

# Documenting inside Cuba

## Cuban Council of Human Rights Rapporteurs

Founded in May 2007 as a coalition of human rights groups, the Council's mission is to uphold truth and human dignity and systematically gather information to document and denounce the worst incidents of human rights violations. Besides monitoring abuses, the Council promotes civil liberties and the unity and evolution of the internal dissidence movement, advocates on behalf of political prisoners, for the improvement of prison conditions and for the abolishment of the death penalty, and offers humanitarian assistance to the weakest sectors of society.



Courageous members of Cuba's outlawed, yet growing, peaceful civil society serve as "rapporteurs,"—around 500 to date, members of almost 70 different organizations. Each one must have actively defended human rights for at least five years and must commit to non-violence and to providing truthful and verifiable information.

Organizationally, the members are divided by geographic location and some specialize in certain topics, such as children, prisoners, labor, culture, etc. Risking their safety and livelihood, they must overcome severe material and logistical obstacles to do this work. Many live very far from Havana, without contact with members of the diplomatic community or the international media who could offer them a measure of security. Prisoners of conscience also serve as "rapporteurs" inside 50 prisons, reporting by phone or during family visits on the horrid conditions and abuses, including an alarming rate of deaths.

The Council issues detailed monthly and annual reports of recorded abuses. It also communicates the most egregious violations to human rights organizations outside of Cuba, hoping the news will be disseminated internationally as well as retransmitted back to the island in transmissions. (As per Cuba's current Constitution, the state owns and controls all means of distribution of information, which must be used in accordance with the preservation and objectives of the socialist state.) Due to the government's strict restrictions on all means of mass communication, including the internet, reports from the island are sent mostly via telephone and then distributed by international human rights organizations and internet news services. Certain diplomatic missions in Havana also provide human rights activists free access to the internet, which allows them to send reports.

See the Council's reports, in Spanish, at: <http://derechoshumanoscuba.blogspot.com>. For independent journalists' reports from Cuba on human rights abuses, including reports by the Council, see: [www.CubaNet.org](http://www.CubaNet.org) and [www.Directorio.org](http://www.Directorio.org), also only in Spanish see, [www.payolibre.org](http://www.payolibre.org) and [www.miscelaneasdecuba.org](http://www.miscelaneasdecuba.org).

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