PRENSA LIBRE CUBA

Neither with one side nor the other: with the Republic

WEEKLY SUMMARY

OCT. 25–31, 2026

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This week's top news stories about Cuba and the world.

This weekly summary in PDF format is part of Prensa Libre Cuba's commitment to Cubans' right to be informed. In a country where official media outlets conceal, distort, or silence the truth, we offer this service so that citizens can access verified news and independent analysis. Since the PLC website cannot be viewed in Cuba due to censorship, we have chosen to distribute this PDF version so that the information reaches—unblocked—those who need it most.

More than six decades later, the name *Prensa Libre* is coming back to life. **Prensa Libre Cuba** is launching online with a mission that honors that republican tradition: to provide a space for information, analysis, and debate that supports citizens at a decisive moment in our history.

Our goal is not only to chronicle the daily reality of Cuba—its challenges, its tensions, its hopes—but also **to open a broad and pluralistic forum on the country's future**. We want to be a place where ideas are discussed, perspectives are compared, and proposals are developed for a **democratic transition** that is already part of the collective imagination of millions of Cubans both on and off the island.

CUBA:

Cuba, a country where wages no longer buy food, gas, or water

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 31, 2026, 11:00 A.M. |
SOCIAL CRISIS, CUBA, ECONOMY, AND LATEST NEWS



The result is a Cuba divided not only between the rich and the poor, but also between those who have access to foreign currency and those who do not. Photo © PLC

CUBA—ECONOMIC CRISIS

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Havana. PLC | The devaluation of the peso, rising food prices, and increasing dollarization are reducing Cuban wages and pensions to practically symbolic amounts. The crisis can no longer be measured solely by statistics: it is evident in families who cook with charcoal, desperately drill wells to obtain water, and buy food with no guarantee of quality.

On October 27, the U.S. dollar reached a new record of 850 pesos on the informal market, 7.5 pesos more than the previous day. The euro stood at 932 pesos at that time. The figure confirms the accelerated deterioration of the national currency and the growing gap between those who receive foreign currency and those who depend exclusively on their income in pesos.

Official year-over-year inflation reached 28.44% in September, while prices rose 3.37% during that month alone and accumulated a 24.85% increase since January. Food and non-alcoholic beverages rose 42.66% over the past year and accounted for 73.39% of the monthly change in the price index.

These figures come from the formal market and therefore do not fully reflect what is happening in the informal sector, where a considerable portion of basic goods are traded. Independent experts cited by various media outlets warn that inflation in that market could reach triple-digit levels.

The gap between incomes and prices reveals the true extent of impoverishment. The average monthly wage in the business and public sectors was 7,354 pesos in August. Sectors such as the sugar industry, hospitality, retail, education, and culture reported even lower wages. With the informal dollar exchange rate at 850 pesos, the average wage is equivalent to barely nine dollars.

It is not just that prices are rising. The problem is that numerous essential goods are increasingly priced in dollars, while the state pays wages and pensions in a currency that is losing value. Workers are paid in pesos, but gas, imported food, medications, and numerous services follow the trend of foreign currencies. This disconnect turns daily survival into a race that the Cuban wage is bound to lose from the start.

On the Isle of Youth, a resident reported that the price of a liquefied gas cylinder purchased from abroad for family members rose from $50

to $89 at Micro 70 and La Fe retail outlets. State distribution is so erratic that private operations paid for in foreign currency have filled the void left by the official system.

In July, the state-set price was fixed at 35 pesos per kilogram, equivalent to 350 pesos for a 10-kilogram cylinder. However, scarce availability prevents this official price from representing a real solution for families. While on paper gas continues to cost pesos, in everyday life it can end up costing tens of dollars.

The result is a visible social regression: households forced to cook with coal or firewood amid power outages and shortages. This is not a voluntary return to traditional methods, but rather the result of the failure of a system that does not guarantee electricity or household fuel, yet allows the alternative to be dollarized and out of reach for workers and retirees.

In Las Tunas, getting water has also become a luxury. Drilling a hand-dug well costs around 20,000 pesos per meter. A resident quoted by the provincial newspaper *26* had drilled thirteen meters without finding water, representing an approximate expenditure of 260,000 pesos with no guarantee of success. About 5,000 private wells have been built in the province in response to the shortcomings of the public water supply.

This makeshift solution also poses health risks. Regulations require a minimum distance of fifteen meters between wells and septic tanks or latrines—a distance that is difficult to ensure on small urban lots. Furthermore, the laboratories responsible do not have all the resources and reagents necessary to properly assess the quality of the extracted water.

The economic collapse is also undermining consumer protection. In Ciego de Ávila, a resident reported purchasing a 200-milliliter carton of juice that had expired in April. Upon checking similar products at

another store, she found one-liter cartons that were also past their expiration dates.

This incident does not appear to be an isolated one. A provincial inspection uncovered irregularities in 1,337 of the 2,165 establishments inspected, equivalent to 61.8 percent. Violations included expired food, prices deemed speculative, and a lack of visible information for consumers. Authorities imposed 1,141 fines, temporarily closed 70 establishments, and permanently shut down six businesses.

In Holguín, writer José Poveda Cruz reported that some merchants are hoarding essential goods to sell them later at higher prices. After visiting several establishments, he managed to purchase a 150-gram bar of laundry soap for 700 pesos. He also described the sale of coal in small quantities and a price of around 1,200 pesos per kilogram of imported sugar.

These practices must be penalized when they constitute speculation or deception, but reducing the problem to the individual behavior of a few merchants would be to obscure its root cause. Speculation thrives where there is scarcity, uncertainty, and a lack of stable supply. When the state fails to guarantee basic goods, every withheld commodity becomes a tool for exerting pressure, and every unmet need becomes an opportunity for enrichment.

Cuban authorities continue to portray the economic deterioration as the almost exclusive result of U.S. sanctions. External restrictions do play a role and should not be ignored, but they do not, on their own, explain the lack of productivity, the absence of effective reforms, bureaucratic control, the in r insecurity for entrepreneurs, the failure of infrastructure, or the loss of credibility of the national currency. The current crisis combines external factors with internal economic decisions whose costs have been systematically passed on to the population.

The so-called “Tarea Ordenamiento” program, implemented since 2021, also failed to stabilize the monetary system. The informal exchange rate rose to 200 pesos per dollar in October 2022, 300 in February 2024, 400 in August 2025, 500 in February 2026, and reached 850 pesos in October of this year.

The result is a Cuba divided not only between the rich and the poor, but also between those who have access to foreign currency and those who do not. A relative abroad can mean cooking gas, food, medicine, or home repairs. Those who do not receive remittances are trapped on a salary that loses its value before the end of the month.

Cuban impoverishment is no longer merely monetary. It is also related to food, energy, water, and health. It manifests in the inability to buy food, in the use of coal for cooking, in the private search for water, and in the circulation of expired products. These are different scenes of the same collapse: that of a system incapable of guaranteeing the most basic needs, yet determined to keep intact the political monopoly responsible for administering it.

Cuba in the Dark: Power Outage Leaves the Country Without Electricity or Water and Drives Cubans into the Streets

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 31, 2026, 11:00 A.M. |
ENERGY CRISIS, SOCIAL CRISIS, CUBA, ECONOMY, AND LATEST NEWS



Cuba is not merely facing a power generation crisis. It is facing the domino effect that occurs when a country's essential infrastructure fails. Photo: Facebook

CUBA-ENERGY CRISIS-PROTESTS

PLC

Havana. PLC | Cuba's energy crisis has evolved from a mere series of blackouts into a national crisis affecting virtually every aspect of daily life. Official figures from October 30 reveal a system incapable of producing even one-third of the electricity needed during peak consumption hours. Accounts coming in from different provinces reveal the human cost behind these statistics: families going days

without power, communities without water, food that cannot be preserved, and citizens beginning to take their desperation to the streets.

The most significant incident occurred on Friday, October 30, in Havana. Residents of the Baluarte neighborhood in Río Verde, in the municipality of Boyeros, blocked Boyeros Avenue by placing trash containers on the roadway. They were not protesting a temporary power outage. They were denouncing more than three days without electricity and months of difficulties with the water supply. One resident stated that, in the previous 72 hours, they had had barely 35 minutes of electricity.

The protest also took on a dimension that was hard to ignore: it occurred on one of the roads connecting the capital to José Martí International Airport. Police arrived at the scene while residents continued to block traffic. As of the latest reports, there were no confirmations of arrests or clashes.

What happened in Boyeros illustrates the extent to which the deterioration of the power grid has ceased to be merely a technical problem. When a citizen endures a few hours without electricity, they protest a power outage. When they go days without power, lose their water supply, cannot preserve food, and end up blocking an avenue, the energy crisis begins to transform into a social and political problem as well.

The official figures themselves help explain the immediate source of the discontent.

According to the report published by the Unión Eléctrica on October 30, at 6:00 a.m. the National Electric Power System had only 790 megawatts available, compared to a demand of 2,260. For peak demand hours, only 840 MW were estimated to be available, compared to a need of 2,800 MW. The projected shortfall was 1,960

MW, and the calculated “ ” impact reached 1,990 MW. The previous day, the peak impact had even reached 2,004 MW.

In other words, the projected availability during peak consumption was approximately 30% of the estimated demand.

And the causes acknowledged by the authorities themselves are equally revealing. On October 30, units at the Santa Cruz, Antonio Guiteras, Felton, and Renté thermal power plants were out of service, while other units at Santa Cruz, Nuevitas, and Renté were undergoing maintenance. The total constraints on thermal generation amounted to 496 MW.

We are not, therefore, dealing with the occasional breakdown of a single power plant. We are dealing with a system whose generation capacity is far below the country’s needs.

In Havana, the Electric Company recorded 173 affected circuits and 371 MW of power loss. Some circuits in Arroyo Naranjo, San Miguel del Padrón, Boyeros, Cotorro, La Lisa, and Playa had accumulated outages exceeding 31 hours. The VC100 circuit in Arroyo Naranjo reached 61 hours and 42 minutes.

In Holguín, other circuits had accumulated outages ranging from more than 20 to 23 hours. The fact that the National Electric Power System remains technically interconnected does not mean—as the records themselves indicate—that all consumers have electricity.

Therein lies perhaps one of the most significant contradictions of the crisis. The regime may report that the system remains connected, but that technical stability means little to those who have gone one, two, or three days without being able to turn on a light bulb.

And the drama doesn’t end when the lights go out.

The lack of electricity disrupts the water supply because pumping stations depend on power. A report published on October 30, based on data from officials at the National Institute of Hydraulic Resources originally cited by Radio Martí, puts the number of Cubans facing serious problems accessing drinking water at more than **2.7 million**. In Havana alone, more than half a million customers were affected by breakdowns in water systems such as El Gato.

In the Baluarte neighborhood, residents report that water problems have persisted for more than seven months. That is why the protest in Boyeros is particularly telling: electricity and water have come to be part of the same emergency.

Accounts from Holguín, Cienfuegos, and Sancti Spíritus describe power outages lasting up to 30 hours and people waiting for the power to come back on in the early morning to cook, recharge electrical devices, and store water. Sleep is no longer governed by the body's natural rhythm but has come to depend on the schedule of the power outages.

Nor is the situation of the past few days an isolated incident. Official figures reveal an extremely serious trend: on October 28, 2,045 MW of power outages were forecast; for the 29th, 1,940 MW; and for the 30th, another 1,990 MW.

Nor can the explanation honestly be reduced to a single cause. The reduction in fuel supplies and U.S. sanctions have substantially worsened the situation throughout 2026. In February, the United Nations even warned of the danger of a humanitarian crisis if Cuba failed to meet its oil needs.

But acknowledging that external pressure does not erase the accumulated internal responsibilities. The aging thermoelectric fleet, simultaneous breakdowns, units constantly undergoing repairs, and an installed capacity unable to respond with stability to demand

reveal structural problems that date back long before the current oil emergency.

The result is plain to see today.

Cuba is not merely facing a power generation crisis. It is facing the domino effect that occurs when a country's essential infrastructure fails. Without electricity, water pumps do not operate regularly; without refrigeration, food spoils; without power, it becomes more difficult to cook, communicate, or store medications; and when all of this lasts for dozens of hours, the blackout ceases to be a mere inconvenience and becomes a complete upheaval of daily life.

That is why what happened in Boyeros has significance that goes beyond that Havana avenue.

The containers placed on the road are a visible expression of a social breaking point. The residents weren't discussing megawatts or official statistics. They were demanding electricity and water after having gone days without either.

The Cuban government can manage power grids, release reports from the Electric Union, and ask for patience. What is becoming increasingly difficult to manage is the exhaustion of a population that has spent far too long adapting its existence to scarcity.

When a country has to organize its daily life around when the power will come back on, the problem is no longer just about energy. And when citizens begin to block the streets because they have no electricity or water, the blackout ceases to be solely an infrastructure crisis and becomes a political crisis as well.

The Civic Maturation of Cuban Society

BY JUAN MORENO ON OCTOBER 30, 2026, 9:30 P.M. |
SOCIAL CRISIS, CUBA, REPRESSION, AND LATEST NEWS



July 11, 2021, marked a turning point. It was neither an isolated outburst nor a date destined to fade from collective memory. On that day, one of the fundamental mechanisms upon which power had rested for decades was shattered: the fear of publicly expressing discontent. AI-generated image | ©JM

CUBA-SOCIETY

By Juan Moreno – Prensa Libre Cuba

Havana. PLC | For decades, Cubans have been burdened by a stigma as simplistic as it is unfair: the myth of the "resilient people." Those who repeat this label from the outside often confuse the survival strategies developed under a totalitarian regime with a supposed collective apathy. However, from a social and political perspective, the interpretation can be very different: what has happened in Cuba is not

simply resignation, but a slow process of civic maturation, built against the tide and, often, through hardship.

July 11, 2021, marked a turning point. It was neither an isolated outburst nor a date destined to fade from collective memory. On that day, one of the fundamental mechanisms upon which power had rested for decades was shattered: the fear of publicly expressing discontent. Thousands of people moved from **private murmurs to open protests in the streets**. Beyond the demonstrations, what was truly significant was the psychological breakthrough: many Cubans realized that their frustration was not an individual experience, but a sentiment shared by a considerable portion of society.

The severe repressive response managed to contain those protests, but it did not eliminate the causes that sparked them. Dissatisfaction took on other forms—often local, spontaneous, and fragmented. It manifests itself in protests during power outages, pot-and-pan demonstrations, verbal confrontations with officials, neighborhood complaints, and public expressions of rejection of increasingly precarious living conditions.

There is also a less visible, but likely more profound, change: **political authority has lost much of the reverence it enjoyed for decades**. Official discourse is no longer met with the same automatic obedience, and government explanations are met by a society far more willing to question them.

Access to information has contributed decisively to this process. The regime no longer holds the near-absolute monopoly on the public narrative that it had for much of its history. A cell phone allows anyone to record a protest, an abuse of authority, an endless line, or conditions in a hospital—and to quickly circulate the images . Social media has thus become a sort of alternative public space, precisely where for decades no truly independent public sphere existed.

The contrast between propaganda and everyday experience is becoming increasingly difficult to hide. What once might have been confined to a neighborhood, a hospital, or a municipality can now be known throughout the island and beyond. This technological shift has also helped transform public consciousness.

The cost of this entire process, however, has been enormous. The mass exodus has drained the country of a significant portion of its population, including many young people. Historically, emigration has also served as a safety valve that reduces internal social pressure: for many Cubans, leaving ends up being a more viable alternative than openly confronting a system that possesses enormous repressive mechanisms.

But even the magnitude of the exodus has failed to eliminate the discontent. Those who remain in Cuba must face daily power outages, shortages, inflation, transportation difficulties, and the deterioration of public services. Political protest and the struggle for basic necessities thus begin to blur: demanding electricity, food, medicine, or water can end up becoming a challenge to the very functioning of the system.

The transformation of a society subjugated for decades into a citizenry fully aware of its rights does not happen overnight. Nor is it, by definition, a linear or irreversible process. There is fear, exhaustion, emigration, repression, and an enormous daily struggle to survive.

But something important has changed. **For many Cubans, freedom and rights have ceased to be abstract concepts— —and have become needs directly linked to daily life.**

The events of July 11 brought this transformation to light, but they neither created it overnight nor brought it to an end. It was the most forceful expression of a process that continues to unfold in a scattered manner—on the streets, on social media, in neighborhoods, and also

among those who have lost their fear of publicly pointing out the failings of those in power.

The civic maturation of Cuban society should perhaps be measured precisely in this regard: not only by the number of people who take to the streets to protest on a given day, but by **the gradual loss of fear, the ability to challenge those in power, and the growing awareness that citizens' rights are not concessions granted by the state**. In this silent transformation lies one of the keys to Cuba's future.



Juan Moreno

Havana. Independent journalist, member of the editorial team at *Prensa Libre Cuba*.

PLC EXCLUSIVE: El Cangrejo Seeks Protection for His Son at Caridad del Cobre

BY CARLOS CABRERA PÉREZ ON OCTOBER 30, 2026, 1:02 P.M. |
CORRUPTION, CUBA, RELIGION, AND POLITICAL SATIRE



As of the time of this writing, the Cuban government has not provided any information regarding El Cangrejo's paternity, his trips to Panama with his wife to conceive their first child, the cost of the treatment and how it was paid for, or the family's plea to the patron saint of Cuba. AI-generated collage/PLC

By Carlos Cabrera Pérez - Prensa Libre Cuba – Exclusive

Madrid. PLC Exclusive | Colonel Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro, alias El Cangrejo, and his wife, Sheila Mariño, recently visited the Church of Our Lady of Charity, located at the corner of Manrique and Salud streets in Havana, to ask for protection for their son, who is about six months old, after he suffered a "little health problem," revealed a source from the Ministry of the Interior who declined to be identified.

Father Ariel Suárez, pastor of the Church of Our Lady of Charity, did not respond to PLC's WhatsApp messages seeking confirmation of the visit by Raúl Castro's favorite grandson to his church, located near Havana's Chinatown, which thousands of Cubans visit every September 8.

As of the time of this writing, the Cuban government has not reported on El Cangrejo's paternity, his trip to Panama with his wife to conceive their first child; the cost of the treatment and how it was paid for, nor of the family's plea to the patron saint of Cuba—despite the fact that, in 1991, the Communist Party amended its statutes to admit believers into its ranks, following 32 years of persecution against them.

But the Castro regime has never renounced its repressive surveillance of the church nor granted Cubans full religious freedom.

Rodríguez and Mariño's first child was conceived after the couple underwent assisted reproductive treatment at a specialized clinic in Panama City, according to FARINT sources. Before beginning her relationship with the colonel, the young woman was married to Samuel Formell, drummer for Los Van Van and son of the group's renowned founder and director.

Colonel Rodríguez serves as an assistant to his grandfather, Raúl Castro, who has been promoting him through the military ranks without justifying his merits or track record—a career path that has caused unease within the Armed Forces and the MININT, just as it did when his late father, Luis Alberto Rodríguez López-Calleja—GAESA's strongman—was promoted to major general.

