



Cuban Observatory for Human Rights

Nearly 1,000 actions against the exercise of religious freedoms in Cuba in 2023

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The Cuban regime continues to use its surveillance and control systems to limit or persecute any public expression, especially political, of those who assume a civic commitment in accordance with the values of their faith.

Madrid, March 27, 2024

In Cuba there were at least 936 actions against the exercise of religious freedoms in 2023, denounced Wednesday the Cuban Observatory for Human Rights (OCDH), just when the regime has banned the realization of Holy Week processions in some localities of the country such as El Vedado (Havana City) or Bayamo, where one of the most resounding protests occurred last March 17.

The data collected by OCDH show violations against persons publicly identified as religious, as well as against others who regularly or sporadically attend religious worship as an expression of faith or civic engagement.

The OCDH documented four summonses and interrogations in official offices against members of the Center for Coexistence Studies such as Yoandy Izquierdo Toledo and Dagoberto Valdés Hernández, director of this Christian-inspired think tank that promotes thinking and proposals for the future of Cuba in different sectors and topics.

During the past year, several relatives of political prisoners denounced the denial of religious assistance, as was the case of Roberto Perez Fonseca and brothers Nadir and Jorge Martin Perdomo.

The report also includes the cruelty against the Yoruba priest Loreto Hernández García, a political prisoner of the 11J, who does not receive adequate medical care or food in prison according to his ailments. On June 12, 2023, the priest was admitted to the Arnaldo Milián Castro University Clinical and Surgical Provincial Hospital in Santa Clara due to his delicate state of health.

In March 2023, Mrs. Ailex Marcano, mother of 11J political prisoner Ángel Jesús Véliz Marcano, was arbitrarily detained for seven hours by the political police in Camagüey, to prevent her from attending the mass officiated in the cathedral by Cardinal Beniamino Stella.

Likewise, Cuban priest Jorge Luis Pérez Soto denounced in his social networks that although he was included by the Church in the list of those invited to the meeting with Cardinal Stella in the Aula Magna of the University of Havana, he was excluded by "other people" at the last minute, preventing his attendance.

In December, the political police in Santiago de Cuba summoned for questioning the evangelical bishop Jorge Luis Pérez Vásquez, leader of the Rehobot Ministry in the country. Pérez Vásquez carries out very important social and charitable work in his locality.

As is generally the case in Cuba, the most frequent repressive actions in this area were arbitrary arrests and the siege of family homes to prevent attendance at Sunday masses, especially against members of the Ladies in White, who were victims of several hundred anti-religious actions, usually against freedom of worship.

In January 2023, State Security in San José de Las Lajas, Mayabeque, prohibited mothers of imprisoned 11J protesters from attending church to pray for the freedom of their loved ones. Layda Jacinto Abad, mother of Aníbal Palau Jacinto, Marta Perdomo, mother of brothers Jorge and Nadir Martín Perdomo, and Liset Fonseca, mother of Roberto Pérez Fonseca, had announced that they intended to make a weekly Sunday walk to the local Catholic church to demand the freedom of their sons.

The Communist Party's Religious Affairs Office, a whip against religious groups

The [OCDH's Second Study on Religious Freedom](#), published on June 22, 2023, shows that 68% of Cubans consulted knew someone who professes a religion and has been harassed, repressed, threatened or hindered in their daily lives for reasons related to their faith.

The predominant opinion is that among the main reasons why a believer may suffer harassment, threats or discrimination are "having a political stance based on their faith" (59%) and "speaking publicly about their faith" (45%).

68% of believers consider that the Office of Religious Affairs of the Communist Party of Cuba violates or represses their rights.

The study showed that the Cuban regime continues to use its surveillance and control systems to limit or persecute any public expression, especially political, of those who assume a civic commitment in accordance with the values of their faith. Likewise, it limits the action and social influence of religious entities or congregations, especially those that demand a greater presence in the public space and in the communities.

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