

H. Res. 179

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

April 8, 2003.

Whereas the Cuban Government continues to repress all peaceful attempts by the Cuban people to bring democratic change to the island by denying universally recognized liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly, association, movement and of the press;

Whereas on March 9, 2003, many of Cuba's prominent dissidents issued a statement titled "Joint Statement" to the European Union, wherein they reaffirmed their view of the Cuban Government's "total vocation to immobility and its refusal to respect internationally recognized human rights or accept the existence of legitimate political opposition" and further stated that "in recent times the Cuban Government has intensified its political and social repression";

Whereas commencing on March 17, 2003, the Cuban Government carried out a massive, island wide crackdown on members of Cuba's pro-democracy movement, which included the arrest of over 80 dissidents, among them many who signed the "Joint Statement", activists of the Assembly to Promote Civil Society, promoters of the Varela Project, independent journalists, and numerous members of Cuba's nascent independent civil society;

Whereas the Cuban Government arbitrarily searched the homes and confiscated personal items belonging to pro-democracy activists;

Whereas independent journalists were among those incarcerated in this massive crackdown, including Raul Rivero, known as the dean of the dissident independent journalists in Cuba;

Whereas independent librarians, who make their homes available so that the Cuban population may have access to publications otherwise censored by the Cuban Government, also became victims of repression, as many were arrested, their homes ransacked and searched, and publications and other belongings confiscated;

Whereas Marta Beatriz Roque, and other leaders of the “Assembly to Promote Civil Society”, an islandwide movement seeking to coordinate the various sectors of Cuba’s nascent independent civil society who work for a democratic transition, were incarcerated and face lengthy sentences, including life sentences;

Whereas activists who have collected or signed petitions for the Varela Project were also incarcerated in this crackdown and may also face life sentences;

Whereas more than 80 pro-democracy leaders who work for a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba have been incarcerated and sentenced under “Law 88” and “Law 91”, two draconian totalitarian laws that call for long sentences of 10, 15, or 20 years, or life imprisonment, or even death for pro-democracy activity;

Whereas there is concern for the well-being and safety for all of Cuba’s political prisoners, particularly Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva, who is a blind human rights activist in-

carcerated since March of 2002 without being formally charged, and Leonardo Bruzon Avila, who has been denied medical attention according to Amnesty International, despite the effects of a prolonged hunger strike while in prison.;

Whereas a plea for solidarity was made from within the notoriously harsh prison in Cuba known as “Combinado del Este” and signed by 21 political prisoners, among them Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, Francisco Chaviano, Rafael Ibarra, and Jorge Luis Garcia Perez “Antunez” to the member states of the 59th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission;

Whereas the Cuban Government has carried out “summary trials” to expeditiously sentence pro-democracy leaders to try to intimidate and silence other pro-democracy activists on the island, while world attention is primarily focused on Iraq;

Whereas the Castro regime has engaged in mass arrests of dissidents while the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, of which Cuba is a member, is meeting in Geneva;

Whereas certain member countries of the Latin American and Caribbean group (GRULAC) at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights are currently drafting a resolution on the violations of human rights by the Cuban Government;

Whereas the Cuban Government has repeatedly violated the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, and other international and regional human

rights agreements, and has violated the mandates issued by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights;

Whereas foreign diplomats and members of the international press have been barred by the Cuban Government from being present at the “summary trials”; and

Whereas pro-democracy leaders on the island have come together to call for the immediate release of all Cuban political prisoners, and are requesting international solidarity with the internal opposition, as reflected in a March 31, 2003, statement signed by some of the most prominent dissidents on the island: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns the brutal crackdown of the Cuban Government on the island’s peaceful pro-democracy movement;

(2) calls for the immediate release of all Cuban political prisoners;

(3) supports the right of the Cuban people to exercise fundamental political and civil liberties, including freedom of expression, assembly, association, movement, press, and the right to multiparty elections;

(4) calls on the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva, Switzerland, to work with the member countries of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to ensure a resolution that includes the strongest possible condemnation of the cur-

rent crackdown of dissidents and of the gross human rights violations committed by the Cuban Government; and

(5) calls on the Latin American and Caribbean group (GRULAC) at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to exclude Cuba from its slate of candidates for the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and urges all member nations to oppose renewing Cuba's membership on the United Nations Commission on Human Rights until the Government of Cuba adheres to international human rights standards, such as those delineated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Attest:

Clerk.