U.S. and Cuban exile media sources have linked "El Cangrejo" to the talks between Cuba and the United States, initiated by his uncle, Brigadier General Alejandro Castro Espín, and the CIA's deputy director, Michael Ellis, in Mexico City in January. Cuba's ambassador to Uruguay, Lissett Pérez, downplayed the significance of these

reports and emphasized that Rodríguez Castro holds no official position and is caring for his grandfather.

The Castro Ruz-Espín families have had a checkered relationship with the Catholic Church and its leadership: Fidel and Raúl Castro and Vilma Espín were educated in religious schools, then renounced Catholicism, and following the institutional reconciliation of 1991, there was a rapprochement between the Communist and Catholic leaderships; three popes visited Cuba (1998, 2012, and 2015), and the Cuban ecclesiastical hierarchy is the largest private provider of elder care and preschool education.

Years before Colonel Rodríguez's wife and son recently visited the Church of Our Lady of Charity, his aunt, Mariela Castro Espín—a member of the National Assembly and director of CENESEX—asked Father Carlos Manuel de Céspedes García-Menocal, vicar general of the Archdiocese of Havana and former director of the General Secretariat of the Cuban Catholic Bishops' Conference, to bless her civil marriage to the Italian Paolo Titolo; a request he granted—after consulting with Raúl Castro—who attended the ceremony, held at the parish of San Agustín in the La Sierra neighborhood, also in Havana.



Carlos Cabrera Pérez

Carlos Cabrera Pérez, Havana, 1962. He has lived in Madrid since 1991. He has worked at Prensa Latina, Granma Internacional, EFE Havana, IPS Havana, Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana, and CiberCuba.
First Cuban mayor in Spain.

Cuba Loses Doctors, Accumulates Patients Awaiting Surgery, and Exposes the Deterioration of Its Healthcare System

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 30, 2026, 11:00 A.M. |
SOCIAL CRISIS, CUBA, AND LATEST NEWS



The problem goes far beyond doctors. The National Health System went from 390,279 workers in 2024 to 365,515 in 2025—a reduction of 24,764 employees in a single year. Photo ©PLC

CUBA-SOCIETY

PLC

Havana. PLC | The Cuban public health system, touted for decades by the regime as one of the Revolution's greatest achievements, is undergoing a decline that even official statistics can no longer hide. The loss of tens of thousands of professionals, shortages of medications and equipment, difficulties in performing surgical procedures, and problems with essential services such as hemodialysis constitute a crisis that directly affects patients.

The most recent figures from the Ministry of Public Health are particularly revealing. Cuba ended 2025 with 71,635 registered physicians, down from 75,364 in 2024 and 106,131 in 2021. In just four years, the registry lost 34,496 physicians, equivalent to 32.5 percent. In other words, nearly one in three doctors counted in 2021 no longer appears in the 2025 statistics.

The problem extends far beyond doctors. The National Health System went from 390,279 workers in 2024 to 365,515 in 2025—a reduction of 24,764 employees in a single year. When compared to 2021, the loss amounts to 145,266 workers—28.4 percent of the healthcare workforce recorded at that time. The number of nurses, dentists, technicians, and other professionals also declined.

The statistics, however, do not allow us to attribute the entire decline to emigration. The yearbook itself does not specify how many professionals emigrated, retired, left the profession, or were no longer listed in the records for other reasons. What can be said for certain is that, on paper, the system has far fewer human resources than it did four years ago.

The severity of the problem takes on a whole new dimension when one considers its consequences in hospitals.

In Guantánamo, more than 3,000 patients are awaiting surgery, including more than 300 cancer patients. The director of the Agostinho Neto General Teaching Hospital, Roberto Javier Torres Bronfield, acknowledged the lack of surgical machines, tables, and lights. The shortage of anesthetics also forces the hospital to reserve its supplies for emergencies and the Maternal and Child Health Program.

The problem is not limited to surgeries. In mid-October, a malfunction in the filters at the water treatment plant of the Octavio de la Concepción y de la Pedraja Hospital in Baracoa left 48 patients with chronic kidney disease from Maisí, Imías, and Baracoa without

local hemodialysis services; they had to be transferred to Agostinho Neto. Four machines and other supplies were also transferred to address the emergency.

The scale of the surgical backlog is not limited to Guantánamo either. In July, the national waiting list exceeded 100,000 people, and approximately 5,152 of them were awaiting cancer surgeries, according to data cited by CiberCuba.

Another cause for concern is the epidemiological situation. Cuba recorded 124 new cases of leprosy in 2025. The problem is particularly prevalent in the eastern region: Santiago de Cuba reported 40 cases, and Guantánamo saw its number rise from seven to 22 in one year. Five of the diagnosed patients were under 15 years of age.

Raisa Rumbaut Castillo, head of the MINSAP's National Leprosy Program, acknowledged that cases are diagnosed in Cuba every year and stressed the importance of seeking medical attention early. The specialist also clarified that the disease is not easily transmitted and requires close and prolonged contact with an untreated patient.

It would be incorrect to interpret the existence of these cases as evidence of a national leprosy epidemic. Official figures even show that the 124 diagnoses in 2025 were lower than the 151 in 2024. What is concerning is their concentration in certain areas and, above all, that these data emerge at a time when the healthcare system's infrastructure and human resources are severely weakened.

Taken together, all these factors paint a picture that is difficult to reconcile with the image of a "medical powerhouse" that the Cuban government has projected for decades. It is not merely a matter of dilapidated hospitals or the occasional shortage of a medication. Official statistics show a considerable contraction in the healthcare workforce, while reports from the health centers themselves reveal postponed surgeries, a lack of anesthesia, and difficulties in maintaining essential treatments.

For the Cuban regime, public health was for decades more than just a state service: it was a cornerstone of its political legitimacy and international propaganda. Precisely for this reason, the figures now coming to light have significance that extends beyond the healthcare sector.

The Cuban healthcare crisis can no longer be measured solely by what is missing from a pharmacy. It is also measured by the **34,496 fewer doctors registered since 2021**, by the **more than 3,000 residents of Guantánamo awaiting surgery**, and by kidney patients whose treatment depends on functioning equipment, water treatment plants, and transportation. These figures come, to a large extent, from the state's own statistics and institutions.

And perhaps that is the most politically uncomfortable fact for Havana: a significant portion of the evidence of the deterioration of what it presented for decades as one of its greatest successes is already reflected in its own figures.

Diplochusmeria: A Futile Effort by the Castro Regime

BY CARLOS CABRERA PÉREZ ON OCTOBER 30, 2026, 11:00 A.M. |
CUBA, THE UNITED STATES, POLITICAL HUMOR, THE UNITED NATIONS, AND POLITICAL SATIRE



Richard Tur de la Concepción, a bilingual slacker, pulled off the most costly stunt of his life because he must already be on his way to Apagonia Village, where the great chieftain Limonardo awaits him to award him one of the medals handed out by the Council of State. File photo

By Carlos Cabrera Pérez – Prensa Libre Cuba - Opinion

Madrid. PLC Opinion | After nearly seven decades of gossip and slander, the foreign minister's outbursts and his chorus of eunuchs reveal that the Castro regime continues to face a fundamental contradiction: those who have built their legitimacy on denouncing the enemy end up treating dissent as a threat; but no amount of posturing, however loud, can replace the obligation to respond to one's adversary with arguments and facts.

Diplomatic gossip is a weapon in the totalitarian arsenal of the Castro regime, as it has just demonstrated at the United Nations with the spectacle featuring star performer Bruno Rodríguez and his dance troupe—yet another futile effort that only leads to melancholy because the resolution imposes no obligations on the United States, and, year after year, the olive-green, guayabera-clad caste loses more support.

Perhaps the time has come for Washington to keep a low profile in the face of Havana's annual refrain and leave it like a bumbling boxer throwing punches into thin air, without getting drawn into its deceitful game—which presents as a great victory a vote whose real effects end up in the next issue of NTV and four parrots from Granma and its affiliates. The UN resolution on the U.S. embargo against Cuba is not binding and obliges Havana to keep embassies open even in Guamuta in the Pacific—a structure it funds with the money it extorts from emigrants.

Willy Chirino

Banging on tables, interrupting one's opponent, and turning a disagreement into a commotion are nothing new in Cuban diplomacy or in totalitarian political practice, which—when it does not control the debate—uses the cry "Scandal! It's a scandal!" as a tool of pressure and launches boos to throw the speaker off balance and provoke a second news story favorable to its interests.

For legal nitpickers and cyber-pundits: the rabble that directs and guides them attempted to sabotage a multilateral session of the United Nations, whose rules of procedure allow for raising objections, but not for turning a point of order into a rebuttal on the substance of the matter—much less for disrupting the proceedings.

The political paradox is clear: a government that constantly champions the sovereign equality of states and respect for international institutions was represented at that moment by its foreign minister, Bruno—short and flabby—who provoked a confrontation that forced the chair to call for order.

Richard Tur de la Concepción, a bilingual slacker, made the most costly blunder of his life because he must already be on his way to Apagonia Village, where the great chieftain Limonardo awaits him to decorate him with one of the badges handed out by the Council of State, his CDR, where he'll collect and distribute little boxes and pats

on the lots of pats on the “ ” shoulders of his comrades, who’ll already be working their magic to replace him in New York—where there’s everything under the sun, man!—as his wife will remind him when no one’s listening because there aren’t enough microphones for so many people.

Just as Fidel taught them

In September 1960, Fidel Castro delivered a speech lasting more than four and a half hours before the UN General Assembly; 269 minutes to be exact—the longest on record in the history of that body—and turned his stay in New York into a political and media operation, when, after being expelled from the Shelburne Hotel, he moved his delegation to the Theresa in Harlem, where he received Khrushchev and Malcolm X.

It wasn’t the same tactic as banging on a table, interrupting the speaker mid-speech, and throwing punches—just another form of theater. “That’s pure theater!”—turning every circumstance into an episode of the political performance of his revolution.

At the Ibero-American Summit in Panama in 2000, the commander-in-chief’s plan backfired when, in an attempt to accuse Salvadoran President Francisco Flores of harboring terrorists, the accused pulled out his own record of terrorism, causing Castro’s jaw to drop and his eyes to blink rapidly; he tried to interrupt, but he had already been intellectually knocked out. Since then, the dictator has stopped attending those meetings.

In January 1979, during a ceremony marking the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution, Castro publicly attacked Beijing and Cairo. “Cuba is neither China nor Egypt, which sold the birthright for a bowl of lentils,” he blurted out, prompting the silent withdrawal of the ambassadors from both nations. And now even Raúl—who, according to Alfredo Guevara, is quite refined—is singing in Chinese. How times have changed, Modesto—what do you think!

Comrade Ernesto Soberón Guzmán played the little Fidel during his address to the General Assembly, where he even scolded the states that had voted in favor of the Cuban resolution. How crazy! That's how desperate and on its last legs the regime is.

But Castro and his heirs didn't invent the use of heckling as a political weapon; its earliest precedent dates back to the Irish Home Rule crisis (1886), when the contenders shouted, interrupted one another, and, at times, prevented speakers from finishing their speeches. The practice wasn't limited to a single political faction; it pitted supporters and opponents of Irish autonomy against one another.

Manchester, October 13, 1905. Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney disrupted a Liberal Party rally featuring Edward Grey and Winston Churchill, demanding that they take a stand on women's suffrage.

The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) turned that bold act into a precedent for the "mob" strategy, which consists of interrupting opponents, attracting press attention, and turning expulsion and/or arrest into publicity for their cause—by staging a second political and media event.

The Bolsheviks Enter the Fray

On January 5, 1918, the Russian Constituent Assembly held its first session; the elections had given the parliamentary majority to the Socialist Revolutionaries—not to the Bolsheviks, who failed in their attempt to impose the decisions of the new Soviet power on parliament. They then walked out of the session, and parliament was forcibly shut down the following day.

In the fall of 1926, during the power struggle within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Leon Trotsky and other leaders of the " " or United Opposition attempted to defend their positions before party

members, but boos and interruptions from Stalin's supporters silenced the dissenters.

Also in October—but in 1960—Nikita Khrushchev disrupted the 15th session of the UN General Assembly by interrupting speeches, shouting at other delegates, and pounding on his desk. The Soviet leader even went so far as to stomp his feet on the table during a confrontation with the Philippine representative, Lorenzo Sumulong. The presiding officer suspended the meeting.

Khrushchev turned the gestural and verbal confrontation into an inseparable part of his international image as a "kolkhoz rabble," but the episode left a lasting impression: a president who, instead of merely refuting his opponent, transformed the diplomatic venue into the scene of a verbal boxing ring.

Discrediting one's opponent and denying their legitimacy are tactics that often foreshadow the closure of spaces for free expression and the outlawing of political parties; in this case, they are not identical anomalies because Cuba does not control all the mechanisms and levers of the UN, but they respond to the totalitarian logic of violating norms and institutions while feigning indignation.

For 67 years, the Castro regime has concentrated political power in the Communist Party and claimed to be the legitimate representative of the nation, where internal dissent does not enjoy the same institutional conditions as in a pluralistic democracy because the regime brands its critics as tools of a foreign power and turns confrontation with the external enemy into a source of legitimacy.

Diplomacy is not isolated from this political culture. When representing the country becomes conflated with the unconditional defense of the government, criticism of its leaders can be treated as an offense against the nation, and the response follows the well-trodden paths of disparagement, outrage, and indignation.

After nearly seven decades of gossip and slander, the foreign minister's outbursts and his chorus of sycophants reveal that Castroism continues to face a fundamental contradiction: those who have built their legitimacy on denouncing the enemy end up treating dissent as a threat. And no outcry, however thunderous, can replace the obligation to respond with facts to what the adversary asserts.

Please, someone tell Ambassador Michael Waltz that Castro was a fan of Seiko watches; Rolexes, like Oldsmobiles, were just a passing fad—and by bringing them up, he's only stirring up a fuss in Miami and the surrounding areas on the eve of the midterms, while diverting attention from the main issue: the long history of Castro's criminality. A fine watch and a private key are communist trappings, just like Brezhnev's dacha on the Black Sea, where he took his mother, and she exclaimed: "Leonid, you've gone mad—what if the Bolsheviks come back!"



Carlos Cabrera Pérez

Carlos Cabrera Pérez, Havana, 1962. He has lived in Madrid since 1991. He has worked at Prensa Latina, Granma Internacional, EFE Havana, IPS Havana, Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana, and CiberCuba.
First Cuban mayor in Spain.

PLC SPECIAL: The Conservative Party of Canada reaffirms its support for a democratic Cuba and distances itself from the Liberal Party's policy toward Havana

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 29, 2026, 4:49 P.M. |
CANADA, CUBA, AND LATEST NEWS



Pierre Poilievre, leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, alongside Cuban-Canadian businessman and activist Antonio Tang, who has a long history of advocating for freedom in Cuba.

CUBA-CANADA-SOLIDARITY

Special Report—Prensa Libre Cuba

Ottawa. PLC | The Conservative Party of Canada has reaffirmed its support for the democratization of Cuba and for those both on and off the island who are calling for political freedoms and respect for

human rights. This r statement takes on special significance following the Canadian government's vote in favor of the resolution presented by Havana at the United Nations against the U.S. embargo.

In special statements provided to **Prensa Libre Cuba,** prominent Conservative representatives expressed their commitment to the Cuban democratic cause following a working meeting with Cuban-Canadian businessman and activist Antonio Tang.

Those who participated in the statements included Leo Housakos, leader of the opposition in the Canadian Senate; Anna Roberts, a Conservative member of Parliament from Ontario; and Pierre Paul-Hus, a member of Parliament from Quebec and the Conservative Party's provincial leader in that province.

These statements offer an important counterpoint to any interpretation of Canada's position at the United Nations as unanimous support for the Cuban regime. A government's vote represents the foreign policy of that executive branch, but it does not necessarily mean there is consensus among the various political forces on how to engage with Havana.

In the case of the Conservatives, this divergence has deep roots.

Leo Housakos has been one of the most vocal critics of the Cuban regime in the Canadian Parliament. In March 2022, he introduced a motion in the Senate calling for the condemnation of repression in Cuba, recognition of the democratic opposition as a negotiating partner, and the defense of Cubans' right to peaceful protest.

His position remains unchanged. On February 26, 2026, now as the Senate opposition leader, Housakos delivered a scathing speech on the situation in Cuba, holding the Havana regime responsible for much of the population's suffering and calling on Canada to directly support Cuban civil society and the private sector, rather than

maintaining what he described as a business-as-usual relationship with the government.

The relationship between Conservative representatives and the Cuban-Canadian civil society is also not new. In 2023, activists met with Housakos and Pierre Paul-Hus to discuss the situation of political prisoners, human rights violations, and the repression of dissent in Cuba.

Pierre Paul-Hus subsequently brought those demands directly to the House of Commons. In June 2024, he submitted a petition calling on the Canadian government to demand the release of all Cuban political prisoners, condemn the regime's serious human rights violations, and recognize both Cuban-Canadians critical of Havana and the island's pro-democracy civil society as interlocutors.

This background reinforces the significance of the statements now obtained by Prensa Libre Cuba. This is not merely a one-off reaction to the vote at the United Nations, but rather a political position that some Canadian Conservative leaders have expressed for years.

Here, it is also important to make a fundamental distinction.

Voting against the U.S. embargo does not necessarily amount to supporting the Cuban regime. A government may consider Washington's sanctions to be misguided while at the same time condemning the lack of free elections, political prisoners, repression, and restrictions on fundamental freedoms in Cuba.

What is truly debatable is Havana's attempt to portray every vote in favor of its resolution at the United Nations as international endorsement of its political system.

The message from Canadian conservatives challenges precisely that interpretation. Canada has an official policy toward Cuba, but within Canadian democracy there are political forces calling for a

considerably firmer stance toward the government in Havana and more direct support for those working toward a democratic transition.

For Antonio Tang and other members of the Cuban-Canadian community, bringing these concerns directly to the Canadian Parliament is intended to prevent the debate on Cuba from being reduced to relations between Ottawa and the Cuban government. Political prisoners, civil society, activists, and those calling for democratic reform must also be part of any Canadian policy toward the island.

The Conservative position therefore raises an issue that goes beyond the latest United Nations vote: **Canada's relationship with Cuba should not be measured solely by its stance on the U.S. embargo, but also by its response to human rights violations and by the support it is willing to offer to Cubans who are peacefully calling for a democratic system.**

On this point, at least, prominent representatives of the Conservative Party of Canada have sought to make their position clear: their engagement does not end with the government in Havana. It also extends to Cubans who aspire to replace the dictatorship with a democracy.

Link to video featuring statements by Canadian senators and representatives

Joe García Sparks an Uncomfortable Debate in Miami: Who Is Defending the New Cuban Emigrants?

