to close us?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. No, it really is shocking, the amount of ignorance and willful ignorance. Even when you point it out to them, you are glorifying a terrorist. And still, they are—the hold that the Cuban regime, the mystique of Che Guevara and the revolution and that was all in favor of the downtrodden, that it still permeates in so many of the college campuses. It is sickening. But as we saw—

Mr. CONNOR. Yes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Look at the anti-Semitism that was alive and well in all of these Ivy leagues. It is sickening, but—

Mr. CONNOR. Well, Columbia University has hired terrorists over the years.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Yes. Terrorists, yes. Yes.

Mr. CONNOR. And look what you get when you hire terrorists; you get students who start believing that stuff.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. And to disguise this as freedom of speech is just ludicrous.

Mr. CONNOR. Yes, it is ludicrous.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

I want to thank our great panel. Sorry we started late. That is because of the Blinken hearing. We were precluded from—

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Who does he think he is?

Mr. SMITH. And we can't have a hearing simultaneous with that. So thank you so much and——

Mr. CONNOR. You are welcome. Thanks for having us.

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. Appreciate all of information. Even when we disagree, we do it civilly and respectfully.

Mr. PAPIER. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 4:11 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD



**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128**

**Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
Christopher Smith (R-NJ), Chairman**

December 6, 2024

Revised

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held by the Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations at 2:00 pm in room 2200 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>.

DATE: Wednesday, December 11, 2024

TIME: 2:00 pm

LOCATION: 2200 RHOB

SUBJECT: The Communist Cuban Regime's Disregard for Human Rights

WITNESSES: Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Former Chair
U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee

Maria C. Werlau
Co-Founder and Executive Director
Free Society Project/Cuba Archive

Joseph F. Connor
Author and Advocate

* **Juan Pappier**
Deputy Director, Americas
Human Rights Watch

**NOTE: Witnesses added or changed

*NOTE: Witnesses may be added.

By Direction of the Chair

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-226-8467 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF GH,GHR, IO SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING

Day Wednesday Date December 11, 2024 Room 2200 RHOB

Starting Time 14:31 Ending Time 16:11

Recesses ☐ (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Smith

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

THE COMMUNIST CUBAN REGIME'S DISREGARD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Attached

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Attached

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

Attached

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 16:11

Meg Wagner
Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

Committee on Foreign Affairs**Subcommittee on Global Health, Human Rights, and International Organizations**118th Congress

ATTENDANCE

Meeting on: The Communist Cuban Regime's Disregard for Human Rights

Date: 12/11/2024

Convened: 2:31PM

Adjourned: 4:12PM

Representative	Present	Absent	Representative	Present	Absent
Mr. Smith	X		Ms. Wild	X	
Ms. Salazar		X	Mr. Bera		X
Ms. Radewagen	X		Ms. Jacobs		X
Mr. Hill		X	Ms. Manning	X	
Mr. McCormick		X			
Mr. James		X			