



***PROPOSED HUMANITARIAN AGENDA
FOR THE CUBAN FAMILY***

PREAMBLE

Consenso Cubano considers it necessary to make a call to move for measures which directly benefit the people and the Cuban families, while we shape a non-violent, sovereign and definitive shift towards democracy in Cuba.

PROPOSALS

Consenso Cubano, based on its founding pillars, has identified three areas of rights and liberties which it considers essential to benefit the Cuban family and we propose adoption of the following measures:

- 1) The right to free movement, residence and family reunification.**
 - Abolition of the requirements which the Cuban government imposes on its citizens when entering and leaving the country and repeal of the migratory category “*salida definitiva*”.
 - Abolition by the Cuban government of the regulations and laws that prevent Cubans from freely establishing their residency, temporarily or permanently, in Cuba and abroad.
 - Elimination of foreign currency as permissible payment during the required process to exit Cuba and revision of the taxes and tariffs to put them in accordance with regional standards.
 - Discontinuation of the Cuban government’s confiscation of goods, interference with employment and other harassing measures against emigrants.
 - Prioritize and ease migration in cases of family reunification.
 - Elimination of the measures enacted by the United States government that hinder and limit trips to Cuba for humanitarian or family reasons.

2) The right to accessible, free communication and at market prices.

- Modification by the Cuban governments of the long distance telephone fees to put them in accordance with regional standards.
- Liberalize and facilitate Cuban citizens' access to the Internet and electronic mail for fees which correspond with regional standards.
- The abolition of all the measures which restrict access by the Cuban population to acquiring computers and communications equipment.
- Normalization of regular air mail between Cuba and the United States.

3) The right to send and receive help from one's family and other individuals.

- Abolition by Cuba of the excessive taxes and restrictions of the deliveries and aid packages received from abroad, using the prevalent market costs in the region as an indicator.
- Elimination of United States' restrictive measures regarding the sending of deliveries and packages to Cuba for humanitarian reasons.
- Allow Cubans in the Island the use of the packages and help from family to establish small business and self-employment opportunities.

RATIONALE

As it happens for anyone who for one reason or another decides to move, temporarily or permanently, to another country, those Cubans living abroad have family members with whom they want to maintain fluid communication, whom they want to help or visit or with whom they want to reunite, in Cuba or abroad. These are human aspirations which should not be affected by political considerations.

The principal reasons we identify and prioritize for these three rights are the following:

1. The process of the Cuban Revolution divided our families, not only politically and ideologically, but also geographically. More than 1 million Cubans today live dispersed throughout the world. The imposition by the Cuban government of permits for entry and exit of the country by nationals, the confiscation of possessions, loss of employment, public stigma, and police harassment against any Cuban who expresses the desire to live in another country, not to mention the privation of the right to return, invest or even visit their country after leaving, are exceptional measures in today's world. Equally reproachable is the involuntary retention of family members in Cuba as a penalty imposed on those who decide not to return to the country. The United States government has also imposed restrictions which limit the ability of Cuban nationals living in the U.S. to freely visit their friends and loved ones. Since the majority of the Cuban Diaspora lives in the U.S., these measures have a negative impact on national reconciliation and family reunification.

The rights of free movement, residence and family reunification are supported by various documents of the international rights movement. The United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) affirms in Article 13 that “everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state” and that “everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country”. After the UDHR, other international pacts and agreement, as well as resolutions, both by the UN General Assembly and the UN's Commission on Human Rights, have complemented these rights, exhorting as well that “all states guarantee the universally recognized right to travel, to all citizens of other countries who reside legally in their territory” and “to facilitate family reunification in an expeditious and efficient manner, taking into careful consideration the applicable legislation, as this reunification has a positive effect.”

2. All emigrants need to be able to communicate freely and fluidly with those family members and loved ones they left behind. It is an inalienable right to communication and it is an emotional and psychological need of the first order. For Cubans it has become extremely difficult to exercise this right, owing to the limitation of access and the fees imposed which are excessive by regional standards.

The use of and access to the internet, particularly e-mail, are intensely regulated, restricted and controlled by the Cuban authorities. Additionally, the cost of these services for those with access, exceeds the standard regional price.

3. Emigrants from any country feel an ethical and emotional obligation to help the family and loved ones they left behind. Almost without exception, they regularly send deliveries and packages to their families and friends and they increase these shipments in response to disasters of various kinds. However, Cubans confront divers obstacles in the exercise of this right.

Both governments have imposed restrictive measures which limit the flow of deliveries and packages expressing human solidarity, from family to family, person to person. For its part, the Cuban government has adjusted the exchange rate of its money, deliberately devaluing the deliveries and combining this action with a state tax on the U.S. dollar.

All these measures, by both governments, limit the right of the Cuban to have “a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing...”, in accordance with Article 25 of the UDHR. Additionally, the Cuban government has launched an offensive and harassing prosecution against the emerging sector of self-employed workers, making it difficult, when not impossible, that packages by invested in small businesses thereby permitting the family members self-sufficiency without depending on the exterior, creating sources of income for other Cubans and providing diverse services and products to Cuban society.

This right is supported by different international rights norms and documents just as they were expressed in conventions and resolutions by the United Nations, where they urge all states to allow, among other things, “the movement, without restriction of the family packages which the citizens of other countries who reside in their territory send to their family members in their country of origin.

CONCLUSION

The measures imposed which limit and deny to Cubans the fundamental rights to travel freely in and out of Cuba for humanitarian or family reunification purposes, to have access to fluid conversation, and to be able to freely send and receive personal and family help, violate Cubans' fundamental rights, damage the Cuban family and constitute ethical contradictions with great transcendence. It is for this reason that Consenso Cubano proposes the elimination of the barriers which impede, limit or prejudice the free exercise of these rights and which complicated and delay the possibility of change for Cuba.

For all the reasons expounded in this document, Consenso Cubano urges collaboration with this humanitarian agenda and asks that all Cubans, governments, organizations, institutions, houses of worship, and people of good will accompany us in this constructive effort.

Miami, October 2006