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 29, 2026, 11:59 A.M. |
CUBA, EMIGRATION, UNITED STATES, AND LATEST NEWS



Former Cuban-American Democratic Congressman Joe García has publicly taken up the defense of these emigrants and has called for greater protection for those who have not yet managed to permanently regularize their status. Photo: Facebook screenshot

CUBA-UNITED STATES-EMIGRATION

Central Editorial Team

Miami. PLC. | The Trump administration's immigration policy is beginning to spark an uncomfortable debate within the Cuban exile community. The traditional stance of firmness toward the regime in Havana now coexists with another reality: Cubans who recently arrived in the United States—many with no criminal records—are facing deportation orders, uncertain immigration proceedings, or the possibility of being sent to third countries.

In light of this situation, former Cuban-American Democratic Congressman Joe García has publicly come to the defense of these immigrants and has called for greater protection for those who have not yet managed to permanently regularize their status.

This is not an abstract problem. Between October 2025 and June 2026, Florida immigration courts issued 4,007 deportation orders against Cuban citizens. A deportation order does not necessarily mean that the removal has already been carried out, but the figure illustrates the scale of the problem.

There have also been documented cases of Cubans threatened with being sent to third countries when their direct deportation to Cuba proves difficult. Immigration attorneys have also reported uncertainty and a lack of information among some detainees regarding the proceedings they face.

García's stance touches on a particularly sensitive issue in Miami: how far should Trump's immigration policy go when it begins to affect a community that contributed significantly to his political support in Florida?

A recent survey by Florida International University (FIU) helps gauge that discontent. The poll, conducted among 1,004 Cuban Americans in Miami-Dade, found that 76% disapprove of the increase in deportations of Cubans with no criminal record. Among those who arrived after 2020, the opposition is even greater: 92% said they were firmly opposed. In addition, 87% want Washington to resume processing immigration benefits for Cubans already in the United States.

These positions do not mean that the Cuban-American community has abandoned its traditional hard line toward the regime in Havana. The same survey indicates that 77% support a policy of maximum pressure on the Cuban government.

That is precisely the distinction that should guide this debate: **being against the Cuban regime does not mean being against Cubans who emigrate**.

For decades, a large part of the exile community was able to simultaneously advocate for a firm policy toward Havana and a welcoming stance toward those fleeing the island. The current tightening of immigration policies now forces a reevaluation of that historical coexistence.

García has brought this discussion directly into the political arena. His remarks also compel us to look toward the Cuban-American Republican representatives in Washington. It would be incorrect to claim that all of them have remained completely silent, because some have questioned certain aspects of immigration policy. But it is another matter entirely whether they are willing to confront the White House when the measures directly affect thousands of their compatriots.

There is no need to choose between controlled borders and a humane immigration system. Defending compliance with the law does not mean abandoning due process. Similarly, politically opposing the Cuban regime does not require automatically treating those who left Cuba seeking to settle in the United States as a threat.

Nor should the figures be exaggerated. There is no official confirmation of an alleged plan to deport 500,000 Cubans—a possibility about which García has made statements and which has sparked controversy. The verified facts are serious enough that there is no need to inflate them.

The Florida International University poll provides another politically relevant finding: despite strong opposition to deportations, 68% of those surveyed said they would vote for Republican candidates. Even among the Republicans surveyed, 63% disapprove of deporting Cubans with no criminal record.

This places Cuban-American Republican leaders in a unique position of responsibility. They can support Trump, advocate for a firm policy toward Havana, and demand stricter immigration controls. But they also represent a community that is clearly stating it does not want to see compatriots with no criminal record indiscriminately deported.

The position taken by García deserves attention precisely because it brings this concern to the center of the public debate. One need not agree with all of his political positions or his historical view of U.S.-Cuba relations to recognize that he raises a legitimate issue.

The Cuban exile community built a large part of its identity on defending those who fled a dictatorship in search of freedom. It would be difficult to explain why that solidarity should end just as a new generation of Cubans has managed to reach the United States.

Firmness must be directed against the regime in Havana; it must not be confused with indifference toward those who fled it.

October 1962, October 2026: Cuba Facing the Mirror of Its Own History

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 29, 2026, 11:00 A.M. |
CUBA, UNITED STATES, INTERNATIONAL, LATIN AMERICA, OPINION, RUSSIA, AND LATEST NEWS



It is far too simplistic to describe the entirety of U.S. policy toward Cuba as the product of an irrational obsession on Washington's part against the Revolution. AI-generated image | ©PLC

CUBA-HISTORY

Central Editorial Team – Analysis

Stockholm. PLC Analysis | October 1962 remains one of the most dangerous moments in contemporary history. For thirteen days, the world stood on the brink of nuclear war after the United States discovered that the Soviet Union was deploying nuclear missiles in Cuba, a short distance from U.S. territory.

The Missile Crisis ended through negotiations between John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev. Moscow agreed to dismantle and withdraw the Soviet missiles deployed in Cuba. Washington committed to not invading the island and, at the same time, through a secret " " agreement, agreed to subsequently withdraw the Jupiter missiles stationed in Turkey.

This averted a war with unpredictable consequences and also established a historic turning point in relations between Washington and Havana.

This is because, prior to October 1962, the United States had indeed been actively involved in efforts aimed at overthrowing the Castro government. The Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961 and Operation Mongoose were part of that earlier phase of the confrontation.

During the Missile Crisis itself, Washington considered far more serious military alternatives. Kennedy had options on the table that included attacks on Soviet installations and even an invasion of Cuba. Ultimately, he opted for a naval blockade—officially termed a "quarantine"—and a negotiated solution.

The agreement reached with Khrushchev changed the landscape. The part concerning Turkey remained secret for years, until the declassification of documents provided a more precise understanding of the exchange that facilitated the resolution of the crisis.

That is why U.S. policy prior to October 1962 should not automatically be projected onto the decades that followed. After the crisis, Washington maintained and expanded its policy of economic pressure, isolation, and containment of the Cuban regime, but the strategic confrontation entered a different phase.

And it is precisely there that one of the greatest contradictions in the historical narrative of Castroism begins.

Cuba was protected by the balance of power that emerged from the Missile Crisis, but the Castro government did not use that security to shut itself off within its borders. On the contrary, it turned Cuban foreign policy into one of the most interventionist in Latin America during the Cold War.

The Revolution aspired to make its mark on the international stage.

Beginning in the 1960s, Havana promoted or supported revolutionary movements in Latin America and Africa. Che Guevara attempted to spur armed struggle in the Congo and later in Bolivia. Cuba provided support to Latin American insurgent organizations and made so-called "internationalism" an essential part of its foreign policy.

But it was in Africa that this policy took on extraordinary military dimensions.

In Angola, Cuba intervened beginning in 1975 in support of the MPLA, and its presence lasted until 1991. Tens of thousands of Cuban military personnel were deployed during various stages of the conflict, in one of the largest overseas military operations undertaken by a Latin American country during the 20th century.

Then came Ethiopia. During the Ogaden War of 1977–1978, Cuban forces fought in support of the Ethiopian government against Somalia. Declassified U.S. analyses identified among Havana's motivations both Castro's revolutionary convictions and the strategic alliance with Moscow, as well as the desire to ensure the victory of governments allied with Cuba and the Soviet Union.

The Cuban presence also extended to other regions in Africa and the Middle East. There was support and intervention in Algeria and the Congo, as well as Cuban participation alongside Syria during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.

In Latin America, the approach was generally different. It did not involve sending large military contingents as in Angola, but rather supporting revolutionary movements and guerrilla organizations that sought to seize power by force of arms.

All of this calls for a critical reexamination of a narrative cultivated for decades by the Cuban government: that of a small, peaceful nation constantly harassed by an imperial power.

Cuba was, indisputably, the target of hostile U.S. actions. But it was also an active player in the Cold War.

Havana supported revolutions, intervened militarily beyond its borders, and turned its alliance with the Soviet Union into a tool for acquiring international influence vastly greater than what the island's size would warrant.

The origins of the embargo must also be viewed within that context.

Economic tensions began to escalate following the nationalizations carried out by the revolutionary government—including U.S. properties—disputes over compensation, trade restrictions, and Havana's progressive alignment with Moscow. The Dwight Eisenhower administration initiated the economic restrictions, and John F. Kennedy formally expanded the trade embargo in February 1962.

The embargo did not, therefore, arise in isolation from the political and strategic events of those years.

But history should not be distorted in the opposite direction either. Declassified U.S. documents show that Washington sought to use economic pressure to create internal difficulties that would weaken the revolutionary government. Decades later, the outcome forces us to acknowledge that the sanctions failed to democratize Cuba or bring down the regime.

That failure does not, however, negate the security concerns that historically explain the deep U.S. mistrust of Havana.

In 1962, the Soviet Union succeeded in deploying nuclear weapons on Cuban territory. In the decades that followed, Cuba sent troops to foreign conflicts and supported revolutionary movements on various continents. The historiographical debate over how much of that policy was a direct response to Soviet interests and how much

stemmed from Castro's own international ambitions remains relevant. Research shows that both factors were at play.

Precisely for this reason, it is far too simplistic to describe the entirety of U.S. policy toward Cuba as the product of an irrational obsession on Washington's part with the Revolution.

The current issue is different: determining whether a policy designed primarily for the realities of the Cold War remains effective more than six decades later.

One could argue that the United States had justifiable reasons for establishing a security cordon against a regime closely allied with Moscow, which allowed for the deployment of Soviet nuclear weapons and subsequently pursued an active policy of foreign intervention. But it does not automatically follow from this that all the sanctions established during that period remain effective or appropriate instruments today.

Historical memory cannot be selective either. The Cuban regime constantly recalls the Bay of Pigs, U.S. covert operations, the embargo, and the hostility of Washington. It has the right to include these events in its historical narrative because they occurred.

What it cannot do is stop the clock at October 1962.

After that came Angola, Ethiopia, the Congo, the Middle East, and support for Latin American revolutionary movements. Cuba ceased to be merely the stage for the confrontation between the superpowers and became one of its protagonists.

The very same regime that made the principle of non-intervention one of its main arguments against the United States spent decades intervening, directly or indirectly, in conflicts and political movements beyond its borders.

The Missile Crisis taught the world a lesson about the dangers of pushing ideological confrontation to the limit. It also established a precarious balance that helped prevent Cuba from once again becoming the scene of a direct military confrontation between Washington and Moscow.

For decades, Cuba projected soldiers, weapons, advisors, ideology, and political influence into other countries. That history is an inseparable part of the Revolution, even if it is uncomfortable for those who prefer to portray the regime exclusively as a victim.

Today, we can and must discuss whether the U.S. embargo still makes sense, whether certain sanctions primarily harm citizens, or whether six decades of pressure have demonstrated the limits of that strategy.

But that discussion will be intellectually honest only if the full history is acknowledged.

Washington was not innocent. Neither was Havana.

And when the Cuban regime demands that the world judge U.S. policy based on its actions from sixty years ago, it must be equally willing to have the world judge its own.

Five Cuban Poets from New York Come Together in “Indómitas al sol”

BY HUMBERTO LOPEZ Y GUERRA ON OCTOBER 29, 2026, 8:16 P.M. |
CUBA, CULTURE, LITERARY SCENE, AND LATEST NEWS



Magali Alabau, Alina Galliano, Lourdes Gil, Maya Islas, and Iraida Iturralde—five writers who have made distance, memory, the body, and personal transformation the subjects of poetry that is an indisputable part of Cuban literature. Image created by AI | © PLC

CUBA-POETRY

By Humberto López y Guerra - Prensa Libre Cuba – Review

Stockholm. PLC | Some books are collections of poems, while others reconstruct a literary landscape. *Indómitas al sol*. Five Cuban Poets from New York, a critical anthology edited by Felipe Lázaro, belongs to this second category. Its pages bring together Magali Alabau, Alina Galliano, Lourdes Gil, Maya Islas, and Iraida Iturralde—five writers who have made distance, memory, the body, and personal transformation the subjects of poetry that is an indisputable part of Cuban literature.



Originally published by Editorial Betania and the Cuban Cultural Center of New York in 2011, the work was reissued in a second edition dated February 24, 2025. The new edition includes a foreword by Odette Alonso Yodú, critical essays by Elena M. Martínez and Perla Rozencvaig, and an epilogue by Mabel Cuesta. The critical essays originated from the conference “Cuban Women Poets of New York: Twenty Years After an Anthology,” held at Baruch College, City University of New York, on March 12, 2010.

But the significance of *Indómitas al sol* goes far beyond its status as an anthology. The book compels us to ask where national literature ends. At a country’s borders? In language? In memory? Can a poem be excluded from the history of Cuban literature simply because it was written in New York, Madrid, Miami, or Mexico?

In the case of Cuba, this question carries particular weight. Exile is not a recent anomaly in its literature. In the prologue, Odette Alonso traces a genealogy that goes back to Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and extends to José María Heredia and José Martí. In other words,

some of the key figures in the Cuban literary canon wrote a significant portion of their work far from Cuba.

Hence one of the central ideas of the volume: the map of Cuban poetry inevitably extends beyond the island's physical boundaries.

But there is also a dimension that is particularly uncomfortable for official Cuban cultural history. Odette Alonso recalls that, even after studying philology at the University of Oriente, she was unaware of much of the Cuban literature produced outside the country, and that it was only after emigrating to Mexico that she discovered the breadth of that body of work. Her account highlights the effect that the exclusion of numerous émigré writers has had on the understanding within Cuba of its own literature.

At this point, *Indómitas al sol* takes on a significance that goes beyond the strictly literary. Rediscovering these writers also means piecing together a Cuban culture that has been fragmented for decades between the island and the diaspora.

The five authors share Cuba, displacement, and a connection to New York, but their poetry follows notably distinct paths. A review published in Insularis Magazine also notes that all five belong to the same generation: they left Cuba as young people, received their literary training, and initially published in the United States; they wrote in Spanish and were connected to the New York metropolitan area.

Magali Alabau brings the fractures of identity and the confrontation with the self into her poetry. The mirror, the body, and the splitting of the self take on an unsettling psychological dimension in her writing. It is not merely a matter of being far from Cuba, but of discovering that distance can take root within oneself.

In Alina Galliano's work, by contrast, the female body occupies a central place. Desire, autonomy, and transformation transform

women into subjects of their own experience. Nature and geography accompany this quest, but no longer as mere backdrops—rather, as extensions of the inner world.

Lourdes Gil, who passed away in 2023, constructs another realm of memory. Her poetry features the house, courtyards, stained-glass windows, gardens, and a dialogue with the visual arts. Absence is not simply what was left behind: it continues to shift within the consciousness of the one who remembers.

Maya Islas moves into a universe where imagination and experience mutually influence one another. Shadows, birds, caves, and everyday objects undergo metamorphoses, and her connection to the visual arts is evident in the visual composition of many of her images.

For Iraida Iturralde, family memory takes on special importance. Childhood and the figures of ancestors allow her to reconstruct an emotional continuity that physical distance cannot destroy. Memory thus ceases to be mere nostalgia and becomes a way of preserving what has disappeared.

The volume's critical framework reinforces this diversity. Elena M. Martínez examines the poetics of space in the works of the five writers; Perla Rozencvaig proposes a reevaluation of these poetics in five movements; and Mabel Cuesta concludes the reflection with "Cuban Poets of New York: Indomitable Passengers on the Sun's Chariot."

There is also a historical continuity behind this anthology. *Insularis Magazine* notes the existence of a previous joint publication from 1991, also dedicated to these writers, and recalls that that edition was bilingual in Spanish and English.

All of this allows us to read *Indómitas al sol* from a broader perspective: not as five accounts of the same experience, but as five

different ways of continuing to belong to a cultural tradition while simultaneously reshaping that tradition from the outside.

That is perhaps the book's most valuable aspect for today's Cuban reader.

For too long, the categories of "literature of the island" and "literature of exile" functioned as opposing territories, when the history of our literature demonstrates precisely the opposite. From Heredia, Avellaneda, and Martí to the successive generations of writers scattered across the world, Cuba has also been written about from afar.

Nor can exile become a critical straitjacket. The five poets brought together by Felipe Lázaro speak of Cuba and of loss, but they also speak of desire, death, family, sexuality, art, imagination, identity, and the contradictions of the individual. Their significance lies not only in having written from outside the island, but in the literature they were able to create from that experience and beyond it.

Indómitas al sol thus returns five names to a space they should never have left: that of Cuban literature, without geographical qualifiers.

For a national literature is not composed exclusively of those who remain within its borders. It also belongs to those who left, carrying with them the language, memories, and questions of their country. These five poets demonstrate that one can physically leave an island and yet continue to inhabit the written word.

Sources consulted: *the second digital edition of *Indómitas al sol* published by Editorial Betania, the bibliographic record from Yale University Library, and reviews from *Alas Tensas*, *Insularis Magazine*, *El Copo*, and * * Rueca. [zoepost.com], [search.lib…y.yale.edu], [alastensas.com], [insularism…gazine.com], [elcopoylarueca.com]*



Humberto López y Guerra

Humberto López y Guerra is a Swedish-Cuban writer, journalist, and filmmaker, author of **El otro espía** and other spy novels, and the Latin America representative for the PEN Swedish Writers in Prison Committee. As editor-in-chief and managing director of *Prensa Libre Cuba*, he combines political analysis, investigative journalism, and active advocacy for freedom of expression in Cuba.

The UN Condemns the Embargo Once Again, but Cuba Suffers Its Greatest Diplomatic Setback in Two Decades

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 28, 2026, 4:26 P.M. |
ANALYSIS, CUBA, UNITED STATES, UNITED NATIONS, AND LATEST NEWS



The resolution was approved by 130 votes in favor, 17 against, and 25 abstentions. This marks the 34th time since 1992 that the General Assembly has called for an end to the embargo, but it also represents the lowest level of support the initiative has received in the last twenty years. UN Photo

UNITED NATIONS-CUBA-EMBARGO

Central Newsroom

New York. PLC | On Wednesday, October 28, the United Nations General Assembly once again called for the lifting of the U.S. embargo against Cuba, but the result masked, behind the broad majority, a politically adverse development for Havana: international support for the Cuban resolution fell sharply, while both the number of votes against and the number of abstentions increased.

The resolution was approved by **130 votes in favor, 17 against, and 25 abstentions**. This marks the thirty-fourth time since 1992 that the General Assembly has called for an end to the embargo, but it also represents the lowest level of support the initiative has received in the past twenty years.

The decline is most evident when comparing the figures. In 2025, the resolution received 165 votes in favor, seven against, and 12 abstentions. In 2024, there had been 187 votes in favor, only two against, and one abstention. In two years, therefore, support for the Cuban proposal fell from 187 to 130 votes.

Havana once again won the vote, and it would be incorrect to present the result any other way. A considerable majority of the international community continues to reject the U.S. embargo policy. But it would also be misleading to interpret the 130 votes as a mere repetition of previous years' votes. The nearly universal consensus that long supported Cuba is clearly weakening.

The shift was particularly evident among European and Latin American countries. Germany, Italy, and Latvia were among the Western countries that abstained after years of supporting the resolution. Lithuania and Slovenia were among those that changed their position to vote against it. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there were also significant shifts: Colombia and Costa Rica were among the countries that opposed the resolution, while Chile and Honduras were among the governments in the region that did not maintain their traditional support for Havana.

The result shows that the Trump administration's diplomatic campaign to erode support for the resolution was successful. Washington did not come anywhere close to securing a majority that would legitimize the embargo internationally, but it did manage to break down positions that had seemed unshakable for decades.

The history of these votes helps illustrate the magnitude of the change. When the resolution was first introduced in 1992, it received only 59 votes in favor, three against, and 71 abstentions. Support gradually grew, reaching 191 votes in favor during the years of closest rapprochement between Washington and Havana. In 2016, during Barack Obama's presidency, the United States abstained for the first time.

Trump's arrival at the White House reversed the trend once again. His administration has not only defended the sanctions but has also intensified political and diplomatic pressure on the Cuban regime.

The text approved on Wednesday once again calls for an end to the embargo and specifically challenges U.S. laws with extraterritorial effects, expressly mentioning the Helms-Burton Act of 1996. The resolution bases its position on the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention, and freedom of trade and navigation.

However, the General Assembly resolution is not legally binding. Its adoption does not oblige Washington to lift the embargo. Its significance lies primarily in gauging the international community's political stance toward U.S. sanctions.

This year's debate was also marked by the severity of the Cuban crisis. The United Nations has noted that the U.S. crackdown coincides with a severe energy crisis and echoes the warning from its resident coordinator in Cuba, Francisco Pichón, regarding the risk of a potential humanitarian collapse. UN officials also reported that more than 100,000 surgical procedures had been postponed until May, while the energy shortage was affecting the healthcare system and the supply of medicines.

U.S. sanctions have real economic consequences, and the overwhelming majority of states represented at the United Nations continue to view them as unjustified. But acknowledging these effects

does not mean accepting the Cuban government's argument that the island's crisis can be explained solely by the embargo.

That was precisely the angle that Mike Waltz, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, sought to exploit. During the debate, he accused the Cuban government of corruption and repression and questioned why the population suffers from severe shortages while, according to Washington, members of the ruling elite enjoy real estate, boats, and luxury goods. He also accused Havana of economically exploiting medical professionals sent abroad and of imprisoning political opponents.

Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla raised a point of order during the U.S. statement and requested that Waltz be called to order, as he considered his remarks offensive. Members of the Cuban delegation approached the podium, and tensions escalated to the point that the Assembly president temporarily suspended the session.

The episode turned the diplomatic debate into a public confrontation that ultimately damaged the image Havana was seeking to project. Instead of focusing exclusively on U.S. sanctions, part of the international attention shifted to the behavior of the Cuban delegation itself.

Havana lost 35 votes in favor compared to 2025 and 57 compared to 2024. The decline in support is too significant to be dismissed as an insignificant fluctuation.

For the Cuban regime, which for years has been accustomed to using the near-unanimity of these votes as a major annual victory in the propaganda war, the 2026 result serves as a serious warning. Condemning the U.S. embargo no longer necessarily means giving the Cuban government a political blank check, and a growing number of countries are choosing to separate the two issues.

Camilo isn't dead yet...

BY CARLOS CABRERA PÉREZ ON OCTOBER 28, 2026, 12:12 P.M. |
CUBA, CUBAN HISTORY, AND LATEST NEWS



Camilo's disappearance has given rise to a theory of political assassination, pointing the finger at Fidel and Raúl Castro, whom critics accuse of being jealous of Cienfuegos' popularity; however, the key factor fueling the speculation was the Huber Matos case and the political tensions of the revolution's first year. Collage © PLC

CUBA-HISTORY

By Carlos Cabrera Pérez – Prensa Libre Cuba

Madrid. PLC | People with a penchant for storytelling tend to react emotionally to events such as the unexpected and untimely disappearance of Commander Camilo Cienfuegos Gorriarán; compounded by the fact that they have never been able to mourn him because there is no body, this has sparked superstitions far and wide, which persist 67 years after his passing.

First came the shock, then the sadness, followed by the pagan procession of throwing flowers into the sea; and for the past thirty-

seven years, the versions from both sides—accusing Castro of having ambushed and assassinated him due to alleged disagreements and conflicts—and the official version, based on the phrase of the hero of Yaguajay: "Not even in a baseball game against Fidel."

Camilo was a true Cuban, but his biography offers few clues that he would not have become a bureaucrat in the crony-driven communist system, as happened to most of his comrades-in-arms, ever since the commander-in-chief killed the pluralistic revolution that had brought him to power with the overwhelming, enthusiastic, and self-sacrificing support of the majority of Cubans.

The future hero, born in Lawton in 1932, suffered hardship from childhood onward; he had to abandon his studies at the San Alejandro Academy due to financial difficulties, worked as a tailor's apprentice in a Havana shop, and participated in popular protests both before and after emigrating to the United States and joining the Granma expedition.

The charismatic Camilo, who during his ten months in power courted half the cast of Tropicana dancers and mastered the technique of flipping—without a plate—an omelet made with up to 40 eggs, came from an anarchist and communist family of Spanish origin, and was unceremoniously deported by the United States, along with his friend Rafael Sierra. To resolve the situation, both married U.S. citizens of Hispanic descent in Havana and returned to the U.S. with resident status.

Retired Colonel Aldo, of the MININT, was the one who taught him how to flip tortillas at the Pekín—located between the popular corner of 23rd and 12th and Jalisco Park—where he worked as a cook and struck up a friendship with Camilo, who had a girlfriend living in one of the apartments above that popular Chinese restaurant of the time.

Cienfuegos had no connection whatsoever to the Moncada raid or the M-26-7 at that stage because he flew to the United States on April 5,

1953; In the U.S., both immigrants held subsistence jobs until Camilo was arrested by immigration authorities at a Latin-themed bar, where people danced, drank, ate, and played games tinged with nostalgia.

Since he had already won over Isabel Blandón, a Salvadoran woman 16 years his senior, she traveled to Havana to marry her Cuban boyfriend and help him obtain legal residency in the United States. Isabel had a son from a previous marriage.

After the wedding, Camilo returned to the U.S., but only briefly, as he already knew what Castro was plotting in Mexico, and his friend Sierra came to see him off at the Los Angeles airport, from where he flew into history—with stops at María Antonia's house, the Sierra Maestra, the invasion, and the Rebel Army taking power.

The popular commander joked with his Argentine counterpart Ernesto Guevara about Hilda Gadea's ugliness, but when Che learned that the wife of the most popular of the rebels was arriving in Havana and that she, too, was ugly, he didn't hesitate to show up at Rancho Boyeros Airport; and from that day on, Guevara's jokes ceased because the dynamic between them reversed, and the historic phrase "Attention, Column Two, Column Two, Camilo, this is Che" took on a playful tone.

Researcher Néstor Castillo has best documented Cienfuegos's life in San Francisco, including a photo of the "marriage of convenience?" in Havana—though he notes that he has been unable to verify whether he married for love or for the immigration benefits of the marriage.

William Gálvez recounted that Cienfuegos and Sierra married Isabel Blandón and Gilda Torres (also Salvadoran by birth), respectively, on September 1, 1955, at the Bacardi building; both women returned to the United States two days later. Gálvez stated that Camilo and Rafael were both wearing guayaberas on the day of the wedding and that afterward, the newlyweds went to the Malecón to have their pictures

taken. Blandón lived as Isabel Cienfuegos until her death and never remarried.

Camilo Flew as Matías Pérez

On October 28, 1959, Cienfuegos departed from Camagüey Airport bound for Havana aboard a Cessna 310 belonging to the Revolutionary Armed Forces. He was accompanied by the pilot, First Lieutenant Luciano Fariñas Rodríguez, and Private Félix Rodríguez, serving as an escort.

The report released by the Rebel Army stated that the plane took off at 6:01 p.m. The plane never reached Havana, and no wreckage or remains of the aircraft or its occupants were recovered. Cuban authorities organized an aerial, maritime, and ground search that lasted two weeks and included cooperation from the United States—a detail omitted from the official account.

On November 12, Fidel Castro officially announced the disappearance and declared it likely that Cienfuegos had died at sea, attributing it to an accident caused by weather conditions. However, the absence of human remains and the aircraft made it impossible to verify his hypothesis.

Camilo's disappearance has given rise to a theory of political assassination, pointing to Fidel and Raúl Castro, whom critics accuse of jealousy over Cienfuegos' popularity; however, the key factor fueling speculation was the Huber Matos case and the political tensions of the revolution's first year, when communist infiltration into the military and repressive apparatus first raised suspicions.

However, anyone seeking to analyze Camilo's disappearance must take into account that the guerrilla commander flew under the alias Matías Pérez; that storms often form in central Cuba—which could have forced Fariñas to change his flight path; and the lack of conclusive evidence supporting the theory of a political assassination.

A document declassified by the United States attributes the accidental theory as the cause of Camilo's death to Ernesto Guevara, but Che did not provide forensic evidence, only an opinion—like so many others regarding the most dramatic event of the Castro regime's early days in power. The publicly available documentation does not allow us to establish—conclusively—what happened to the plane or to rule out all hypotheses regarding the traumatic disappearance.

Since then, Camilo Cienfuegos has come to occupy a central place in official Cuban iconography. His wide-brimmed hat, his smile, and his image as a popular guerrilla fighter became recognizable elements of Castroist propaganda and political education, which used his name for military schools and public institutions; perhaps the "camilitos" are the most visible expression of this symbolism.

But the official narrative and self-serving manipulations do not eliminate the historical and bibliographic need to study the real Camilo—a young man of modest origins who became a daring guerrilla commander and an idol of the masses.

Faced with the political canonization of Fidel and Raúl Castro as immaculate, untouchable saints immune to any questioning—and with historicist manipulation—many Cubans have always reacted with mockery, like a prankster and anonymous bar owner from Havana's Sevillano neighborhood who swore: "Camilo isn't dead at all, and he runs a shoe store in Miami…"



Carlos Cabrera Pérez

Carlos Cabrera Pérez, Havana, 1962. He has lived in Madrid since 1991. He has worked at Prensa Latina, Granma Internacional, EFE Havana, IPS Havana, Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana, and CiberCuba.
First Cuban mayor in Spain.

“This Isn’t Havana”: Waltz Calls Out Bruno Rodríguez and Denounces the Cuban Regime’s Intimidation at the UN

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 27, 2026, 9:23 P.M. |
CUBA, UNITED STATES, UNITED NATIONS, AND LATEST NEWS



Richard Tur de la Concepción, a bilingual ne’er-do-well, made the most costly blunder of his life because he must already be on his way to Apagonia Village, where the great chieftain Limonardo awaits him to award him one of the medals handed out by the Council of State. File photo

CUBA-UNITED STATES-UNITED NATIONS

New York. PLC | The United Nations General Assembly witnessed an unusual scene on Tuesday when Cuban Foreign Minister Rodríguez repeatedly attempted to interrupt U.S. Ambassador Mike Waltz during the debate on the resolution against the U.S. embargo. What began as a procedural matter turned into a bitter political confrontation that forced the Assembly’s president to intervene.

But the episode takes on another dimension when one considers what happened just eight days earlier in the same United Nations building.



On October 19, Cuban diplomats staged a protest against former political prisoners at the United Nations headquarters itself.

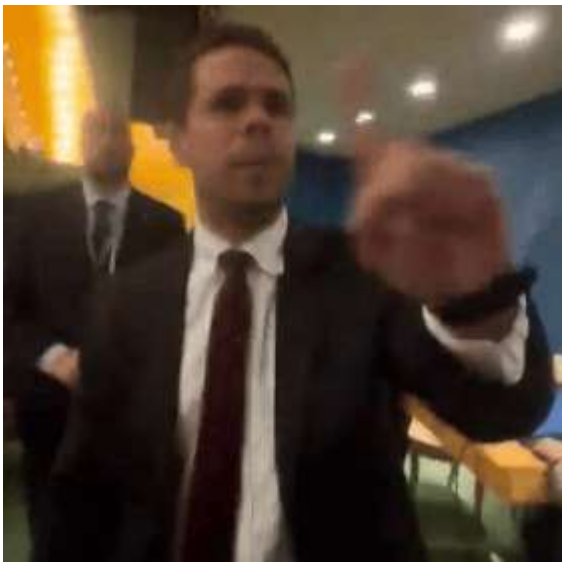
On October 19, Cuban diplomats led by Havana's permanent representative, Ernesto Soberón Guzmán, heckled opposition figures and former political prisoners who had attended the forum "Cuba Libre: The Oppression Havana Hides," organized by the U.S. mission. Among the participants were José Daniel Ferrer and Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara. The Cuban officials greeted them with shouts of "terrorists" and other accusations. The incident was captured on video and independently confirmed by Reuters, which reported that Soberón and other Cuban representatives shouted at Waltz as he was leaving the meeting.

Waltz later described the incident as an attempt to "harass," "intimidate," and film both former political prisoners and other attendees.

Tuesday's scene featuring Rodríguez is difficult to separate from that previous incident.

While Waltz accused the Cuban regime of corruption and cited examples of the privileges enjoyed by its ruling elite, members of the

Cuban delegation banged on the tables and protested. Rodríguez insisted on immediately raising a point of order and moved toward the presiding officer's area amid an increasingly heated exchange.



The U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Mike Waltz, posted a video on Tuesday in which he accuses a member of the Cuban delegation of attempting to intimidate UN staff into cutting off the microphones while he was showing images of the lavish lifestyles enjoyed by regime leaders and their families.

For PLC, there is a political element here worth noting: the Cuban delegation's conduct is reminiscent of the methods of collective pressure that for decades have characterized the so-called "acts of repudiation" within Cuba. The difference is that this time it did not take place in front of an opposition figure's home in Havana, but at the United Nations, in front of diplomatic representatives and cameras.

That is precisely why Waltz's response took on special significance: "This isn't Havana. You're not going to intimidate me."

The comparison is not merely rhetorical. The October 19 incident featured official Cuban representatives shouting "terrorists" and "liars" at opposition figures and former political prisoners. The

footage that was released shows officials filming and heckling the meeting's participants.

There is even a previous precedent. In October 2018, Cuban representatives interrupted another event organized by the United States at the United Nations to address the situation of political prisoners in Cuba by shouting and banging on tables.

Therefore, rather than a mere momentary loss of diplomatic composure, what happened can be interpreted as the replication outside of Cuba of a political culture accustomed to responding to opponents not only with arguments, but by attempting to silence them through shouting, collective pressure, and disparagement.

Waltz capitalized precisely on that reaction to reinforce his message. When the interruptions began, he turned the Cuban protest into a demonstration of his own thesis: if government representatives acted this way within the United Nations, surrounded by diplomats and cameras, the question implicitly raised was what chances an ordinary citizen has within Cuba when confronting those in power.

And that was likely Rodríguez's biggest political mistake.

The foreign minister intended to refute Washington's accusations, but ended up providing Waltz with an extraordinarily effective image for his argument: a Cuban government representative trying to stop his speech while other members of the delegation protested from their seats.

The confrontation also unfolded amid a much deeper debate. Havana maintains that U.S. sanctions are the main cause of the h r economic hardships suffered by Cubans. Washington seeks to undermine that explanation by pointing to the responsibility of the political system itself, economic mismanagement, repression, and the privileges of the ruling elite.

That was why Waltz cited images of the Rolex watches attributed to Fidel Castro and Miguel Díaz-Canel and publicly denounced the lavish lifestyles of members of the ruling family and those connected to it.

The U.S. message was simple: while millions of Cubans suffer from power outages, shortages, and the deterioration of basic services, those in the upper echelons of power live under very different conditions.

Rodríguez, for his part, accused the U.S. ambassador of lying and of maintaining an undignified attitude toward Cuba.

But the confrontation left Havana in a particularly awkward position. Just eight days after Cuban diplomats confronted former political prisoners and opposition figures in the hallways of the United Nations, the foreign minister was at the center of another confrontational scene as he attempted to interrupt the U.S. representative.

The Cuban regime traveled to New York to denounce the embargo and convince the world that Cuba is a victim of Washington. It ended up also placing at the center of the debate something that surely was not part of its strategy: its own methods toward those who contradict it.

For decades, “acts of repudiation” have been used within Cuba to surround, intimidate, and silence political opponents. What has happened in New York in recent days offers legitimate grounds for wondering whether that culture of intolerance has ended up being exported even by those who hold diplomatic passports.

That is why Waltz’s statement carries significance that goes beyond the personal altercation with Rodríguez:

“This isn’t Havana. You’re not going to intimidate me.”

And perhaps therein lies the politically most damaging image that this diplomatic battle leaves for the Cuban regime: that, in an institution created precisely so that adversaries can listen to one another, its representatives have ended up behaving in a manner all too similar to what so many Cuban dissidents have been denouncing for decades.

66 Days Alone and Sick: The Case of Félix Navarro Exposes the Punitive Conditions Faced by Political Prisoners in Cuba

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 27, 2026, 4:42 P.M. |
CUBA, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND REPRESSION



Navarro and his daughter, Saylí. Photo: Cubalex

CUBA-REPRESSION-HUMAN RIGHTS

Central Editorial Staff

Havana. PLC | At age 73, suffering from diabetes and serving a nine-year sentence for his participation in the July 11, 2021, protests, Cuban opposition figure Félix Navarro Rodríguez had spent 66 days alone in a cell in the infirmary at Agüica Prison in Matanzas, according to a complaint filed by his wife, Sonia Álvarez, after visiting him.

The case would be serious in and of itself. But it ceases to seem exceptional when viewed alongside data compiled by Cubalex: the

organization “ ” recorded 18 incidents related to punishment cells or solitary confinement during the first 26 days of October. Throughout 2026, it has identified 95 people involved in at least one of these incidents. October is already the third-highest month for such incidents, behind July (26) and April (23).

In other words, the complaint regarding Navarro raises an issue that goes beyond his personal situation: to what extent is solitary confinement used within the Cuban prison system as a disciplinary measure—and, in particular, against political prisoners?

Navarro told his wife during a visit that he had been alone for 66 days. Sonia Álvarez stated that his placement in the infirmary is not due to specialized treatment that would require keeping him separate from the rest of the prisoners. According to her testimony, he receives medication for diabetes, but his condition is not regularly monitored, nor does he receive medical care that would justify his confinement there.

Placement in an infirmary might suggest medical protection. The family’s complaint describes precisely the opposite: isolation without the corresponding health care.

The situation is particularly sensitive given Navarro’s age and his diabetes. His wife also reported that during a visit, a prison official removed some of the food she had brought for him, and she explained that her husband needs to eat regularly due to his condition.

There is another precedent for these medical concerns. Infobae, citing Amnesty International, reported that in January of this year, Navarro underwent tests for possible symptoms of tuberculosis and that neither he nor his family received timely information about the results. The same source notes that on October 23, Amnesty International reiterated its demand for the release of Navarro and his daughter, Saylí Navarro Álvarez, whom the organization has recognized as prisoners of conscience since 2024.

Father and daughter are serving sentences of nine and eight years, respectively, in connection with their participation in the July 11 protests. Navarro also has health problems, according to a report by his mother published by Martí Noticias.

The length of Navarro's solitary confinement takes on special significance when compared to international prison standards.

The Nelson Mandela Rules stipulate that persons deprived of their liberty must be treated with respect for their dignity and may not be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. They also stipulate that the provision of medical services to prisoners is the responsibility of the state and that prisoners must have access to standards of health care equivalent to those available to the rest of the community.

Nor does the complaint end with Navarro.

Data compiled by Cubalex and released on Tuesday reveal repeated instances of solitary confinement targeting certain political prisoners. Among the documented cases are Danisbel Labrada Morales and Fausto René Ramos Ramírez, with nine incidents each; Ediolvis Marín Mora, with seven; Virgilio Mantilla Arango and Pedro Carlos Camacho Ochoa, with six each; Aliesky Calderín Acosta and Alexander Fábregas Milanés, with five; and Carlos Alain Abrahantes Valdés, with four.

Particularly disturbing is the case of Ediolvis Marín Mora. Cubalex states that it recorded a total of 19 repressive incidents against him in 2026 at various prisons in Camagüey, including solitary confinement, incommunicado detention, death threats, difficulties accessing medical care, and prison transfers. The organization reported on October 23 that he remained in a punishment cell at the Kilo 8 prison.

These two cases help paint a picture that demands greater international attention. It is not enough to simply count how many

political prisoners there are in Cuba. We must also observe what happens to them once the prison doors are closed.

Solitary confinement has precisely this effect: it renders the prisoner invisible.

It reduces their contact with other inmates, makes it difficult for outsiders to monitor their condition, and increases their dependence on prison officials for food, medication, communication, and health care.

In Navarro's case, there is also a political history that makes his incarceration particularly sensitive. This is not the first time he has been imprisoned by the regime. Martí Noticias recalls that he was also among those convicted during the Black Spring. He is currently serving a nine-year prison sentence on charges of public disorder and assault following his arrest during the demonstrations on July 11, 2021.

What the sources consulted do not allow us to establish independently is the specific official justification for keeping him separated from the rest of the prison population during this period. The claim that this is a deliberate punishment stems primarily from his wife's testimony. Nor do these sources provide a recent independent medical evaluation determining his exact clinical condition.

It is important to make these clarifications. However, the lack of official information does not diminish the seriousness of the questions; rather, it makes an explanation from prison authorities all the more necessary.

Why is a 73-year-old man kept alone in an infirmary for weeks if, according to his family, he is not receiving treatment there that requires isolation? How is his diabetes being managed? What is the

prison or medical justification for keeping him separate from the other inmates?

The underlying problem goes beyond Navarro.

When a human rights organization documents 18 incidents of isolation in just 26 days and 95 people affected in a single year, it is no longer sufficient to consider each case in complete isolation. The numbers demand an investigation into whether there is an institutional pattern and what real safeguards inmates have to report abuses.

The responsibility is particularly clear when it comes to health care. The Nelson Mandela Rules expressly state that medical care for prisoners is the responsibility of the state.

The Cuban regime may imprison Navarro, but from the moment it deprives him of his liberty, it also assumes direct responsibility for protecting his health, his physical integrity, and his dignity.

And therein lies precisely the political dimension of the case.

A state also reveals its true nature by the way it treats those it has defeated, convicted, and imprisoned. An elderly, sick, and isolated prisoner does not pose a threat that justifies a lack of transparency. On the contrary, he represents basic evidence of just how far a prison system is willing to go when witnesses disappear.

The reported 66 days of Navarro's isolation should be sufficient grounds to demand a public explanation, an independent medical evaluation, and an immediate review of his conditions of confinement.

Because in Cuba, the plight of political prisoners does not end when they are sentenced. For many, it is precisely behind prison walls that

the part of their ordeal begins—the part the regime would prefer no one to see.

The CIA Seeks to Undermine the Regime from Within: Washington Bets on Fissures in the Cuban Leadership

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 27, 2026, 1:39 P.M. |
ANALYSIS, CRISIS, CUBA, UNITED STATES, AND LATEST NEWS



The uncomfortable question is not only who might contact Washington tomorrow, but who may have already done so. AI-generated image | ©PLC

UNITED STATES-CUBA ESPIONAGE

Central Editorial Office - Analysis

Washington. PLC Analysis | The U.S. strategy of pressure against the Cuban regime has entered a much more sensitive phase. Washington is not only attempting to weaken the government economically through sanctions and increase its political isolation. It is now pursuing something potentially more disruptive to the internal stability of the system: finding officials, military personnel, and individuals with access to information who are willing to collaborate with U.S. intelligence.

The offensive ceased to be discreet last Friday, when Secretary of State Rubio issued a public call to Cubans interested in promoting "positive change" on the island to consider discreet collaboration with the CIA. The agency subsequently released a message in Spanish addressed to individuals who believe they possess information of interest to the United States.

The Southern Command later joined the same political offensive. Its commander, General Francis L. Donovan, stated that "Cuba's future belongs to those who take action" and once again emphasized corruption, broken promises, and the existence of a privileged elite while a large portion of the population faces severe hardships.

The convergence of these messages can hardly be viewed as an isolated action. It comes after it was revealed in August that the CIA had created a special task force dedicated specifically to Cuba, designed to more rapidly mobilize human, financial, and technical resources and to seek divisions within the ruling elite. According to reports published at the time, the unit included specialists in source recruitment, intelligence analysis, cyber operations, and covert influence.

The fundamental difference between that information and what has happened now is visibility. An intelligence agency normally tries to conceal whom it intends to recruit. Washington is doing the partial opposite: it is publicly announcing that it is seeking people within Cuba willing to collaborate.

There may be a political explanation for this apparent contradiction. The value of the campaign does not depend solely on how many informants the CIA manages to recruit. The mere possibility that collaborators exist within the Cuban apparatus can sow suspicion among officials, military personnel, and security leaders.

This is one interpretation, but there are indications that internal divisions are precisely one of the U.S. objectives. Reports published in

August about the new special force noted that its mandate included attempting to create rifts within the Cuban political elite and increasing pressure to replace leaders considered intransigent with more pragmatic figures willing to negotiate with Washington.

Nor does the current campaign come out of nowhere. CIA Director John Ratcliffe made an unusual visit to Havana in May and met with senior officials within the Cuban government, including Brigadier General Ramón Romero Curbelo, identified as the director of the Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior. Also present were Interior Minister Lázaro Álvarez Casas and Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro, Raúl Castro's grandson.

This information is revealing for another reason. Washington appears to be combining two tools that may seem contradictory: it maintains channels of communication with representatives of the Cuban leadership and, at the same time, is intensifying its search for information and potential fissures within the system itself. These are not necessarily incompatible strategies. Negotiations seek to influence decisions from the top down; intelligence seeks to uncover what happens behind closed doors and where the adversary's weaknesses lie.

The regime's reaction was immediate.

Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossío tried to ridicule the initiative, stating that there must be "a great deal of desperation" within the CIA when it needed to promote its offers "like toothpaste."

Public mockery, however, does not eliminate the problem that an initiative of this nature poses for a regime whose survival depends largely on the cohesion of its political, military, and security apparatuses.

The uncomfortable question is not only who might contact Washington tomorrow, but who may have already done so.

And therein likely lies the operation's most effective psychological component. The CIA does not need to publicly demonstrate that it has informants within the Cuban structure. Precisely because an intelligence relationship is not publicized, the uncertainty can fuel suspicion among the leaders themselves.

But neither should we portray the U.S. campaign as proof of an imminent collapse of the regime. There is no public data indicating how many Cubans have responded to the CIA's call or how many actually belong to sensitive state structures. Nor is there sufficient public evidence to support the claim that the regime's leadership is on the verge of a breakdown.

Furthermore, Washington is entering a realm where its track record in Cuba calls for caution. The CIA's history in Cuba is marked by very serious failures, ranging from the Bay of Pigs to major Cuban counterintelligence operations. The special force created in 2026 has inevitably been compared to that history, although reports on the new unit indicate that its current mandate is much more limited and that it does not have an organized Cuban force comparable to the one used in 1961.

Havana has also demonstrated a considerable ability to infiltrate U.S. intelligence efforts. Therefore, any recruitment attempt could also become an opportunity for Cuban counterintelligence to try to infiltrate double agents and spread disinformation.

But the context of 2026 is different from that of the Cold War.

U.S. pressure now coincides with a deep economic crisis, prolonged blackouts, and growing social frustration. Reports on U.S. strategy suggest that Washington views these tensions as an opportunity to exploit potential divisions within the ruling structure.

This point deserves particular attention. For decades, the Cuban leadership has managed to shift the cost of the crisis onto the population while preserving the cohesion of the institutions tasked with defending the system. The U.S. strategy appears to be banking on the possibility that this balance could begin to break down if resource shortages and inequalities also affect middle-level sectors of the state apparatus.

Whether that gamble will pay off is another matter.

An authoritarian system does not automatically collapse simply because its economy fails, nor because a portion of its officials is dissatisfied. It possesses instruments of surveillance, control, and repression precisely to survive such circumstances. The Cuban opposition has learned over decades that economic deterioration does not necessarily lead to political transition.

That may explain part of the U.S. shift in policy. According to the report published on October 26 by Nora Gámez Torres, Washington is observing internal dynamics while the expectation that this year's protests might turn into a massive uprising capable of precipitating the regime's end has faded.

In other words, since pressure from the streets failed to bring about a rupture, Washington is now looking toward the cracks within the system.

The strategy carries obvious risks. The regime will use the CIA's call to once again fuel the narrative of " 's Square under siege," justify greater internal controls, and portray any political opposition as a tool of the United States. It may also reinforce Havana's propaganda arguments precisely as Cuba once again takes its annual battle against the embargo to the United Nations.

But there is also a fundamental difference compared to previous moments in the confrontation.

Washington appears to have concluded that a transformation in Cuba is unlikely to occur solely through economic sanctions or popular protests. To change the system, fractures would also need to occur at some point within the institutions responsible for sustaining it.

That is the context in which the CIA's new message must be understood.

It does not mean that the Cuban regime is on the verge of collapse. It does not prove that there is a conspiracy within the Armed Forces or the Ministry of the Interior, nor that Washington already has a decisive network within the government.

It means something more specific: the United States is attempting to turn internal discontent within the Cuban apparatus into a political and intelligence vulnerability.

The battle, therefore, is no longer being waged solely between Washington and Havana. The new U.S. strategy aims to bring the conflict into the regime itself.

And that may be precisely the most unsettling aspect for the Castro leadership. Sanctions can be calculated, protests can be suppressed, and statements from Washington can be countered with propaganda. It is much more difficult to govern when doubts begin to arise about the loyalty of those on the other side of the door.

Pío Serrano, 85 Octobers of a Rare Cuban

BY CARLOS CABRERA PÉREZ ON OCTOBER 27, 2026, 11:00 A.M. |
CUBA, CULTURE, LITERARY SPACE, AND SPAIN



Photo by Pío E. Serrano, courtesy of CCP

ONOMASTICS

By Carlos Cabrera Pérez

Madrid. PLC | Disclaimer: This article lacks objectivity because it is colored by the affection and admiration I feel for Pío E. Serrano Castellanos, a rare Cuban who has relished the joy of dissent ever since the Castro regime exiled him and who has made his vast culture a hallmark of kindness—one that provokes without hurting and wins smiles with that stubborn Eastern humor rooted in four pillars: culture without borders, baseball, pork rinds, and books.

Pío was born in San Luis, Oriente, on October 27, 1941; he later moved to Güines due to his father's job transfer, and together they won a television trivia contest, which earned them a house in San José de las Lajas; These were stopovers on a life journey that led him to literature, law, the Vedado, Marianao, and exile in Madrid in 1974;

after being turned back at the airport twice, despite having served four years of punishment cutting sugarcane in the Limonar area.

For a list of his achievements, it would suffice to say that he is an exile, a poet, an editor, and a cultural promoter; but that would be an inaccurate portrait because Pío has lived—since he was a little boy—in the realm of words; a realm that—in his serene conviction—admits neither ideological labels nor geographical boundaries.

In 1990, together with Aurora Calviño—his guardian angel—he founded the Verbum publishing house, through which he helped disseminate literature, essays, and theater and keep the works of numerous Cuban authors scattered across the diverse geography of exile in circulation; deprived of their natural readership and ignored by publishers eclipsed by the fantasy of the charismatic Revolution; and—in his fruitful maturity—he hit a grand slam with the bases loaded by becoming the first publisher of the finest Korean literature in Spanish; until then, it had been the victim of poor translations from English.

At age 56, he set out to study Korean, the only language in the Far East with its own alphabet (Hangeul), dating back to the 15th century, and his excellence was officially honored by Seoul and recognized by the prestigious Lotte Foundation in 2019; he took advantage of that trip to take a two-day excursion to the madhouse that is North Korea.

Pío has combined his immense cultural work with an unwavering commitment to Cuba's freedom and—always discreet—solidarity with Cubans of all ages who arrived in Madrid before, during, and after the fall of the Berlin Wall; a city he planned to explore for a portrait of the 1930s that he never completed, just as he never traveled to Alaska to earn the money needed to establish a major publishing house in Madrid, alongside the late Agenor Martí, who—along with José Catalán and a few other friends—remained by his side when he broke with the Castro regime and asked to leave.

As a publisher, he knows that a good book survives ruptures, challenges, ugliness, bitterness, and even the dirty tricks of those who presume to decide which voices deserve to be heard and which writings should be read—and that conviction has led him to the very limits, without falling into the decadent trap on either side. Pío has built an indispensable space for Cuban culture, which remains trapped in its contradictions, diverse sensibilities, and unresolved debates.

Eighty-five autumns invite us to celebrate a vocation sustained by the authentic avant-garde—one that recognizes itself as part of a corpus inseparable from the nation, because culture is not the exclusive heritage of one group or another, but rather a space of shelter and encounter.

Happy birthday, big brother. May poetry continue to be home, conversation, and freedom; without losing the bad habit of venturing into the Castilian countryside in search of a pagoda of steaming pork rinds—which is the best synthesis between your appetite as a country boy in gaiters with a creaking machete and your passion for all things Eastern; including El Vedado, that neighborhood that dazzled you with its octagonal layout; dotted with mansions and skyscrapers that follow the rhythm of the alphabet D H K O... and the cabal of the charade 17 23 4 12...

And as a greeting card—so very much from the realm of poetry, as your friend Gastón Baquero proclaimed—another luminous, mischievous exile, I leave these verses of yours here because if it's hard to come up with a catchy opening line, it's even harder to wrap things up without tiring the reader, so I'm taking advantage of your poetry to embrace you.

Quietly, he renounced

reproaches and grand gestures,

just as

the usual exiles do.

And although on the calendar

the date of the journey was erased,

its voice remains alive in the

of longing.

But do not expect

for his complete return, because

he is nowhere to be seen now.

From being away so long, he is a being

that moves forward, charting

his destiny in the shattered light

of all places.



Carlos Cabrera Pérez

Carlos Cabrera Pérez, Havana, 1962. He has lived in Madrid since 1991. He has worked at Prensa Latina, Granma Internacional, EFE Havana, IPS Havana, Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana, and CiberCuba.
First Cuban mayor in Spain.

The Cuban peso plummets: the dollar nears 850 CUP and the euro approaches 1,000

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 26, 2026, 5:33 P.M. |
CRISIS, ECONOMY, AND LATEST NEWS



The situation takes on even greater significance because various informal market indicators show virtually the same exchange rates for the major currencies. Another figure published on Sunday placed the dollar at 835 CUP and the euro at 930 CUP. AI-generated image | ©PLC

CUBA-ECONOMY-CRISIS

Central Newsroom

Havana. PLC | The depreciation of the Cuban peso has once again pushed foreign exchange rates to exceptionally high levels. On Sunday, the U.S. dollar reached a rate of 834 Cuban pesos (CUP) on the informal market, while the euro reached 929 CUP—two of the highest values recorded over the past 30 days, according to CiberCuba's exchange rate. The data was also reported by Infobae.

The figures are particularly striking: one dollar is just 16 pesos away from the 850 CUP mark, and the euro is 71 pesos away from 1,000. This does not mean that these rates will necessarily be reached, but it illustrates the extent to which the de facto devaluation of the national currency has progressed in the informal market.

Nor is this movement an isolated one-day fluctuation. In seven days, the dollar's reference rate rose from 807 to 834 CUP—an increase of 27 pesos, or approximately 3.3 percent. The euro rose from 904 to 929 CUP over the same period—about 25 pesos, or nearly 2.8 percent.

On Friday, the dollar had closed at 830 CUP and the euro at 919. At Saturday's close, the dollar had already risen to 834 and the euro to 925 CUP, before the euro gained ground again on Sunday.

Behind these figures lies one of the most serious problems facing the Cuban economy: the enormous gap between the peso—the currency in which most workers receive their wages—and the hard currencies that determine the effective price of numerous goods and transactions.

Taking only the average exchange rate reported on Sunday as a reference, 100 dollars are equivalent to 83,400 Cuban pesos and 100 euros to 92,900. This is purely an exchange rate comparison, but it illustrates the enormous amount of national currency required to purchase relatively modest amounts of foreign currency.

The situation takes on even greater significance because various informal market indicators show virtually the same exchange rates for the major currencies. Another rate published on Sunday placed the dollar at 835 CUP and the euro at 930 CUP.

There is, however, a significant difference in the behavior of the so-called Freely Convertible Currency (MLC). CiberCuba's " " reference rate placed it at around 536 CUP on Sunday morning, compared to 585 at Saturday's close. The publication also warns of the peculiarities of

this exchange rate and the low volume of transactions that may underpin it.

This data calls for caution. Other sources provided significantly different figures for the MLC on the same Sunday. Directorio Cubano, citing an update from elTOQUE, reported 685.62 CUP. The methodologies and price sources are not identical, so it is not accurate to present a single MLC figure as the undisputed value for the entire informal market.

A clarification must also be made regarding the sharp fluctuation recorded over the past month. CiberCuba acknowledges that part of the monthly difference may be related to methodological adjustments to its index and not exclusively to a market depreciation.

But even with this caveat, the recent trend of the dollar and the euro is unmistakable in the published figures: both currencies are at very high levels and have risen over the past week.

For Cubans who rely primarily on income in pesos, the problem is not simply a matter of watching a number change in a table. The informal exchange rate has become a barometer of mistrust toward the national currency and of the growing gap between those who have access to foreign currency and those who depend exclusively on the CUP.

The government can set administrative exchange rates and maintain various monetary mechanisms, but there is a reality that largely eludes those decisions: how much a citizen is willing to pay in pesos to obtain a dollar or a euro.

This Sunday, that answer is once again devastating for the Cuban currency: around 834 pesos for a dollar and 929 for a euro.

And perhaps that figure best sums up the depth of the crisis: while the dollar approaches 850 pesos and the euro begins to approach the

symbolic 1,000 mark, for millions of Cubans, the currency in which they are paid is losing value against foreign currencies that increasingly serve as a safe haven and economic benchmark.

This is not merely a currency crisis. It is, above all, a crisis of confidence in the Cuban peso.

Orphaned Cuba

BY CARLOS CABRERA PÉREZ ON OCTOBER 26, 2026, 4:30 P.M. |
CUBA, OPINION, AND POLITICAL SATIRE



Social discontent—which is now widespread—the existence of opposition groups, and the willingness of some people to collaborate with the United States do not guarantee the existence of an internal force capable of bringing about a change in power. AI-generated image | ©CCP

By Carlos Cabrera Pérez – Opinion *

Madrid. Opinion | Donald Trump and Marco Rubio have taken Cuba under their wing, and what remains of the nation lies stunned by their back-and-forth maneuvering, by the inexplicable silence of opposition figures, activist-grantees, the press, and neo-journalists in search of grants and monetization, and by the rambling of three sad tigers from Havana; amid the courageous solitude of 146 former political prisoners who stood as the exception amid so much cowardice and mediocrity.

Never before has Cuba been more orphaned. The gesture of Ángel de Fana and his fellow martyrs is an example of consistency and courage, while the anti-Castro squad of grant-chasers plays the role of a seal

trained by the White House; although the shrewdest among them— — will already be building bridges with the Democrats in case they win the midterms and then the White House, so they won't be left without their bread of glory. Working is very hard.

The blowhards of "neo-journalism"—mere hack media types looking to monetize—have also taken a vow of silence so as not to lose followers, under the totalitarian pretext of not weakening the cause. What cause?

All this misfortune stems from the indifference of the financial oligarchy in Miami and other ports across Cuba's diverse geography toward the homeland. The M-26-7 and the PSP had lavish funding. But those who could finance a democratic and independent political project continue to bet that the ripe fruit will fall without risking a single dollar.

The CIA, the mystery that always haunts us

Comrade Trump has announced an anti-Castro Armageddon as many as eight times between this spring and this fall. March 5: an event at the White House with the Inter Miami soccer team. "First I want to deal with Iran, and then it will only be a matter of time before many Cubans can return to Cuba." October 23: Campaign rally in Fort Myers, Florida—"The United States will address Cuba upon returning from Iran." Marco Rubio will travel to the island to seal the deal.

The most "Cubiche" Secretary of State launched a snitch campaign, inviting Cubans to collaborate "discreetly" with the CIA—in other words, he comes up with the idea, and the potential agents put their lives on the line. What a deal.

The president and his Secretary of State—as in the case of Venezuela—have been absurdly and unnecessarily disrespectful toward the victims of the West's most brutal dictatorship, which has

given free rein to its broody hen-like anxiety, pretending to be all tough in the face of its most profitable enemy.

The idea may seem bold, but it is not new—especially not in Cuba, where, in March 1960, President Dwight Eisenhower authorized a covert CIA program against Fidel Castro. The plan called for organizing exiles, launching a propaganda campaign, creating a clandestine intelligence network within Cuba, and preparing a paramilitary force that could enter the island and support an insurrection.

Social discontent—which is now widespread—the existence of dissidents, and the willingness of some people to collaborate with the United States do not guarantee the existence of an internal force capable of bringing about a change in power.

In fact, Washington's plans resulted in three failures: the Bay of Pigs (1961), Operation Mongoose (1961–1962), and El Escambray (1959–1966).

Iraq is another example worth considering, especially when intelligence agencies recruit informants but fail to properly verify those reports—for which a substantial amount of U.S. dollars has already been paid in cash.

"Curveball" collaborated with the Yumas, living up to his pseudonym and helping to sustain the assessment in Langley that Iraq possessed mobile facilities for producing biological weapons. But the CIA concluded—too late—that the source had fabricated his stories and skewed the conclusions that reached the Oval Office.

Imagine what could happen with Cubans who never stop making things up—including the discredited Counterintelligence unit, which could easily fabricate one, two, three, or many such "little puppets." Golden rule: Recruiting someone does not mean they are reliable,

have access to relevant data and decisions, or are capable of evaluating them accurately.

Many Cubans have legitimate reasons to promote political change, but not all have real access to the decision-making center of late-Castroism, nor do they have the courage to risk their lives in an adventure that could make them a hero or lead to their execution.

In the former East Germany, the CIA and Britain's MI6 built the so-called Berlin Tunnel to intercept Soviet communications. The operation provided access to military and intelligence data, having recruited a Soviet officer from the earliest stages of the project. But Honecker did not fall until Gorbachev gave the green light and the East Germans tore down the Berlin Wall.

In Cuba, a clandestine network could be useful for learning what is happening within the state, but that does not mean it can spark an insurrection or control its outcome. The Mariel exodus (1980), the rafters (1994), and the July 11th protests (2021) were not inspired by the CIA, but by popular discontent with "olive-green happiness."

Afghanistan is an important lesson because there, the CIA and other Western intelligence services supported local actors who shared a common enemy with Washington—the USSR—but not its political objectives.

Following the Soviet intervention in December 1979, Langley supplied weapons and resources, channeled primarily through Pakistani intelligence services, with funding and collaboration from other countries. Reagan pushed this collaboration to the limit.

The Afghan resistance helped make the Soviet occupation increasingly costly, leading to the withdrawal of troops in February 1989. But the strategic outcome was twofold.

On the one hand, Washington succeeded in weakening the Soviet Union militarily in a conflict that helped exacerbate its internal crisis. On the other hand, Afghanistan did not become a stable state aligned with U.S. expectations. The Soviet withdrawal was followed by new phases of civil war and the expansion of armed movements with their own agendas, including Al-Qaeda.

The Cuban opposition is rife with rose-colored optimism, greenwashing, and "woke" ideology; obsessed with contributing to the "Obama II" hype in order to seize power, implement a socialist, rainbow-colored, "melonera" agenda (green on the outside, red on the inside), and march through squares and avenues with fists raised because "wokism" claims to correct all the injustices in the world—starting by changing words, moving on to censoring opinions, and ending by deciding who has the right to be offended. If the facts contradict my sensibilities, so much the worse for them—that's their pioneer-style motto.

An intelligence service can help individuals or organizations weaken an adversary without being able to decide which forces will subsequently occupy the political space, what interests they will defend, or what kind of government they will build—including potential recruits under "Marco's deals," among whom there will undoubtedly be assets of the old fox, the GRU, with a long history of tactical collaboration with the United States, dating back to long before the triumph of the revolution.

Unfortunately, mediocrity and opportunism are shared by both sides. Díaz-Canel, Bruno Rodríguez, and Carlos Fernández de Cossío have seen a goldmine in Trump and Rubio's statements and immediately picked up the ping-pong paddle, shouting, "Out with the vermin!"

Limonardo got all poetic: "The U.S. government makes it clear that it has not given up its ambitions to dominate Cuba." Come on, little one, why would Washington need to take over a run-down little farm that depends on Miami even for cooking and lighting?

What the U.S. president isn't giving up on is cleaning out the back alleys of your friends—the dynamite, the Bolivarian cocaine, the $70 "Aurika," and the smuggling of illegal immigrants.

Bruno reacted by playing up the deaths of Ñico Cuevita (Núñez Jiménez) and López-Callejas: "We reject any threat regarding U.S. ambitions toward Cuba. Our shores have beautiful beaches, but also dogtooth coral—inhospitable to those who arrive with hostile intentions and a thirst for domination." Is that a fight or a romance? He shouts at the Yumas, "Don't you dare!... I'll be waiting for you where you know."

Deputy Foreign Minister Fernández de Cossío must miss the Colgate he used to buy at the grocery store in New York, and he blurted out: "Now the U.S. is resorting to public CIA recruitment drives. There must be a lot of desperation or poverty in the agency's ranks when it has to sell its offers like toothpaste."

An unsurpassed display of Castro-style hypocrisy—as the Pasteles Verdes would say—seeing supposed weaknesses in the adversary, when he's been stuck for years in front of a mirror more deceitful than Snow White's stepmother's.

What a load of flat-tire rhetoric and dollar-scavenging from those three sad Havana tigers. More than political statements, they sound like the complaints of a spurned girlfriend, playing hard to get in front of the guy who's sweeping her off her feet. All that posturing makes for a tasty guaracha.

Poor Cuba—it doesn't deserve such cowardice or contempt—but the people suffer when they're unable to change the rules of the game, and the nomenklaturas—seemingly at odds with one another—are each carving out their own tributes on the eve of an Armageddon that never comes; inspired by the example of Venezuela, where María Corina Machado has just arrived; a muse for part of the opposition, while Lula has won—for the fourth time—in a Brazil politically split in

two, though this is enough to fuel a day and a half of tantrums for the late-Castro era.

** The Opinion page of Prensa Libre Cuba is the space where we analyze Cuban reality with independence, rigor, and a critical eye. Here, we interpret events beyond the immediacy of the news, question those in power without compromise, and defend freedom of expression as an essential democratic principle. Ideas are debated with arguments, not slogans, and citizens find a voice that calls things by their proper names. The opinions expressed in this space belong exclusively to their authors and do not necessarily represent the editorial position of Prensa Libre Cuba.*



Carlos Cabrera Pérez

Carlos Cabrera Pérez, Havana, 1962. He has lived in Madrid since 1991. He has worked at Prensa Latina, Granma Internacional, EFE Havana, IPS Havana, Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana, and CiberCuba.
First Cuban mayor in Spain.

Ángel de Fana Rules Out a U.S. Invasion: "Cuba Must Be Liberated by Cubans"

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 26, 2026, 11:10 A.M. |
SOCIAL CRISIS, CUBA, AND LATEST NEWS



This approach has an important political dimension because it seeks to avoid a trap that has shaped the Cuban issue for decades: the portrayal of the conflict as a dispute primarily between Cuba and the United States. Photo courtesy of FIU-Miami

CUBA-SOCIETY

Central Editorial Office

Miami. PLC | At a time when speculation is once again mounting about Cuba's future and just how far Washington might be willing to go in its confrontation with the regime in Havana, one of the historic figures of the Cuban political prison movement brings a dose of realism to the debate: Ángel de Fana does not believe the United States will intervene militarily on the island and maintains that the leading role in bringing about change must essentially fall to the Cubans themselves.

“I have never believed that the United States would intervene militarily in Cuba,” De Fana stated in an interview with journalist Tania Costa for CiberCuba. The veteran dissident, leader of Plantados hasta la Libertad y la Democracia en Cuba, served more than two decades in Cuban prisons after being convicted in 1962.

His position, however, includes one exception. De Fana believes that a radically different scenario could arise if a popular uprising were to occur in Cuba and the authorities responded by killing those who participated in it. It is under such extreme circumstances that he believes a U.S. intervention might be considered.

But that is not the scenario he presents as either desirable or likely. His fundamental thesis is precisely the opposite: the solution for Cuba must come primarily from the Cuban people themselves.

This is not a new position. In April, De Fana had already stated that he was confident Cubans could free themselves from the dictatorship without U.S. military intervention. At that time, he stated directly: “I continue to trust my people.”

These new statements take on greater significance because they do not stand alone. They come immediately after the public presentation in Miami of the declaration “To the People of Cuba and the United States,” dated October 10 and endorsed by more than 145 former Cuban political prisoners from different generations. De Fana read the document on October 22 at the Museum of Brigade 2506.

The declaration sets forth two fundamental demands prior to any negotiations with the regime: the unconditional release of all political prisoners and the decriminalization of dissent. Among its signatories are dissidents such as Guillermo “Coco” Fariñas and Jorge Luis García Pérez “Antúnez.”

This is perhaps the most significant political element of the initiative.

The signatories do not simply reject negotiations because they come from the regime, nor do they propose foreign intervention as the only alternative. Rather, they seek to establish a prerequisite: before discussing political agreements, there must be a minimum level of freedoms to ensure that such negotiations do not take place between an absolute power and an opposition subjected to imprisonment, persecution, or illegal status.

Negotiating while political prisoners remain in detention and dissent is criminalized would mean, according to the logic set forth by De Fana, accepting in advance the conditions imposed by those who control the prisons, the police, the courts, and state institutions. Hence his insistence that the release of prisoners and the decriminalization of dissent must occur before negotiations begin.

This position also takes on added significance at a time when much of the discussion about Cuba is once again revolving around the United States: what Donald Trump will do, how far Marco Rubio will go, how much pressure on Havana will increase, and what real capacity exists from abroad to change the regime's behavior.

De Fana raises another, perhaps more uncomfortable question: What should Cubans themselves do?

Elsewhere in the same interview, the longtime dissident stated that he wants to be in Cuba before change takes place and rejected the idea that any hope for transformation can be placed in Washington. As he put it, the responsibility also lies with the Cubans themselves.

This approach has an important political dimension because it seeks to avoid a trap that has shaped the Cuban issue for decades : the portrayal of the conflict as a dispute fundamentally between Cuba and the United States.

For the regime, this interpretation has proven extraordinarily useful. It allows it to present its internal conflicts as the result of external

aggression, to portray dissidents as tools of a foreign power, and to shift responsibility for its own failings onto Washington.

An opposition that places the driving force of change within Cuba itself undermines that narrative.

But there is also a reality that cannot be ignored. Calling on Cuban society to take the lead implies recognizing the enormous limitations under which that society can organize itself. There is no free electoral competition among political alternatives; independent media face restrictions; and opponents and activists have repeatedly denounced detentions and legal proceedings. Therefore, reducing Cuban responsibility to a simple call to "rise up" would be insufficient.

The fundamental question is how to create the political conditions that allow citizens to act as citizens.

And that is where the statement by the former political prisoners takes on its greatest significance. Its two preconditions—the release of political prisoners and the decriminalization of dissent—aim precisely to reshape the ground on which a transition could begin.

De Fana's message, viewed from this perspective, contains less triumphalism than it might seem. His confidence in imminent change is a personal conviction, not a demonstrable certainty. The politically substantial aspect of his words lies elsewhere: after decades of waiting for international events to decide Cuba's fate, he once again places Cubans at the center of their own historical responsibility.

The United States can exert pressure. Other governments can make their relations with Havana conditional. The international community can demand the release of prisoners and respect for fundamental rights. But no external power can indefinitely substitute for a society in building the country that will emerge.

That is probably the most important aspect of the message from these former political prisoners.

They are not asking to begin negotiations while forgetting those who remain imprisoned. Nor are they presenting a U.S. invasion as a solution to national problems. They are proposing something much more difficult: creating the conditions for Cubans themselves to decide Cuba's political future.

And after nearly seven decades in which the regime has used its confrontation with the United States as an explanation, justification, and political shield, returning the issue of Cuba to the Cuban people constitutes, in and of itself, a significant shift in perspective.

Cuba Silences Independent Journalism: IAPA Denounces New Forms of Repression

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 26, 2026, 10:17 A.M. |
CUBA, CULTURE, HUMAN RIGHTS, REPRESSION, AND LATEST NEWS



The picture painted by the IAPA thus points to a broader phenomenon: in today's Cuba, the distinction between journalists, digital creators, activists, and citizens who document public events is becoming increasingly irrelevant to the repressive apparatus when what is reported contradicts or questions the official version. AI-generated image | © PLC

CUBA-REPRESSION INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM

Central Newsroom

Stockholm. PLC | Repression against independent journalism in Cuba shows no signs of abating: it is changing its methods and becoming more diverse. That is one of the main conclusions drawn from the report on the island approved during the 82nd General Assembly of the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA), held October 22–25 in Bogotá, where the organization denounced "persistent patterns and new forms of restriction on freedom of expression and the practice of journalism."

The report describes a situation in which Cuban authorities are increasingly resorting to police and judicial measures against independent journalists, content creators, and activists who report on the situation in the country. According to the IAPA, these practices take the form of arrests, summonses, interrogations, and legal proceedings.

But the pressure does not end there. The document also highlights legal, administrative, and technological restrictions; travel bans for individuals classified as "regulated"; difficulties in accessing newsprint; and internet connectivity issues.

The case that the organization considers "most serious" is that of Henry Constantín Ferreiro, director of the independent media outlet La Hora de Cuba and regional vice president for Cuba of the IAPA's Commission on Freedom of the Press and Information. The journalist remains in pretrial detention at Kilo 7, a maximum-security prison in Camagüey.

Constantín was arrested on September 16 and is charged with "disobedience." According to information released about the case, authorities claim he failed to comply with a summons, while the journalist asserts that he did appear but that the officials had already left. A habeas corpus petition filed on his behalf was denied.

The situation subsequently worsened. According to information gathered following the IAPA assembly, prison officials claimed to have found a handmade knife among the journalist's belongings during a search. Constantín denied this and maintained that the object had been planted to frame him. He was then sent to a punishment cell and temporarily lost his right to family visits and phone calls.

The IAPA adopted a resolution demanding his immediate release and specifically denounced the escalation of arrests, summonses, surveillance, restrictions on movement, and criminal proceedings

against those who practice independent journalism or disseminate information of public interest.

The organization also mentions Kamil Zayas and Ernesto Ricardo Medina, members of the independent audiovisual project El4tico (El Cuartico), who remain imprisoned on charges related to videos featuring political analysis and satire. The report frames their cases as part of a “criminalization” of spaces for opinion on social media.

Another particularly serious issue is the use of convictions and prosecutions against individuals whose communication activities take place primarily on social media. The IAPA cites Anna Sofía Benítez Silvente, known as Anna Bensi, and her mother, Caridad Silvente, who were sentenced on October 1 to two years of “restricted freedom” after recording and sharing a video of a non-commissioned officer from the Ministry of the Interior who came to their home to deliver a summons.

The report also mentions journalists Jorge Bello and José Gabriel Barrenechea, who were imprisoned for their participation in protests, as well as Mayelín Rodríguez Prado, who is not a journalist and is serving a 15-year sentence after interviewing minors during a demonstration.

The picture painted by the IAPA thus points to a broader phenomenon: in today’s Cuba, the distinction between journalists, digital content creators, activists, and citizens documenting public events is becoming increasingly irrelevant to the repressive apparatus when what is reported contradicts or questions the official version.

Added to this is the legal framework. The IAPA resolution notes that Decree 160/2026, in effect since early August, strengthens state control by restricting the ability of independent media to register and by keeping activities related to journalism, news agencies, and broadcasting under state control.

The political coincidence is particularly significant. While Havana prepares its usual diplomatic offensive at the United Nations to denounce U.S. sanctions and assert its rights against Washington, international organizations are once again calling out the Cuban government for the restrictions it imposes within its own borders.

This is not to deny the international debate over U.S. sanctions. It is to highlight a contradiction that is much harder to hide: a state may assert its sovereign rights before other states, but that assertion does not exempt it from respecting the freedoms of its own citizens.

In Cuba, moreover, practicing journalism outside of state-controlled media means working without the safeguards that, in a democracy, should precisely protect those who investigate, ask questions, document, and criticize.

The report by the Inter-American Press Association therefore highlights a reality that goes beyond individual cases: controlling information remains an essential part of the Cuban political system.

When a government owns the major media outlets, restricts the legal existence of independent journalism, and—according to the continent's leading press organization—uses police and judicial mechanisms against those who report outside its structures, the problem is no longer merely one of censoring a news story.

It is about deciding who has the right to tell the story of Cuba.

And every journalist who is imprisoned, interrogated, "regulated," or subjected to legal proceedings demonstrates that this battle to tell Cuba's story remains ongoing.

Padura portrays a Cuba that is emptying out, but leaves the regime that governs it in the background

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 25, 2026, 11:47 A.M. |
CUBA, CULTURE, LITERARY SCENE, AND LATEST NEWS



Padura portrays a Cuba that is emptying out, but leaves the regime that governs it in the background. Photo by Leonardo Padura, Wikipedia

CUBA-LITERATURE

Central Editorial Staff

Stockholm. PLC | Cuba is running out of Cubans. The phrase may seem like an exaggeration, but demographic and migration figures turn this image into a reality that is increasingly difficult to hide. And now Leonardo Padura, one of the most internationally renowned Cuban writers and a resident of the island, once again brings this drama to the world's attention in his article "The Emptied Island," published this Sunday by EL PAÍS. The newspaper summarizes the scale of the problem with a startling figure: around two million

people—equivalent to approximately 20% of the population—are said to have left Cuba in four years.

Padura begins with a powerful image. At José Martí International Airport, he observes the lines at an airline used by Cuban families setting off for other countries. An employee offers him a household-scale measure of the disaster: “Every week, a whole classroom’s worth of people leaves.” Padura concludes that the nation is losing “part of its future.”

The metaphor is powerful because it helps us understand what lies behind the statistics. It is not just individuals who are leaving. Children, parents, professionals, and people of productive and reproductive ages are leaving. Cuba is simultaneously losing both its current and future populations.

But precisely because of the power of this portrait, it is also necessary to point out what remains underdeveloped in his analysis: the political responsibility of the state that has governed Cuba for nearly seven decades.

Here, it is important to be fair to Padura. It is not accurate to portray him as an intellectual who has never questioned the Cuban government. In an interview with EFE on September 30, he acknowledged that the government did not take full advantage of the rapprochement with the United States during Barack Obama’s presidency and described the current situation as a “daily hell” for most Cubans.

However, that same interview reveals a significant aspect of his public discourse.

When asked about the causes of Cuban suffering, Padura immediately directed his criticism toward Washington: he questioned whether U.S. policy truly sought to change the regime and argued that, as long as the government remains in power, it is the Cuban people who suffer.

He also described Donald Trump's policy toward Cuba as "very aggressive."

This is a legitimate criticism. U.S. sanctions are part of the Cuban context and can and should be scrutinized.

But there is a notable difference between describing the consequences of U.S. policies and examining with equal force the responsibility of those who have governed Cuba all this time.

That is precisely the contradiction worth pointing out in **La isla vaciada**.

Padura masterfully describes the result: a country from which families leave with their children because they are confident they will find a better future abroad than the one they have lived for years in Cuba. His own text notes that many of these travelers head to Guyana and continue to seek alternatives for residence and work outside the island.

But such a description compels us to ask a question that goes beyond migration routes: Why has such a significant portion of Cubans concluded that their future begins outside of Cuba?

The U.S. embargo does not run Cuban state-owned enterprises, does not set wages on the island, does not direct the Cuban political system, nor does it determine the country's economic model. Nor does it, on its own, explain why, after several generations under the same political system, so many young people consider it more promising to start from scratch abroad than to remain in the country where they were born.

Attributing the disaster exclusively to Washington would be just as irresponsible as pretending that U.S. sanctions have no consequences. Responsibility may be shared in certain areas without being equivalent.

And there are internal demographic indicators that make the picture even more concerning.

Official data already released for 2025 show that the population continues to age: 26.7% of the Cuban population is 60 years old or older.

This process makes youth emigration qualitatively different from traditional migration waves. It is not merely a matter of losing population. The country is losing precisely the part of the generations that should be renewing its workforce, starting families, and sustaining an economic and social system increasingly populated by older people.

Herein lies the true significance of the statement “every week, a classroom disappears.”

A classroom that disappears today means children who will likely neither study, work, nor start families in Cuba tomorrow.

That is why the current exodus should not be analyzed solely as a migration crisis. It is also an extraordinarily harsh verdict on the prospects the country offers.

This does not mean that every Cuban emigrant is a political dissident. It would be absurd to claim that. Nor do they all emigrate for the same reasons. But the collective behavior is significant: hundreds of thousands of citizens have decided that facing the uncertainty of emigration is preferable to staying where they are.

It is, in a sense, a silent referendum expressed through passports and plane tickets.

That is where Padura’s analysis could go even further.

His importance as a chronicler of Cuban reality lies precisely in the fact that he remains in Cuba. He endures the power outages and shortages he describes. He himself has recently recounted that he must carry water jugs to obtain drinking water and has acknowledged that, even though he is privileged in certain respects, he shares in the hardships of daily life. But describing the illness without subjecting the political system that governs the country to the same intense scrutiny leaves the diagnosis incomplete.

Washington Changes Its Tone Toward Cuba: From Economic Pressure to an Open Call from the CIA and Southern Command

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 25, 2026, 10:31 A.M. |
ANALYSIS, CUBA, UNITED STATES, AND LATEST NEWS



When the White House, the Secretary of State, an intelligence agency, and a military command issue messages pointing in the same direction within such a short span of time, Washington gives the impression that it wants Havana to realize that the pressure is no longer confined exclusively to the economic and diplomatic spheres. AI-generated image | ©PLC

CUBA-UNITED STATES-ESCALATION

Central Editorial Office – Analysis

Washington. PLC. Analysis | The confrontation between Washington and Havana has just crossed a new political threshold. It is no longer just about sanctions, diplomatic isolation, or economic pressure. Within a matter of hours, President Donald Trump spoke of U.S. ships off the coast of Cuba; Secretary of State Marco Rubio publicly invited Cubans to collaborate "discreetly" with the CIA; the intelligence agency itself released a message in Spanish addressed to potential

collaborators; and, on Saturday, U.S. Southern Command publicly joined this communications offensive.

This sequence can hardly be considered a collection of isolated incidents. What is verifiable is an extraordinarily visible convergence of messages coming from different levels of U.S. power. The actual scope of this strategy and just how far Washington is willing to take it remain open questions.

Everything began to take on a new dimension on Friday, October 23. During a campaign rally in Fort Myers, Florida, Trump stated that, once operations against Iran were concluded, U.S. ships would "pass through" Cuba and described one of them as having stopped about 50 yards from the coast. He added that he would then send Rubio to "seal the deal." He did not, however, present any concrete operational plan.

The distinction is important. The president's words constitute a serious rhetorical escalation, but they do not allow us to assert that there is an approved military operation against Cuba. To confuse the two would be to turn a political statement into a military fact that, so far, the sources consulted do not corroborate.

Hours later, a much less ambiguous signal arrived.

Rubio addressed those who want change in Cuba directly: "Now is the time," he wrote, linking his call to unfulfilled promises, corruption, and the privileges of a select few, and urging them to seize the opportunity through "discreet collaboration with the CIA."

The political significance of the message lies not simply in the fact that U.S. intelligence is seeking to obtain information in Cuba. What is truly significant is that the head of U.S. diplomacy is publicly making that collaboration an explicit part of his political discourse directed at the Cuban people.

The CIA then took over. The agency released a message in Spanish requesting information from individuals who believe they possess data of interest regarding Cuba.

And on Saturday, a fourth player emerged: U.S. Southern Command.

Its commander, General Francis L. Donovan, declared that "Cuba's future belongs to those who take action" and called for seizing the moment to bring about change, denouncing "broken promises," corruption, and the privileges of an elite at the expense of the people's needs. SOUTHCOM further amplified the CIA's earlier message.

That is probably the real news.

When the White House, the Secretary of State, an intelligence agency, and a military command issue messages pointing in the same direction within such a short span of time, Washington gives the impression that it wants Havana to realize that the pressure is no longer confined exclusively to the economic and diplomatic spheres.

But it would also be premature to present these events as evidence of an imminent U.S. intervention. The verified statements indicate political intimidation, psychological pressure, and public information gathering. The sources consulted do not demonstrate that Trump has ordered a military operation against Cuba.

Havana has, however, understood the significance of the message and has responded by similarly raising the tone.

Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossío resorted to sarcasm in response to the CIA's call. "There must be a lot of desperation or poverty within the agency's ranks when it has to sell its offerings like toothpaste," he wrote. He also accused the CIA of state terrorism.

Bruno Rodríguez, for his part, reacted specifically to Trump's statements about the ships. He affirmed that Cuba rejects U.S. threats and responded that while there are beaches along the Cuban coast, there are also "dog's teeth"—a place "inhospitable to those who arrive with hostile intentions and a thirst for domination."

It is telling that the Cuban government is once again placing the external confrontation at the center of its narrative precisely when it is going through a delicate internal situation. The external threat provides the political apparatus with a formula used for decades to call for unity, discredit its internal adversaries, and attribute much of the country's crisis to the United States. But that propagandistic reality does not eliminate another equally evident one: this time, Washington is providing Havana with particularly powerful arguments to fuel that narrative.

There is, moreover, a U.S. political factor that cannot be ignored. Trump's most recent statements came during a campaign rally in Fort Myers, Florida, just a few days before the November 3 midterm elections. Univision specifically notes that the event was aimed at supporting Republican candidates, and EFE highlights the significance of Florida's Cuban-American population.

This necessitates a critical analysis from both perspectives.

It would be naive to reduce everything that has happened to mere campaign rhetoric. Rubio's explicit call, the CIA's publication, and the involvement of the Southern Command are concrete facts that go far beyond an off-the-cuff remark at a rally. But it would also be unwise to automatically interpret every statement by Trump as an announcement of military action.

Washington appears to be pursuing a strategy that could prove politically effective without firing a single shot: increasing uncertainty within the Cuban power structures. The publicity surrounding the recruitment of potential collaborators has, by its very

nature, an effect beyond the strictly informative. It forces a regime built around political control and State Security to question just how far the loyalties of those working within its institutions truly extend.

José Daniel Ferrer's reaction demonstrates the extent to which the U.S. message has already begun to permeate opposition politics. On Saturday, the UNPACU leader addressed Cuban military personnel, police officers, and government officials, urging them to respond to the CIA's call.

Therefore, the essential question today is not whether U.S. ships will appear tomorrow off the Malecón. There is no confirmed information to support that claim. What is truly new is that the United States has decided to make public part of a strategy that would traditionally have remained within the confidential realm of intelligence services.

For the government of Miguel Díaz-Canel, this pressure also comes on the eve of another major diplomatic battle. On October 27 and 28, the United Nations General Assembly will once again address the Cuban resolution against the embargo. On October 21, Bruno Rodríguez denounced that Washington is exerting pressure on member states to change their position in that vote.

The confrontation is thus unfolding simultaneously on several fronts: the United Nations, sanctions and economic isolation, intelligence, presidential rhetoric, and now also the Southern Command's public communications.

Fernández de Cossío's irony regarding Rodríguez's "toothpaste" and "dog's tooth" may serve domestic propaganda purposes. But behind the exchange of barbs lies a far more serious political reality: Washington is attempting to convince Cubans—including, presumably, those within state structures—that the status quo is not set in stone.

The question is how much of this is a sustained strategy and how much is calculated political pressure, further exacerbated by the U.S. election calendar. Confusing expectations with facts would be a journalistic error. Ignoring the accumulation of signals coming from various institutions in Washington would be another.

What can be said for certain is that U.S.-Cuba relations have entered a phase of much more explicit confrontation. And for a regime accustomed for decades to obsessively monitoring the loyalty of its own cadres, perhaps the most unsettling message is not the ship Trump imagined just a few dozen meters off the coast.

It is the question that Washington is trying to plant within the Cuban system itself: who remains loyal, and who has begun to think about the day after.

INTERNATIONAL:

Venezuela Enters the Election Battle: Machado Demands 2027,

and Delcy Rodríguez Avoids Setting a Date

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 30, 2026, 10:14 P.M. |
LATEST NEWS AND VENEZUELA



For the opposition, the risk is that a transition that drags on too long will allow Chavismo to rebuild its structures and retain enough power to shape the future. Photo collage ©PLC

VENEZUELA-ELECTIONS

PLC

Caracas. PLC / The Venezuelan transition has entered a new and possibly decisive phase. Following María Corina Machado's return to the country and the presentation of a U.S. roadmap to reform the institutions that will be responsible for ensuring future elections, the opposition leader and acting president, Delcy Rodríguez, have begun to publicly stake out positions on Venezuela's political future.

The fundamental difference no longer seems to lie in whether there will be elections. Both Chavismo and the opposition are now speaking openly about them. The decisive question is **when they will be held, who will guarantee their transparency, and how far the**

transformation of the power structures inherited from Chavismo will go.

Delcy Rodríguez stated on Thursday, the 29th, that there will be "all the elections established by the Constitution" and promised that they will be organized by a renewed electoral authority. But she carefully avoided announcing a date. According to the acting president, conditions for participation, legal reforms, and a framework for democratic coexistence must first be in place.

The omission of a timeline is no minor detail. María Corina Machado, in her first press conference after returning to Venezuela, was much more specific: she believes the presidential elections should be held in 2027 and stated that "the democratic transition is irreversible."

Her return has changed the landscape. Machado returned on Sunday, October 25, after nearly a year abroad, and made her public reappearance in the state of Lara. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated that the conditions that allowed for her safe return were the result of reconciliation talks backed by Washington.

Machado now maintains that his very presence in the country demonstrates that the transition is moving forward. He has also publicly thanked the Donald Trump administration and links the current changes to the events of January 3, when Nicolás Maduro was captured during the U.S. intervention.

But behind this political confrontation lies a third actor that is impossible to ignore: the United States.

The Trump administration has established a roadmap leading up to the elections. The first step would be to renew the Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ); subsequently, the National Electoral Council (CNE) would be reformed; once both institutions are in place, Delcy Rodríguez should declare the presidency permanently vacant, which would open the way for new elections.

The U.S. position is based on a premise that is difficult to dispute given what occurred under the Maduro regime: elections cannot be considered democratic simply because there are ballot boxes and candidates. It is also necessary to guarantee the independence of the electoral authority, the proper functioning of political parties, the freedom of candidates to campaign, and judicial institutions that cannot politically alter the results.

Marco Rubio has been particularly explicit on this point. He has argued that there can be no legitimate elections as long as the institutions that allowed for the manipulation of electoral processes and the exclusion of candidates remain intact. At the same time, Washington maintains pressure mechanisms through sanctions and economic licenses and insists that it will evaluate the process based on its results, not simply on the statements of the interim government.

Herein lies the great contradiction of the Venezuelan process: to gradually dismantle the system built by Chavismo, Washington is negotiating precisely with a faction of Chavismo.

Delcy Rodríguez does not represent a historic break with the previous regime. She was Nicolás Maduro’s vice president and one of the leading figures in his power structure. However, she now promises guarantees that stand in stark contrast to the “ ” practices denounced for years. She has ordered that no one be detained without a warrant, except in cases of flagrante delicto, and has admitted that the so-called Anti-Hate Law was applied abusively.

Rodríguez is also attempting to present herself as the guarantor of an orderly transformation from within the state. Her argument is that reforms require experience and knowledge of the institutions, while she insists on avoiding a rupture that would lead to confrontation once again.

The question is how far this transformation is willing to go.

The renewal of the Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ) and the National Electoral Council (CNE) will be the first serious test. The U.S. plan aims for the new electoral body to have primarily technical functions and to no longer have mechanisms used to control which parties could participate or which candidates could run. It was precisely those powers that were used against María Corina Machado before the 2024 elections.

Machado, meanwhile, is trying to place justice and human rights at the center of the political future. He has spoken of "memory, justice, and reparations" and maintains that Venezuela needs justice, not impunity. He has also advocated for a transitional justice approach to human rights violations.

However, there is another significant challenge. Machado's political movement, Vente Venezuela, **is not currently participating in the negotiations between Chavismo and the opposition faction led by Dinorah Figuera**, despite the indisputable political clout Machado retains within the opposition.

Furthermore, Machado confirmed that, for now, he has no plans to meet with Delcy Rodríguez and that he has not received any messages from her or from the United States to arrange a meeting. Nevertheless, he has previously expressed his willingness to negotiate in order to move toward presidential elections.

The clash, therefore, is not yet head-on. Both sides recognize, at least publicly, the need to move toward the polls. But they differ on one essential point: **Machado wants to make the 2027 elections the culmination of the transition, while Rodríguez avoids committing to that timeline and makes the call for elections contingent on a prior reform process.**

The government reshuffle is also significant. Rodríguez dismissed Foreign Minister Félix Plasencia and appointed Óliver Blanco—until now the deputy minister for Europe and North America—to replace

him. Plasencia, who had served as a liaison with the Trump administration and particularly with Marco Rubio, will take on international duties within the Presidency, and his responsibilities will include the issue of Venezuelan gold held at the Bank of England.

The developments of recent days indicate that a genuine political contest has begun to define post-Maduro Venezuela, but it would be premature to confuse this with a democratic transition that is already firmly established.

The return of María Corina Machado, her public political activity, the promise of elections made by Rodríguez, and, above all, the plan to overhaul the Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ) and the National Electoral Council (CNE) represent substantial changes. But the true test will come when those commitments must be translated into institutions, guarantees, and timelines.

For the opposition, the risk is that a transition that drags on too long will allow Chavismo to rebuild its structures and retain enough power to shape the future. For Rodríguez, the challenge is to demonstrate that his reformist rhetoric is not merely a strategy to buy time and preserve, in new forms, an essential part of the old system.

And for the United States, the dilemma is even more complex: it needs to use the structures that still exist to dismantle precisely the mechanisms that made Chavismo's authoritarian hold on power possible.

The battle that is now beginning will therefore be less spectacular but likely more decisive than the previous ones. **The debate is no longer solely about who will govern Venezuela, but about who will write the rules by which Venezuelans will be able to decide that.**

Therein lies the true significance of the positions taken this week by María Corina Machado and Rodríguez. One calls for an election in 2027 and maintains that the transition is irreversible; the other

publicly accepts elections and the renewal of the electoral authority, but still resists specifying when.

Caught between them is a Venezuelan society that, after years of authoritarianism, crisis, and confrontation, hopes that this time the promise of free elections will cease to be a political bargaining chip and finally become a reality.

Israel Votes for Change, but Netanyahu Resists Stepping Down

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 28, 2026, 10:01 A.M. |
ANALYSIS, ISRAEL, AND LATEST NEWS



Such caution is essential. Official results are expected on November 4, and only then will the true balance of power in the new Knesset be known with certainty. AI-generated image | ©PLC

ISRAEL-ELECTIONS

Central Editorial Team

Jerusalem. PLC | The Israeli elections on October 27 have sent a political message far more complex than a simple victory or defeat. Benjamin Netanyahu remains in the running, and his Likud party continues to be the largest single party, but the preliminary results do not guarantee him the 61 seats needed to form a government. At the same time, the opposition led by Gadi Eisenkot does not, on its own , have an alternative majority either. Israel has voted, but it has not yet decided who will govern.

And an important clarification is needed regarding the initial reports from election night: exit polls initially showed a slight lead for the opposition, but the partial vote count later began to tilt in favor of Netanyahu's bloc. With just over 55% of the votes counted, a report cited by Al Jazeera put the governing bloc at 56 seats, compared to 49 for the opposition and 15 for Arab parties. These are provisional figures and may change substantially until the count is complete.

Such caution is essential. Official results are expected on November 4, and it will be then that the true balance of power in the new Knesset can be known with certainty.

What does seem indisputable is the extraordinary level of voter turnout. Turnout reached 77.7%, the highest in 27 years, according to data from the Central Elections Committee cited by CNBC. It is difficult to separate this mobilization from the enormous political weight accumulated in the wake of the Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023, and the subsequent wars in Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran.

In that sense, these elections were much more than a contest between parties. A significant portion of the electorate was effectively voting indirectly on the security failure of October 7, the conduct of the war, judicial reform, military service for the ultra-Orthodox, and, more broadly, on the continuation of the political model that Netanyahu has built after many years of dominating Israeli public life.

Eisenkot himself—former Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces and leader of the Yashar! party—made political accountability for October 7 one of the defining issues of his campaign. In an interview prior to the election , he was unequivocal: he argued that anyone who held command and leadership responsibilities during that attack should not lead the country in the future, and he specifically stated that Netanyahu was not fit to continue as prime minister.

The paradox is that Eisenkot may now need to relax other red lines if he intends to turn the vote against Netanyahu into a parliamentary majority.

This brings us to one of the most politically significant developments of these elections: the sharp increase in the representation of Arab parties. Early polls projected they would win between 17 and 18 seats, a figure that could make them the kingmakers in the new Knesset.

But the arithmetic clashes head-on with political positions. Netanyahu has ruled out relying on Arab parties to govern. Eisenkot has also put up obstacles to their inclusion, advocating for the formation of a Zionist government.

That contradiction may become the focal point of all subsequent negotiations. If the traditional blocs fail to secure 61 seats, the Arab parties will wield a parliamentary influence that none of the candidates can simply ignore. A minority government sustained by external parliamentary agreements is emerging as one of the scenarios now being discussed.

Nor does Netanyahu accept the interpretation that the election results signal his departure. Speaking to his supporters, he called for the formation of a “strong right-wing national government,” while Eisenkot maintained that the electorate had voted in favor of change.

This is precisely where the second election begins—the one carried out not directly by the citizens but by the parties through their negotiations.

The Knesset has 120 seats, and 61 are needed to secure a majority. Receiving the most votes does not automatically grant the position of prime minister. Once the results are official, President Isaac Herzog must decide which candidate has the best chance of securing a parliamentary majority. According to the schedule published by Israel Hayom, the official results are expected to be announced on

November 4, and Herzog will have until November 11 to task a candidate with forming a government.

And this is where a trait comes into play that has made Netanyahu one of the most resilient politicians in Israel's recent history: his extraordinary ability to survive parliamentary situations that seemed to block his path.

That is why it would be premature to portray these elections as the end of the Netanyahu era. The prime minister continues to lead the most significant single political force, and as the provisional count progresses, his bloc has performed better than some polls initially predicted. But what has happened cannot be presented as another unequivocal victory for the Israeli leader either. There is still no majority that would guarantee his continued hold on power.

The elections have also left a deeply mobilized and politically fragmented society. The high voter turnout demonstrates that for a vast number of Israelis, this was not simply a matter of deciding who would occupy the office of prime minister, but rather what kind of Israel will emerge after the trauma of October 7 and years of war, political polarization, and clashes over the role of the judiciary, religion, and military service.

The 2026 elections may have weakened the coalition system that allowed Netanyahu to govern, but they have not yet clearly established a replacement for him. That is the great paradox of the day: there is a strong vote calling for change, but the very divisions among th s who want that change may end up offering Netanyahu another chance to survive politically.

Therefore, rather than a conclusion, Israel has just entered a new battle. This time it will not be fought at the polls, but in backrooms, in negotiations between parties, and in each bloc's ability to cross some of the red lines it proclaimed during the campaign. And until the vote

count is complete, any declaration of victory remains, quite simply, premature.

Machado Arrives in Caracas Flanked by a Crowd Demanding Elections

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 26, 2026, 1:50 P.M. |
LATEST NEWS AND VENEZUELA



Her return now creates a twofold pressure. For the government of Delcy Rodríguez, because it will have to demonstrate the extent of the political guarantees offered during the process of opening up. And for Washington, because it will have to reconcile the negotiations it is sponsoring with a leader who possesses an evident ability to mobilize support but who remains outside the main negotiating table. Photo: Maria Corina Machado Facebook

VENEZUELA—MARÍA CORINA MACHADO'S RETURN

Central Newsroom

Caracas. PLC | Machado's return to Venezuela culminated this Sunday with a massive welcome in Caracas, following a long road trip from Barquisimeto. Thousands of people lined the route to greet the opposition leader and accompanied her in a motorcade of cars and motorcycles that moved slowly toward the capital amid flags, cheers, and chants of "Elections now!"

Machado, the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, had surprised everyone hours earlier by announcing her presence on Venezuelan soil with a brief message: "I'm here. With you." Shortly afterward, she

appeared at the “ ” sanctuary of the Divina Pastora in Santa Rosa, Barquisimeto, where she was welcomed by supporters during a Mass.

From there, she set out on the journey to Caracas. The motorcade traveled along the main roads connecting Lara with Yaracuy, Carabobo, and Aragua before entering the capital. Along the way, groups of people gathered to greet her and join the procession. By nightfall, her arrival in Caracas was surrounded by supporters, cars, and motorcycles.



The reception takes on a political dimension that goes beyond the images. Just three days earlier, on October 22, thousands of opposition supporters had taken to the streets in Caracas and other states demanding presidential elections in 2027 and Machado’s return. Her reappearance in the country now transforms a demand made in her absence into a movement that once again has its main leader on the ground.

That is likely the most significant immediate consequence of her return. After nearly ten months away from Venezuela, Machado has demonstrated that she retains her ability to mobilize support and has

once again positioned herself physically at the center of an opposition facing a decisive phase.

The situation, however, is far more complex than the one he left behind in December 2025. Venezuela is under the interim government of Delcy Rodríguez, while the United States is promoting talks between Chavismo and a sector of the opposition. Machado is not directly participating in those talks, and there is still no agreed-upon date for the presidential elections his supporters are demanding.

U.S. Secretary of State Rubio attributed the conditions that allowed for Machado's safe return to the Washington-backed reconciliation talks and maintained that this process offers an opportunity to achieve free elections and a lasting democracy.

The exact circumstances of his entry into the country have not been fully clarified. Reports attributed to the Spanish newspaper ABC claim that he entered Venezuela from Colombia following a diplomatic operation involving several countries and with U.S. knowledge. These details remain unconfirmed and are based solely on information attributed to the Spanish newspaper.

His return now creates a twofold pressure. For the government of Delcy Rodríguez, because it will have to demonstrate the extent of the political guarantees offered as part of the opening process. And for Washington, because it will have to reconcile the negotiations it is sponsoring with a leader who possesses a clear ability to mobilize support but who remains outside the main negotiating table. Venezuelan analysts believe that her return could accelerate the pace of the transition and alter the existing political balance.

For Machado, the challenge has also changed. It is no longer simply a matter of returning to Venezuela. Now she must transform the crowds that welcomed her into an organized political force capable of pressing for competitive elections without being sidelined from the negotiation process.

On Sunday, she achieved something significant: returning to the country surrounded by thousands of supporters. What unfolded from Barquisimeto to Caracas demonstrated that her leadership retains the ability to mobilize the streets.

The question now is whether that momentum will be enough to turn the demand for “elections now” into an actual electoral calendar and, ultimately, into a democratic transition.

Brazil Re-elects Lula: A Victory That Extends "Lulism," but Does Not Heal the Country's Divide

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 26, 2026, 8:25 A.M. |
ANALYSIS, BRAZIL, AND LATEST NEWS



The 2026 election is, in the end, somewhat paradoxical. Lula won, but Bolsonarism was not politically defeated. AI-generated image/© PLC

BRAZIL-ELECTIONS-ANALYSIS

Central Editorial Team

Brasília. PLC Analysis | Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has once again emerged victorious in Brazil. At 80 years old, the veteran leader of the Workers' Party achieved what, just a few weeks ago, seemed far from certain: staging a comeback in the runoff to defeat Flávio Bolsonaro—the political heir to his father, Jair Bolsonaro—and extending the political cycle of "Lulism" for another four years. With 99.99 % of the

polling stations counted, Lula had secured 51.78% of the valid votes, compared to 48.22% for his opponent.

But it would be a mistake to interpret the result as a landslide victory for the Brazilian left. Quite the opposite, in fact. The result shows a Brazil practically split down the middle.

Flávio Bolsonaro had won the first round with 47.03%, compared to Lula's 45.16%. Polls in the days leading up to the runoff also showed an extremely close race. Lula managed to turn the result around and transformed an initial defeat into a victory by approximately 4.4 million votes.

The electoral map also confirms the depth of that division. Lula won in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, in addition to maintaining his stronghold across much of the Northeast. Flávio Bolsonaro, however, prevailed in Brasília and Belo Horizonte and secured victories in numerous state capitals in the South, North, and Central-West. In Curitiba, he garnered 62.29%, and in Boa Vista, no less than 75.75%.

Therefore, the main message from the polls may not simply be that Brazil elected Lula, but that Bolsonarism has largely outlived Jair Bolsonaro. The candidate has changed, but his electoral base has not disappeared.

Brazil will have four more years of Lula, but Lula will govern a country in which nearly half of those who cast valid votes in the runoff preferred to hand the presidency over to the former president's son. The president thus gains electoral legitimacy to continue governing, but not a blank check to rebuild Brazil according to the PT's political agenda.

His most difficult challenge will likely be to break free from the logic that has dominated Brazilian politics for years: Lulism versus Bolsonarism, left versus right, one Brazil against the other. The

electoral victory determines who governs; it does not eliminate the political confrontation that divides the country.

There is also a generational issue. Lula has once again demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for political survival. He won the presidential elections in 2002 and 2006, returned to power in 2022, and has now secured another reelection. But the more the PT depends on Lula's personal leadership, the more inevitable a question becomes: what comes after Lula?

That problem may shape his new term. The president will have to govern while simultaneously addressing a succession issue that the Brazilian left has been postponing for years. "Lulism" remains electorally competitive, but its dependence on an octogenarian leader also reveals a structural weakness.

At the other end of the spectrum, something equally significant is happening. The Bolsonaro name continues to mobilize tens of millions of voters. Flávio not only made it to the runoff: he won the first round and finished the second with more than 59 million votes. The defeat, therefore, hardly signals the end of Bolsonarism.

And the conflict is already threatening to shift from the ballot box to the institutions. After the results were announced, Flávio Bolsonaro called for the election to be annulled and questioned decisions made during election day. In the coming days, it will be essential to distinguish between political allegations and any evidence that can be evaluated by the electoral authorities. A democracy cannot automatically turn an electoral defeat into proof of fraud.

For Cuba, however, there is another dimension to the result.

Lula's return to office is likely to mean the continuation of a particularly friendly political relationship with Havana. For the Cuban regime, retaining a historically close partner in Brasília represents a significant diplomatic asset. But for a democracy of Brazil's size, a

contradiction remains that warrants critical scrutiny: the gap between the defense of democracy within Brazil and the stance its government takes toward authoritarian regimes in the region.

That will be one of the criteria by which the new term must be judged—not by Lula's historical friendships or the ideological rhetoric of his adversaries, but by concrete actions.

The 2026 election is, in the end, somewhat paradoxical. Lula won, but Bolsonarism was not politically defeated. Flávio lost the presidency after winning the first round. And Brazil chose continuity, but within a deeply polarized society.

Four more years of Lula could provide political continuity. They could also turn into four years of stagnation if the president interprets the victory as a complete endorsement of his agenda rather than what the numbers seem to indicate: a real, albeit narrow, majority in the face of a massive opposition.

Lula won the election. Now he will have to prove that he can still govern something far more complex than an electoral coalition: a Brazil divided almost exactly in two.

This approach underscores the difference between electoral victory and political hegemony—which strikes me as the most solid critical interpretation for PLC—and incorporates the Cuban dimension without making it the central argument of the analysis.

Machado returns to Venezuela under Washington's mediation and shakes up the political landscape

BY PLC CENTRAL EDITORIAL STAFF ON OCTOBER 25, 2026, 10:16 P.M. |
ANALYSIS, UNITED STATES, LATEST NEWS, AND VENEZUELA



The U.S. strategy therefore appears aimed at keeping several channels open simultaneously: negotiations with the interim authorities, dialogue with opposition sectors, and guarantees that exiled political figures can return. Photo captured from Facebook

VENEZUELA—MARÍA CORINA MACHADO RETURNS

Central Editorial Team – Analysis

Caracas. PLC Analysis | Machado's return to Venezuela was not merely the spectacular reappearance of the country's leading opposition figure. Behind her arrival lies a much broader political dimension: The United States now publicly acknowledges that its mediation was instrumental in creating the conditions that allowed Machado to return safely.

The confirmation came directly from Secretary of State Marco Rubio, just hours after Machado surprised the country by reappearing this

Sunday, October 25, at the Santuario de la Divina Pastora in Santa Rosa, Lara state. The 2025 Nobel Peace Prize laureate had announced her return shortly before with a brief but politically calculated statement: “I am here. With you.”

Rubio was much more explicit about what had happened behind the scenes.

“The conditions allowing for Ms. Machado’s safe return to Venezuela are the direct result of U.S.-backed reconciliation talks,” stated the head of U.S. diplomacy. As he explained, that process has also led to the release of hundreds of political prisoners and the return from exile of hundreds of opposition figures.

The statement is significant because it frames Machado’s return as something other than a clandestine operation carried out against the will of all political actors. Washington is publicly stating that the conditions that made her return possible were created by the political process the United States supports in Venezuela.

And there is background information that reinforces this interpretation. Reuters reports that U.S. officials had previously asked Machado, on at least one occasion, to delay his return. His repeated attempts to return had strained his relationship with the Donald Trump administration. Machado’s team did not explain how he ultimately managed to enter the country, but two sources cited by Reuters claim that he traveled on a private plane from Panama to Colombia and then crossed into Venezuela by land.

This means we must distinguish between two things. Rubio did not say that the United States physically organized Machado’s entry operation. What he stated is that the “conditions” that made his safe return possible were a direct result of political talks backed by Washington. That distinction is important.

The event thus takes on a dimension that goes far beyond the emotional scene that unfolded in Lara.

Machado left Venezuela clandestinely in early December 2025 to travel to Oslo after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. Since then, he has spent nearly ten months outside the country and made several unsuccessful attempts to return.

Now he returns to a profoundly changed landscape. The country is under the interim government of Delcy Rodríguez, and a process of political talks sponsored by Washington is underway, while a date for new presidential elections has not yet been set. Significantly, Machado is not directly participating in those negotiations.

And this is precisely where one of the major contradictions of his return lies.

Washington is helping to create the conditions for the return of a leader who is not part of the political negotiations that Washington itself is promoting. At the same time, the Trump administration maintains a cooperative relationship with Rodríguez's interim government. Reuters notes that Donald Trump has repeatedly backed Rodríguez and praised agreements related to oil production and other U.S. business activities.

The U.S. strategy therefore appears aimed at keeping several channels open simultaneously: negotiations with the interim authorities, dialogue with opposition sectors, and guarantees that exiled political figures can return.

Rubio's own words point in that direction. The Secretary of State stated that Washington hopes that "the freedoms of all sectors of Venezuelan politics" will continue to be respected and urged all parties to support the talks. According to Rubio, this process constitutes "the best opportunity Venezuela has had in thirty years"

to peacefully achieve not only free and fair elections but also a lasting democracy.

Machado thus enters a delicate landscape where Washington appears to be acting simultaneously as mediator, guarantor, and the primary external power with the capacity to influence the Venezuelan transition.

Her appearance at the Divina Pastora was carefully laden with symbolism. Instead of initially calling for a partisan rally or a press conference, she chose a sanctuary deeply identified with Venezuelan religiosity. There, she was greeted by supporters who embraced her while chants for freedom rang out. She then set out on the road to Caracas, according to her team.

The chosen location made it possible to transform a political return into an emotional and national image: after months abroad, Machado appeared once again among Venezuelan citizens.

But the real challenge begins after the photo op.

Machado now needs to demonstrate that the enormous visibility she gained during her time abroad and the international prestige she earned with the Nobel Prize can once again translate into political mobilization within Venezuela. Her return places her physically on the stage where the country's immediate future will be decided, but it also compels her to define her position regarding the talks that Washington considers fundamental.

There is also another factor that could significantly alter the landscape: Edmundo González Urrutia.

After news of Machado's arrival broke, the former presidential candidate—who has been in exile in Spain since September 2024—emotionally confirmed the news and announced that he intends to follow the same path . He stated that he would be joining Machado

“very soon” and maintained that his return also marked the return of a voice destined to “lead and guide this process.”

If González Urrutia’s return ultimately takes place, the opposition—which led the 2024 electoral contest—would regain its two main political figures within Venezuelan territory.

But Washington seems to want more than just the simple return of the exiles.

Rubio’s message can be interpreted as an invitation, but also as a political warning: The United States supports Machado’s presence within the country, but at the same time expects “all political actors” to support the talks that Washington considers the path toward free elections and a lasting democracy.

That nuance is crucial.

Machado returns with enormous political capital, but she does so within a framework in which the United States aims to steer the transition through negotiation rather than an abrupt rupture. Her ability to combine popular pressure with that diplomatic strategy will likely determine how much real power she will be able to wield in the next phase.

Donald Trump’s initially distant reaction is also striking. When asked by reporters about the return, the U.S. president claimed he knew nothing about the matter, expressed his hope that Machado was safe, and added that the United States was doing “really well” in Venezuela.

Hours later, however, his secretary of state made it perfectly clear that the political conditions that made her return possible were, according to Washington, a direct result of U.S. mediation.

The apparent discrepancy between the two messages reflects the complexity of U.S. policy toward Venezuela: support for democratic openness and for Machado, but also a commitment to preserving the negotiation process and the relationship established with the interim authorities.

That is why Machado's return has far greater significance than the mere physical return of an opposition leader.

Her arrival demonstrates that Washington is actively intervening in the shaping of Venezuela's new political landscape and that it intends to use the talks to gradually expand the political space, facilitate returns from exile, and set the country on a path toward future elections. That, at least, is what Marco Rubio publicly maintains.

For Machado, a challenge now begins that may be even more complex than life in hiding and exile: returning to the streets, rebuilding a national movement, and maintaining her political independence while the transition is negotiated under Washington's tight oversight.

The scene this Sunday at the Divina Pastora marked his return.

But the truly revealing statement of the day was perhaps not just Machado's "I am here," but Rubio's explanation of how he was able to be there.

Because behind Machado's arrival, another key player is now clearly emerging: the United States.

See you next week!

The Editorial Staff of Prensa Libre Cuba

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